

## Small Group Guide

### WILL YOUR HEART BE HARDENED OR HUMBLLED BY THIS KING?

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*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*March 4, 2012*

*Matthew 12*

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

### **Relate . . .**

*Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:*

*Welcome*—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

*Review*—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

*Prayer*—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

### **Reflect . . .**

*Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)*

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### Six More Portraits of Jesus...

- He is the Lord of the Sabbath.
  - As legalists, the Pharisees...
    - Added to the requirements of the law.
    - Ignored the exceptions to the law.
    - Missed the heart of the law.
  - As Lord, Jesus...
    - Is greater than the tabernacle.
    - Is greater than the temple.
    - Is God.
- He is the Servant of God and sinners.
  - Of God: Jesus is loved by the Father and filled with the Spirit.
  - Of sinners: Jesus is hope for the hurting.

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- He is the Power of God.
  - An unreasonable accusation...
    - It is illogical.
    - It is inconsistent.
  - Undeniable conclusions...
    - If this is not by the power of Satan, then this is by the power of God.
    - The One who is stronger than Satan is here.
    - Neutrality toward Jesus is impossible.
  - The unforgivable sin...
    - Blasphemy against the Son is forgivable, and the avenue to forgiveness is repentance.
    - Blasphemy against the Spirit of God is unforgivable, because the avenue to forgiveness is rejected.
      - Such sin involves willful unbelief, persistent rebellion, and final denial.
      - Permanent refutation leads to permanent condemnation.
  - Two unforgettable reminders...
    - We must avoid labeling anyone as guilty of the unforgivable sin.
      - We trust that God alone knows a person's heart.
      - We work and we pray with a constant hope.
    - We must realize that the unforgivable sin is primarily a sin of the heart, not the lips.
      - Our words reveal our hearts.
      - Faith results in good works, which includes good words.
- He is the Greater Prophet.
  - Jonah was alive after three days in a fish...Jesus would be alive after three days in a grave.
  - The Ninevites responded with repentance...the Israelites were responding with rejection.
- He is the Wiser King.
- He is our Elder Brother.
  - What we don't need: an empty religion consumed with outer reformation.
  - What we do need: an intimate relationship compelled by inner transformation.

#### The Humbling Invitation...

Feast at the table with the promised Messiah, the authoritative Judge, the sovereign Son, the gracious Master, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Servant of God and sinners, the Power of God, the Greater Prophet, the Wiser King, and your Elder Brother.

#### Message Summary

Matthew 12 is primarily marked by conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus. In this chapter, the writer, Matthew, contrasts the false thinking of the religious elite with the truth of who Jesus is, painting six portraits of the Messiah.

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*Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. Salvation is not found in following rules, but in faith in One greater than the tabernacle and the temple.*

*Jesus is the Servant of God and sinners. He is loved by the Father and filled with the Spirit. He is hope for the hurting.*

*Jesus is the Power of God. We respond to Him either with repentance or rejection. There is no neutrality. The unforgivable sin is a sin of the heart, involving willful unbelief, persistent rebellion, and final denial. Because only God knows a person's heart, we refrain from labeling anyone as guilty of the unforgivable sin.*

*Jesus is the Greater Prophet, ultimately because He rose from the dead as a display of His victory over sin and death.*

*Jesus is the Wiser King, greater even than Solomon.*

*Jesus is our Elder Brother. We don't need empty religion focused on outer reformation. We desperately need intimate relationship flowing from inner transformation.*

### Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- What is legalism? Do you believe we were all born with an inclination toward legalism? How does legalism play a role in all of the world's other religions? How can legalism manifest itself in the 'Bible Belt' of the Southeastern United States?
- In what ways do we all continue to struggle with legalism? What is the only cure for legalism? How can it be dealt with on a daily basis?
- Read Matthew 11:28–12:14. Why would Jesus' actions in these verses incite the Pharisees to murderous plotting? Why were the Pharisees so angry? Do you think the Pharisees (not to mention their followers) were tired of trying to keep all their rules? Do you believe Jesus could have given them rest? Why did they not take it? What is the lesson for us today?
- Read Matthew 12:15–21. How do these verses contrast with the previous portrait of Jesus in verses 12:1–14? Why is it important to understand both the servanthood and lordship of Jesus Christ?
- Is legalism (following rules in one's own strength to find favor before God) appealing to a person who feels like a "bruised reed" or a "smoldering wick"? Do we normally see ourselves as hurting? Why is it a grace to see ourselves as needy? How is Jesus hope for the hurting? How can you rely on Jesus to serve you this week? Does that thought make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?
- Dr. Platt quoted Puritan pastor Richard Sibbes: "There is more mercy in Him than sin in you." How does this thought bring you comfort and defeat pride? How does it influence your reaction to your own sin? To the sins of others? Why is this truth not an excuse to sin?
- Read Matthew 12:22–30. Why is neutrality toward Jesus impossible?
- Read Matthew 12:31–37. Is the unforgivable sin a matter of the lips or the heart? So, what is the unforgivable sin?
- How would you counsel a person who fears they have committed the unforgivable sin? Why is it important to avoid labeling anyone as guilty of the unforgivable sin?
- Why do our words matter? Why will we be justified or condemned by our words? How does Romans 10:9–10 fit into this picture?
- Read Matthew 12:38–50. Why is the Resurrection the hinge upon which the gospel turns?

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- The queen of the South came “from the ends of the earth” to hear Solomon. Jesus is a greater king than even Solomon. Are you diligently seeking the wisdom of Jesus? What obstacles are preventing you from coming to listen to Him? How can you provide others access to His words?
- What does it mean that Jesus is the believer’s Elder Brother? In order to enjoy an intimate, familial relationship with Jesus, do we need outer reformation or inner transformation? What is the evidence of inner transformation? Actions? Words? Desires? All of the above?
- Why is mere outer reformation ultimately another road to condemnation? How does a Christianity that emphasizes what you do for Jesus miss the mark entirely? How does the true gospel (salvation by grace through faith in Christ) grant us abundant, everlasting life now and forever? How does it lead to “good works”? (Ephesians 2: 8-10)
- Are your words and your actions matching your theology? Would people see your life as grace-based (Christ) or works-based (self)? This week how can you point others (family, friends, classmates, co-workers, neighbors) toward Christ and away from legalism?

## Respond . . .

*Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today’s study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:*

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

## Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Pray for Our Lives:** *In this week’s passage we see Jesus calling the Pharisees to yield to the Holy Spirit. Pray that we would all heed this call and yield our lives to the Spirit. Pray that any who are rejecting the Spirit’s call to salvation would turn from their sin and trust in Jesus. Pray that we would each live lives that are known for bearing the fruit of the gospel. Ask the Spirit to empower each of us to do the will of the Father.*
- **Pray for Our City:** *This week we are praying for the outreach efforts of one of our local church plants, The Church at South East Lake, as they seek to proclaim the gospel in word and deed in the community of East Lake. We are praying for their pastor, Ben DeLoach.*
- **Pray for Our World:** *This week we are praying for Brook Hills’ field partners Jeff and Rose W. serving in East Asia. Jeff and Rose have served in East Asia for 15 years where they mobilized church planting teams among the unreached in East Asia.*

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*Recently they have transitioned to help train East Asian believers to start sharing and extending the gospel across their borders.*