

Message Discussion Guide

WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO NEVER HEAR ABOUT JESUS?

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

November 9, 2008

Romans

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions 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 their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Open your time with the following questions:

- What are some common objections that people have with going on a mission trip?
- Why do you think people have these objections or concerns?
- Do you think these objections/concerns are valid? Why or why not?

Many hear the challenge to take a mission trip and one of the first objections that comes up is: "God has not called me to go on a missions trip overseas." Discuss this objection by asking the following questions:

- When Jesus told His disciples to go to all the nations and make disciples, who do you think He was talking to?
- What passages of Scripture can you think of that would address being "called to missions?"
- Do you think that you have to be "called to missions" to go on a mission trip here in the U.S. or overseas? Why or why not?
- Is it being disobedient to go on a mission trip without feeling that God has "called" you to go? Why or why not?

Explain to the learners that we will be discussing what happens to people who never hear about Christ and our responsibility as the church to go to them.

Option 2

Ask the small group to go through an imaginary scenario with you. Invite the learners to think of a place where millions of people are dying from a plague. Tens of thousands of people are contracting the plague daily. A group of scientists from another part of the world have discovered a cure for this plague. They know about the people dying on the other side of the world with the disease, but it would take a scientist to administer this cure. So, for many different reasons (personal, professional, social, financial, etc.), the scientists decide that they cannot take this cure to the dying people.

- How does it make you feel to see millions of people ignored like this?
- Is it possible that the scientists' excuses are valid enough to justify them not going to help these people?
- Should there be any repercussions for the scientists' decision? Why or why not?

Statistics say that over 1 billion people have never heard of the name of Jesus. Invite the learners to think of a place where the gospel has not been spread broadly. Ask the following questions:

- What place are you thinking of? What part of the world is this place located?
- How does it make you feel to think that these people may never hear the gospel, die and go to hell? Is this fair that those who never hear the gospel will be condemned for their sin?
- Could it be possible that you are like the scientist with the cure for their plague and they need you to come and administer the cure?

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Many times when people discuss the issue of “What happens to people who never hear about Jesus?,” the question is also asked, “What about babies or young children who die without giving their lives to Christ?” These questions often go together because of the emotional nature of the issue and because of the discussion of “innocent” people. If this question is raised during your small group time, we would recommend that you steer the discussion back to the question at hand and offer to discuss the issue after the small group is over or at a later time.

Review the Message . . .

Seven Affirmations...

#1 All people know God the Father.

#2 All people reject true knowledge of God.

Discussion Questions

- Invite a volunteer to read Romans 1:18-25. What does this passage say can be known about God the Father?
- Who has this knowledge been revealed to? How has it been revealed?
- According to v. 21-23, 25, what is the response to the knowledge of God?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 1:26-32. What is God’s response to the rejection of His creatures? How does this passage describe those who reject God?

#3 There are no innocent people in the world.

#4 All people are condemned for rejecting God.

Discussion Questions

- Invite someone to read Romans 1:28-2:16. Ask a volunteer to sum up this passage in one sentence. (Ex. – All people are guilty and without excuse, therefore, they must be punished.) It may be good to point out verses such as 2:1 and 2:5-6.
- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 3:9-18. Who is this passage talking about? (v. 9, Jews and Gentiles – i.e. everyone)
- Who does it say in v. 11 seeks God?
- Based on these passages, can anyone make a claim to be innocent? Why or why not?
- Read Romans 3:19. What does this verse say is a purpose of the law? Who is included?

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#5 God has made a way of _____ salvation _____ for the lost.

#6 People cannot come to God apart from _____ faith _____ in Christ.

Discussion Questions

- Invite someone to read Romans 3:21-26. How is righteousness from God transferred to us?
- How does v. 24 describe our justification?
- In light of the previous passages, the question should not be, “Why is there only one way to God,” but “Why is there any way at all?” How does v. 24 shed light on this question? (i.e. God gave us a way to Him freely by His grace through Jesus Christ. God is incredibly gracious and kind to send Jesus Christ to redeem people who have completely and utterly rejected Him!)
- Invite someone to read Romans 3:27-31. How does this passage say we come to God? Point out to the learners that the word “faith” is used 5 times in this passage, showing the emphasis of faith in Christ.
- What objections do you have with the conclusion that all those who never hear about Jesus are still condemned for rejecting God? Does this seem unfair or unjust?

#7 Christ _____ commands _____ His church to make the Gospel known in all nations.

The plan of God...

- **Christ sends _____ followers _____.**
 - **Followers _____ preach _____.**
 - **People _____ hear _____.**
 - **Hearers _____ believe _____.**
 - **Believers _____ call _____.**
 - **Those who call are _____ saved _____.**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a learner to read Romans 10:12-17. Invite a volunteer to summarize this passage in one sentence. (Ex. – Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but they cannot believe and call on someone they’ve never heard about.)
- Read v. 14 again to the group. Ask: What is the answer to Paul’s rhetorical questions here? Why do you think that Paul asked this series of questions when the answers are so obvious? Explain to the learners that Paul is demonstrating to the Romans the church’s responsibility in the mission of Christ to make the gospel known.
- Read “The plan of God” (above) to the group. Remind them of David’s statement that the only place that this can breakdown is “Followers preach.” Ask: Can you think of a time in Scripture when someone came to faith without a preacher

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(someone speaking the gospel message)? If this is correct, how important is it for believers to be preachers of the gospel? Have the learners share their thoughts on the importance of this.

Application

- How does Romans 1-3 shape how you feel about those who never hear about Jesus? What emotions are stirred from this passage? How should this passage make us feel about the way that God deals with those who die without trusting Christ?
- Knowing that Romans 1-3 describes all of us without Christ, what should our response to this truth be?
- David said in regard to human destiny, “The default is not heaven, but hell.” What emotions arise from hearing this statement? Why do we want the default destination to be heaven? Does this create a greater sense of urgency to spread the gospel to our friends, family, and the world? Why or why not?
- David said, “If there is some other way to God, we say to Jesus, ‘Thank you but the cross was not necessary.’” Are we saying to Jesus, “Thank you, but the cross was not necessary” when we fail to preach the gospel to others? If so, are you saying this to Jesus? Explain your answers.
- Are you a part of the breakdown in the church’s mission by your lack of preaching the gospel or are you a part of the completion of the church’s mission by your obedience to Jesus’ command?

Read Romans 3:27-28 to the group. The application questions above could lead the members of your small group to either feel pride because of their obedience in sharing the gospel or guilt for their lack of sharing the gospel. It would be very easy to motivate the members of your small group by guilt. Explain to the members of your small group that they are “not guilty,” for this is the implication of the word “justified.” The gospel calls us to repent of both pride in our obedience and in lack of obedience.

Explain to the small group that they have been forgiven of their disobedience and pride. This may help in helping them in moving forward with the application of the sermon.

The point of Scripture...

- **The goal is not to answer the question; the goal is to alleviate the question altogether.**

Application...

- How are you and your family currently working to alleviate the question?
- How are we as a small group currently working to alleviate the question?
- What are things that we as a small group could do better to help alleviate the question?
- What are things that you and your family could do better to help alleviate the question?

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The Real Question...

How are you going to impact the _____unreached_____ world with the Gospel?

Application...

- How are we as a small group doing in thinking about our mission being to the entire world?
- What are things that we can do give us a broader focus that encompasses the unreached people of the world?
- What are some ideas of things that we can do in the upcoming year to spread the gospel to the world?

Challenge:

1. Challenge each member of the small group to memorize Romans 3:21-26 for this next week.
2. Challenge each member to come up with a plan in the next week in which his/her family can begin praying in specific ways for the salvation of all of the people groups in the world.