

Small Group Guide

A CHURCH MIGHTY IN THE WORD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

March 6, 2011

Acts 18:23–20:16

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to 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 through 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 revisit 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 in our lives:

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The Word and the Holy Spirit...

- What the Bible isn't teaching...
 - After you come to faith in Christ, you need to be baptized by/in/with the Spirit.
- What the Bible is teaching...
 - Baptism by/in/with the Spirit occurs at _____ conversion _____.
 - Questions...
 - But what about Pentecost?
 - Jesus' disciples were living in a time of covenant transition.
 - Regarding Jesus, they understood the new covenant (they believed in an ascended Messiah).
 - Regarding the Spirit, they still lived in the old covenant (they had an incomplete experience of the Spirit).
 - At Pentecost, disciples with an old covenant experience of the

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- Spirit became disciples with a new covenant experience of the Spirit.
- But what about other “second baptisms” in Acts?
 - None of these experiences mention “baptism by/in/with the Spirit.”
 - The new covenant realization of the Spirit is simply following the advancement of the gospel to new territory (Acts 1:8).
 - Conclusions...
 - Be confident in your baptism.
 - Beware of two-class Christianity.
 - Be active in seeking the Spirit!
 - Be biblical in talking about experiences with the Spirit.
 - Look for the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Focus on the filling of the Spirit.

The Word and Evil Spirits...

- What the Bible isn't teaching...
 - Get training to talk with demons.
- What the Bible is teaching...
 - There is no direct command in Scripture to do deliverance ministry (i.e., cast out demons).
 - Scripture commands us not to have anything to do with evil spirits or their mediums.
 - Scripture nowhere prescribes a strategy for naming or binding evil spirits.
 - There are numerous direct commands in Scripture to do personal ministry (i.e., call people to salvation).
 - Revere Jesus.
 - Repent of sin.
 - Rest in the Word.

The Word and the World...

- What the Bible isn't teaching...
 - Opposition to the gospel will eventually be quieted in this world.
- What the Bible is teaching...
 - Proclamation of the gospel will always be challenged in this world.

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The Word and our Worship...

- What the Bible isn't teaching...
 - You will _____ die _____ if you fall asleep in church.
- What the Bible is teaching...
 - When the church gathers, we _____ soak in _____ the Word.
 - When the church scatters, we _____ spread _____ the Word.
 - Jesus has conquered sin and defeated _____ death _____!

The Bottom Line...

We are in the midst of a spiritual _____ war _____, and we have _____ all _____ been filled with the Holy Spirit to spread God's Word throughout this world, no matter what it _____ costs _____.

Message Summary

Today's teaching focused on the events of Paul's third missionary journey, which included a nearly three-year stay in Ephesus. Through Paul's ministry, "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). The goal of the message is to challenge us to be a people like the Early Church who were mighty in the Word when they gathered together and mighty with the Word when they scattered.

Dr. Platt examined four topics in the light of God's Word in Acts 18-20 looking at what the Bible is not teaching as well as what it is teaching on these subjects. First, regarding the Holy Spirit, there is no "second baptism"—baptism by/in/with the Spirit occurs at conversion for all believers. Second, the Bible calls us to revere Christ, repent of sin, and rest in the Word rather than focus on deliverance ministry (talking with demons, etc). Third, the Bible teaches that the proclamation of the gospel will always be challenged. Fourth, the church is to study the Word together and then scatter to spread the Word to all nations.

Discuss

- There are only seven places in the New Testament that speak of baptism with or in the Spirit. Four are parallel passages where John the Baptist promises that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Two others refer to the upcoming disciples' experience at Pentecost (Acts 1:5 and Acts 11:16). The seventh reference is 1 Corinthians 12:12–13. Read that together as a group. Who receives the baptism of the Spirit? When? How does this passage of Scripture refute the idea of a 'two-class Christianity'? Is there any need for a "second baptism" after salvation?
- So what about Pentecost? How is Pentecost a unique time in redemptive history? Should the disciples' experience at Pentecost be considered normative for the church today? Should we expect conversions to be accompanied by tongues of fire and speaking in tongues?
- There are four examples in Acts sometimes cited as "second baptisms" (Acts 2; Acts 8:12–17; Acts 10:44–48; Acts 19:5). However, none of these mention baptisms by/in/with the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 8:12–17 and 10:44–48. What ties together Pentecost (Acts 2), Acts 8:12–17, and Acts 10:44–48? (See Acts 1:8). How would these experiences have authenticated the advance of the gospel to new territories? Who was present to witness these experiences? (Hint: Peter was present for all three).
- Read Acts 19:1–7. Paul is probing to find out the nature of the beliefs held by these disciples. He discovers they did not yet receive the Holy Spirit. They were actually only disciples of John, not Jesus. What is the difference between the baptism of John and baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus? When these men understood and trusted in the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ what

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happened? How did this event prove that repentance alone was not enough to be saved?

- Sometimes Christians use the term “second baptism,” which is unbiblical. However, they are many times describing good, legitimate experiences with the Holy Spirit resulting from concentrated prayer, confession, repentance, and surrender to Christ. Should we seek the Holy Spirit for a one-time, or second-time, or third-time experience? Or should we daily spending time in confession, turning from sin and turning to Christ? How can we daily yield our lives more and more to His will? How can we seek the fruit and filling of the Holy Spirit? How can we pursue daily alignment with our lives and the Spirit so that we walk in step with the Spirit?
- How can an unhealthy fascination with demonic spirits harm our faith? Who is responsible for breaking down the strongholds of the devil?
- Do we need to learn more about Satan or more about Christ? Should our ministries be focused on combating demons or glorifying Christ? How might some “deliverance” ministries actually divert our attention from Christ? How can a focus on the demonic distract us from dealing with our own personal sin?
- There are numerous commands in Scripture to wage spiritual warfare at a personal and corporate level. What are some examples? How can we take this kind of spiritual warfare more seriously?
- How can we revere Jesus, repent of sin, and rest in the Word on a daily basis? What are some things that distract us or tempt us away from Christ that we might need to get rid of? How can we alter our lives to give priority to prayer, the Word, and worship?
- When we preach the gospel, what should we expect to happen, according to the Bible? How does this challenge our view of comfort and safety in this life? How can we prepare for the challenges we will face?
- Was the spread of the gospel in Asia accomplished by one man? Do only certain believers have the Spirit or the power of the Spirit? Whose calling is it to spread the Word and make disciples of all nations? How can we best live that out, empowered by the Spirit, this week?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. 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 the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to 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 message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Lives and Church:** *Thank God this week for the men and women He has provided to disciple you through the years. Then, ask God to lead you to men and women whom He is going to use you to disciple.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for the Brook Hills Hispanic Ministry. Pastor*

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Eduardo Torres joined our staff in December of 2007 to assist our local body in advancing the gospel among the Hispanic population of Birmingham. The primary focus of the ministry has been outreach to the Spanish-speaking population of our city through weekly English as a Second Language classes, a weekly Sunday evening worship gathering, four weekly small groups across the city, and a variety of special outreach events, such as carnivals, movie nights, marriage workshops, a Spanish version of Secret Church, neighborhood visitation, health clinics, etc. God has now opened the door for them to launch a Sunday morning worship gathering beginning April 3 at the corner of Highway 280 and Highway 41. We want to continue to pray for them as they seek to advance the gospel through this new venue. We are also praying for McElwain Baptist Church, Mike Miller, Pastor.

- **Global:** *This week we are praying for John and Amy Crawford, our Brook Hills Church Planters, planting in the Midwest. We are also praying for Brook Hills teams in India.*