

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

November 16, 2008

Exodus 33:14-16

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

Explain that people attend churches for a number of different reasons. Encourage learners to name reasons why they attend a certain church consistently. Then explain that the reasons for becoming a member of a church may be the same or different than the reasons for attending a church. Invite learners to name what they look for in a church that they would join.

Ask the following questions:

- If we looked for a church in which we could most get involved, would that change how we look at churches?
- If we looked for a church where we could join other Christ-followers in making disciples of all nations, would that change how we look at churches?
- How would we feel if we joined a church with the idea that they expected us to reproduce another church?

Explain that today we will take a look at the strategy of The Church at Brook Hills and those expectations on how we "do" church.

Option 2

Explain that many churches on the Gulf Coast have experienced the scattering effect that hurricanes and storms can bring to bodies of believers. Numerous churches felt the loss of members, money, buildings, and resources.

Ask the following questions:

- How would this kind of devastation affect their ministry if everything they did was based upon their church building and money?
- How could they organize ministry so that their mission was not stopped by a hurricane?

Explain that today we will look at how ministry can be organized to withstand such obstacles.

Review the Message . . .

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THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS

We glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations.

OUR VISION

We glorify Christ... (Philippians 3:10)

OUR MISSION

...by making disciples... (Matthew 28:18-20)

Four Components of Our Mission:

Share the Word.

Show the Word.

Teach the Word.

Serve the World.

OUR GOAL

...of all nations (Psalm 67:1-2).

OUR VALUES

Biblical Proclamation (Acts 2:42)

Sacrificial Care (Acts 2:42)

Wholehearted Worship (Acts 2:42)

Desperate Prayer (Acts 2:42)

Exponential Multiplication (Acts 2:47)

OUR STRATEGY

Biblical

Simple

Intentional

Reproducible

Cross-Cultural

Radical

THE WIN: IMPACT THE WORLD

A church with this vision, mission, goal, values, and strategy will produce world-impacting disciple-makers.

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Remind learners that this particular sermon is somewhat of a summary of previous studies on the Gospel, making disciples, and living radically. The above outline is the outcome of those in-depth studies and how they apply to The Church at Brook Hills.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Exodus 33:14-16. Remind learners that this passage is the culmination of Moses' pleading for God's presence to remain with the people of God. Although in Verse 14, God consents to keep His presence with Moses, he continues to plead that God remain with the entire community.
- Why did Moses insist that God keep His presence with the entire people of Israel? What was significant to the world to him?
- Invite three volunteers to read Philippians 3:10, Matthew 28:18-20, and Psalm 67:1-2. How do these passages influence the following statement: "We glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations."
- Read Acts 2:42, 47. How does this New Testament church influence the values of a contemporary church?
- Based on these passages and others from previous studies, does God clearly outline His purpose for the Church?

Application . . .

- How do we often operate as individuals instead of as a community in the typical North American Church?
- How does a typical North-American mindset of independence contribute to our tendency to avoid being part of a true community?
- Keeping in mind the passage from Exodus, how can we better glorify Christ through the body of Christ?
- What role should Scripture, specifically the Gospel, play in shaping the vision, mission, values, and strategy of a church?
- Why should the Gospel influence the way that we "do" church? What is the danger in developing our own values and strategies apart from God's Word?
- What should be the criteria for implementing an activity or event in the church? In our lives? (Does it fuel the mission of the church? Is it the "best way" to fuel the mission of the church?)
- How would our churches and lives be different if those criteria were followed?

The following outline is the "fleshing out" of the strategy of The Church at Brook Hills based upon the Gospel and its impact on the church. It is also the result of the previous in-depth studies and how the Word of God dictates the mission of the Church.

STRATEGIC NON-NEGOTIABLES

BIBLICAL...We align all of our plans with the Word of God.

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- We are not creating plans and asking God to bless them.
- We are aligning with the plans He has already promised to bless.

Application . . .

- Do we truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God? Do we truly trust it? How do we demonstrate or not demonstrate this truth in the church and in our lives?
- If God has outlined His plans for spreading the Gospel, how should we align with those plans?
- Can programs/events/activities be a part of the strategy to make disciples? What are the biblical criteria for determining how programs/events/activities fit into God's plan?
- What is the danger in making and implementing good plans that aren't God's plans?
- Is it possible for good plans and programs to keep us from God's Plan, making disciples of all nations?

INTENTIONAL...We purposefully equip people to make disciples of all nations.

- The success of the church is not dependent on creating the best programs; the success of the church is dependent on building the best people.
- Therefore, church leaders are equippers, not event planners.
- Church leaders do not exist to provide services; they exist to serve people.
- The success of our mission rises and falls on leadership development.

Application . . .

- Ephesians 4 indicates that church leaders equip the people of God to be involved in His work. How does this biblical truth differ from the way that many of us view leadership in the church?
- What then is the role of church members?
- How would our view of the church change if we all viewed ourselves as leaders or leaders-in-training?
- Are we ignoring responsibility to the lost if we fail to step up as leaders?

REPRODUCIBLE...We organize our ministries and maximize our resources for rapid multiplication of the Gospel.

- What if God chose to add 10,000 people to the Kingdom this year in Birmingham?
 - Would we be ready to support such growth?
- We are currently organized for routine addition.
- We must be organized for rapid multiplication.
- Brook Hills is not a place of ministry; Brook Hills is a base of ministry.
 - We must eliminate all references to the church as a building from our vocabularies!
- We must become decreasingly dependent on ministries that require large budgets and large buildings.

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Application . . .

- Judging by the way that we currently are organized, do we expect God to multiply our ministries?
- Do we really want our ministry to be multiplied if it means we will have to change the way do things, or our friendships, or even our comfort level?
- Why is the idea of a reproducible ministry foreign to many of us?
- What would happen to our ministries if suddenly we were scattered around the city with no buildings or budget?

CROSS-CULTURAL...Everything we do at Brook Hills, we do ultimately for the sake of God's glory in all nations.

- We are intentional about penetrating various cultures with the Gospel through various means.
- In order to be effective in and equipped for cross-cultural ministry, we focus our energy here on Gospel ministry that transcends culture.
- At the same time, we wisely and responsibly contextualize ministry methods in view of the culture around us.

Application . . .

- After spending a short time in other cultures, it is evident that some cultures out there are vastly different from our own.
- Why do we often think that we can lead a culture to 'do church' in the same way that we do it in our own culture?
- If we truly believe that we are all commanded to make disciples of all nations, why would it be important to learn how to do disciple-making in a way that crosses cultures?
- Was Jesus' method of disciple-making cross cultural?
- Why is contextualizing ministry also important for us as we make disciples here and in different cultures?

SIMPLE...We focus all our resources on a straightforward process aimed at producing world-impacting disciple-makers.

- Three Primary Activities...
 - Worship Gatherings that glorify Christ.
 - Small Groups that are making disciples.
 - Short-Term Missions that impacts the world.
- Three Primary Levels of Support...
 - Assimilation
 - Administration
 - Communication
- In this process, we set free the people of God in the power of the Spirit of God to accomplish the mission of God for the glory of God.

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Application . . .

- If God's command to us is to make disciples, why would we spend time and resources doing anything differently?
- Do you ever feel as if the church prevents us from doing ministry because of its organization or programs?
- Do you ever feel like we don't have time to go and make disciples?
- How can a simple organization and process help to set us free to accomplish the mission of Christ?

RADICAL...We are willing to risk everything to accomplish our mission.

- For the sake of the lost.
- For the sake of the poor.
- For the sake of the church.
- Ultimately for the sake of Christ.

Application . . .

- How important is making disciples of all nations to us?
- How important is obeying God's Word to us?
- What is more important to us than Christ?
- What would it take for us to be willing to give up everything for Christ?
- How could our small group join together to effectively make disciples locally and globally this next year?