

## Small Group Guide GREATER WORKS

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 3, 2013*

*John 5:16-29*

---

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.)*

### **Message Outline**

#### **Greater Works John 5:16-29**

#### **The Church at Brook Hills**

- Where we've been the last month: Faith Family
  - We glorify God by making disciples of all nations.
- Where we're going the next two months: Threads
  - Greater Works (February 3)
  - Gospel Threads Explored (February 10, 17, 24, March 3, 10)
  - Gospel Threads Illustrated (March 17, 24)
  - Easter (March 31)
  - Beginning New Life in Christ (April 7)

#### **The Work of the Father and the Son**

- Jesus knew that God the Father was working.
- Jesus knew that apart from the Father, He could do nothing.
- Jesus looked and listened to know where and how the Father was working.

## Small Group Guide GREATER WORKS

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 3, 2013*

*John 5:16-29*

---

- Jesus joined the Father wherever and however He was working.
- Jesus knew that the Father involved Him in His work because the Father loved Him.
- Jesus knew that the Father's work in Him had eternal ramifications.

### **The Work of the Spirit in the Christian**

- Be aware...
  - God is already at work in the lives of people around you.
- Be available...
  - God desires to include you in His work.
- Be alert...
  - Look and listen for evidence of God at work.
- Be active...
  - Sacrifice your agenda each day to join God wherever and however He is working.
- Be amazed...
  - Remember that God has involved you in His work not because He needs you, but because He loves you.
- Be assured...
  - God's work in and through your life will bear fruit that will last forever.

### *Digging Deeper*

This sermon series emphasizes personal evangelism, which will likely cause many believers to feel uncomfortable because of unfaithfulness in sharing the gospel, because of a fear of man, and because of not grasping the greatness and worthiness of God. If this is an area in which you struggle, identify why and think through steps you can take this week to grow in faithfulness with regard to evangelism. Also, confess your unfaithfulness to God, for not sharing the gospel is a sin – a sin that affects the eternity of others. Pray for boldness and wisdom as you facilitate your small group and as you train each other in how to share the gospel.

Challenge those in the small group to identify their fears with regard to evangelism, to pray for God to work in their own hearts, and to think through steps they can take in the following week to develop in this area. For each of the reasons why you balk at sharing the gospel, identify Scripture that you can rehearse to yourself. For example, if not knowing how to begin conversations about spiritual matters hinders you from sharing, search Scripture for verses that address such matters such as Colossians 4:3-4, where Paul asks believers to pray that God would open the door for them to declare Christ and to speak clearly. Such passages guide us and remind us of truth to claim when faced with fear or the temptation to be silent about the gospel. Also, think through conversation starters and common questions that you could ask that could lead a conversation to spiritual topics. It may feel unnatural and unnerving to witness, but the Great Commission is not optional for the believer.

Utilize the "How Will I Share God's Love as a Witness in the World" portion of the Personal Disciple-Making Plan during this sermon series as a means of accountability and as a guide to prayer. If small group members have not completed a Personal Disciple-Making Plan, encourage them to do so or to at least respond this next week to the following three questions:

- **Who?** Take some time to write down the names of three, five, or maybe ten unbelievers God has placed in your life. Then begin praying specifically for God, through the power of His Spirit, to draw them to His salvation and to use you to share the gospel with them.
- **How?** Think through how, in the context of where you live, work, and play, and with the people God has put around you, you can begin to speak intentionally about God's character, man's sin, Christ's provision, and our need to respond to that provision.

## Small Group Guide GREATER WORKS

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 3, 2013*

*John 5:16-29*

---

- **When?** It's wise to consider how you can actively show Christ's love by creating opportunities to tell people about Jesus. Think about the people you identified above and how you can specifically and deliberately create opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Also, encourage those in your small group to be as specific as possible with their responses to the questions above. Have the small group members share the evangelism portion of the plan either with the whole group or with a smaller portion of people in the group. Make it a weekly exercise in small group to share with each other how you each were able to weave gospel threads into your conversations with unbelievers in the past week and how the individuals responded. Pray for all of the people encountered in these conversations and for God's Spirit to give them understanding and to draw them closer to Himself. While such an exercise may step on people's toes, it creates accountability, encourages the Body regarding how God is working, and provides an opportunity for us to learn from each other regarding how to respond to people's questions and ways to share the gospel with different types of people.

While the command to share the gospel is clear and believers often know *to* do this, many struggle with *how* to do it. Ask your small group what questions they have regarding how to share the gospel. While sharing the gospel may sound like some big, hard thing to do, break down actions steps into small, manageable portions. For example, if I am not regularly around unbelievers, then one action step is to think through where I can go or what I can do to regularly encounter lost people. A following action step would be to follow through and actually try some of the things that I listed. For example, you could frequent a particular coffee shop on a particular day/time in order to build relationships with people that work that particular shift, or you could regularly take your children to the same playground in order to meet other parents whom you could get to know.

As a small group, also think through what to say, how to respond if someone asks a question that you cannot answer, how to respond if someone says they do *not* want to follow Jesus, how to respond if someone says they *do* want to trust in Jesus, how to begin conversations about spiritual matters, etc. Use Scripture as your go-to resource for what to do and how to do it. The Gospels and Acts are particularly ripe with examples of how Jesus and early believers witnessed.

### *Message Summary*

Following the *Faith Family* sermon series where we walked through what it means to be a member of the church, *Threads* will challenge and equip us to actively engage in disciple-making by leading unsaved people to Jesus. In John 5:16-29, Jesus describes the work of the Father and the Son. God seeks to restore people to a right relationship with Him, and He works in people's hearts by convicting them of sin and by teaching them truth. God chooses to involve believers in His plan to communicate the gospel to sinners, and as the Son depended on the Father to tune in to how He was working in people's hearts, we too must rely on God as we look and listen for how He is at work and as we share with the lost. God calls us to join Him in His mission. For Christ, participating in God's mission cost Him His life, and for us, committing to follow Christ requires us to sacrifice our desires and lives and to prioritize investing in people for the sake of the gospel. God calls us to evangelize and to make disciples not because He needs us but because He loves us, and His work in and through His people will bear eternal fruit.

### *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?).

- Do you even feel burdened for the lost? Is sharing the gospel a regular part of your life? If not, why? Confess this to God and pray for Him to give you a greater understanding of who He is and of the eternal destiny of the lost.
- How could your small group and the church better equip you to share the good news of salvation?

## Small Group Guide GREATER WORKS

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 3, 2013*

*John 5:16-29*

---

- What fears do you have regarding evangelism? What does Scripture say regarding those fears, God's character, and man's eternity?
- Read John 14:10, 26-28; 15:26; 16:5-15; and 17:20-23. How does the Holy Spirit equip believers to evangelize?
- Since God is at work in the hearts of people around us, how can you tune your heart to be sensitive to how God is working? How would your life look if you truly believed that God is already at work in the hearts of people around you?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism? How do you rely on the Spirit and not yourself in evangelism?
- If the Spirit of God works in people's hearts and if God chooses those who will be saved, why should believers share the gospel with the lost?
- How do you know whom the Holy Spirit is drawing to Himself and in whom He is working?
- In John 5:19, Jesus remarks that He can do nothing apart from the Father, and in John 15:1-5, He expresses to the disciples that they can do nothing unless they abide in Him. How are you growing in intimacy in your relationship with God? How well do you know His voice? Describe your time in the Word. How are you studying Scripture? With what frequency are you in the Word? What is God currently teaching you through your personal study of Scripture? What does your communication with God through prayer currently look like? What steps can you take this week to grow closer to God?
- How can your small group and faith family help you grow closer to God?
- How can you join God in His work this week? How can you intentionally make yourself more available to be around unsaved people? How can you cultivate relationships with them? How do you typically respond when opportunities to share arise? Do you even recognize when such opportunities come your way?
- Identify 3-10 people who are lost and with whom you can share the gospel. Pray for the salvation of each of these people, and pray for opportunities to weave gospel threads into your conversations with them.
- What is God calling you to sacrifice in order to join God in His mission? What hinders you from participating in His work? What do you need to rearrange in your life this week to make evangelism a priority?
- How is it evidence of God's love that He chooses to include believers in His work? How should this transform our attitudes regarding evangelism and service? What hinders you from feeling amazed that God involves you in Kingdom work?

### **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 ... (from our worship guide)**

- *Church:* Praise the Father for His plan of redemption manifest in the Son and witnessed by the Spirit. Thank God for those in your life who proclaimed the gospel

## Small Group Guide GREATER WORKS

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 3, 2013*

*John 5:16-29*

---

to you that you might respond in repentance and faith. Pray for those around you with whom you desire to share the gospel. Ask the Spirit to be working in their lives, preparing them to hear and respond. Pray for God to grant you opportunities to share. Ask Him for strength and boldness to maximize the opportunities with which He presents you.

- *Local:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills' Hispanic Ministry. This ministry meets every Sunday morning for worship and Bible study at a campus on Highway 41. We are also praying for Brook Hills Hispanic Church and Eduardo Torres, Pastor.
- *Global:* This week we are praying for field partners engaging unreached people groups through the Tree of Life program. The Tree of Life program (TOL) focuses on training church leaders and pastors to plant healthy churches throughout South Asia. The Church at Brook Hills has been able to partner with and help provide deeper theological training and practical leader training for the networks of new house churches in hopes of maintaining and multiplying viable New Testament churches.