

Message Discussion Guide

THE IMPORTANCE OF COVENANT IN COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

March 15, 2009

Ephesians 1:22-23

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

Stories of divisions in the American church are far too common. Churches splitting over musical styles, building proposals, secondary theological matters, racial differences, social class distinctions, and even carpet colors are sickening – to man, yes – even more so to God. By definition the church is to be unified.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. –Ephesians 2:19-22

Discuss some examples of how those in your group have witnessed or experienced division within the church.

- What were the causes of those divisions? What were the heart issues behind what cause these divisions?
- How could those divisions have been avoided?

Explain that in this lesson you will discuss the importance and urgency for the church to be unified as well as the uniting factor of God's grace in Christ.

Option 2

All people have to submit to an authority at some point in their lives. Sometimes submission to authority is done joyfully and sometimes begrudgingly. Some people have an overwhelming desire and need to be led while others rebel against authority any chance they get. Discuss some examples of authority figures that have impacted the lives of those in your group.

Have participants identify an authority (other than God) to which they have gladly submitted and one to which they have rebelled against. Then discuss the reasons why.

- Why is it easier to submit to some authorities than others?
- Why is it often difficult for you to personally submit to Christ's authority?

Explain that in this lesson you will discuss what it means to be filled with the power of Christ in terms of His authority in the church and the church's authority in the world.

Review the Message . . .

The Ramifications of Covenant for Community...

- We have been united by the grace of Christ.
 - What we once were...
 - We were dead in sin.
 - We were living in darkness.
 - We were children of disobedience .
 - We were captivated by sinful desire.
 - We were doomed to hell.
 - What He has done...
 - The Father planned our salvation.
 - The Son purchased our salvation.
 - The Spirit preserves our salvation.
 - Who we now are...
 - We are His body .
 - We are His building .
 - We are His bride .

Discussion...

- Ask someone to read Ephesians 2:1-3.
- What are some insights we can gain about a person's condition before God saves him based on Paul's use of the word "dead" in vs. 1 instead of words like "sick" or "injured"?
- Discuss some ways that some in your group have lived "*when [they] followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air*". [Note: if your group struggles with transparency on this level, help them along by sharing from your own experience].
- Ask someone to read Ephesians 2:4-5 and Ephesians 1:3-14.
- In both of these texts, who is the active participant in saving people / the church? Take some time to give examples of what God has done according to these texts.
 - Ephesians 1:4 – God chose us
 - Ephesians 2:5 – God made us alive
 - Ephesians 1:7 – Through Christ's blood we have forgiveness of sins
 - Etc.
- According to Ephesians 1:3-14, what was God's purpose in salvation?
- According to Ephesians 2:4-5, what was God's motivation for the salvation of the church?
- In Ephesians 1:13-14, what important shift in language does he make that indicates there are no "second-class" members of the body of Christ? [Think about pronouns]

Application...

Message Discussion Guide

THE IMPORTANCE OF COVENANT IN COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

March 15, 2009

Ephesians 1:22-23

- How can people live as “children of disobedience” even while they are involved in very religious activities? Why does religious activity apart from the grace of God in Christ often blind people from the reality of the darkness in which they’re living?
- How should the unifying factor of the church’s former state of “deadness” in sin and what God has done in Christ to save us impact how we respond to being sinned against by members in the church?
- What are some implications of God’s activity in salvation when compared to the passivity of sinners dead in their sins? [Note: This has become one of the most highly debated topics in the church today. Be careful not to create division in asking this question!!! The question will not be resolved completely.]
- Does the mystery surrounding God’s saving work typically cause frustration or praise? Does it cause division or unity? Why does it cause so much frustration and division? Why should this mystery instead cause us to praise and be unified?
- Discuss how group participants have witnessed or experienced the “second class” treatment of members of Christ’s body. Why did / does this occur? Why is it sin? How can this behavior be changed? [See James 2:1-13 as a guide for answering these questions]
- We have been _____ filled _____ with the _____ power _____ of Christ.
 - Christ has _____ all _____ authority.
 - He is the risen _____ Savior _____.
 - He is the exalted _____ King _____.
 - He is the sovereign _____ Lord _____.
 - The church has the _____ fullness _____ of Christ.
 - All the authority in all the earth belongs to the _____ church _____.

Discussion...

- Read the following verses:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way
–Ephesians 1:22-23

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. –Ephesians 3:19

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. –Ephesians 4:13

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him –Colossians 1:19

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form –Colossians 2:9

- What does “fullness” in these verses mean?

Message Discussion Guide

THE IMPORTANCE OF COVENANT IN COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

March 15, 2009

Ephesians 1:22-23

- Read Ephesians 1:19-23. How is Christ's authority described in these verses? Give some examples of His authority.
- According to vv. 20-22, what was the goal of the resurrection and by implication, our salvation?
- Read Colossians 2:9-10. What does it mean for us, the church, to have the fullness of Christ? See also 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Application...

- If Christ has all authority in heaven and earth, as exalted Lord of God's creation what authority does He have in your life? If He is Lord, why then do we often not obey Him?
- Based on the texts you have reviewed why is it incorrect for someone to claim to be part of the church, the body of Christ, but not recognize Christ as the authority in his life?
- If we are unable to accept and walk in Christ's authority and divine resources, what issue(s) of unbelief may we be embracing? What promises do we doubt; what lies do we believe?
- We are now a display of the glory of Christ.
 - God's design is to use the body of His Son to show the glory of His Son to all creation.
 - God says, "Look at the church and you will see my Son."

Discussion...

- According to Matthew 28:18-20 and Ephesians 1:23, for what reason has Christ given the church His authority in the earth?
- Read Ephesians 3:7-11.
- What is the "manifold wisdom of God" that is to be made known through the church?
- In Ephesians 3:10, who are the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms"? See also 1 Peter 1:12, Luke 15:10, and Ephesians 6:12.

Application...

- What are the implications of the church's authority in Christ on completing the Great Commission? On the life of a believer who thinks he has no need for the church? On the idea that "church" is a place, a social organization, or a hobby?
- How is God's glory most clearly displayed to creation through the life of one follower of Christ? [Reflect on Ephesians 1:22-23 to answer this question]
- What is the significance of God's wisdom and work through the church as a means of "educating" the angels and demons?

The Reason for Covenant in Community...

Because we want to celebrate His grace,
we want to demonstrate His power,
and we want to communicate His glory clearly to all the world.