

Message Discussion Guide

THE NEW COVENANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

August 22, 2010

Jeremiah 31:31-40

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

Ask your group: What is the connection between behavior and heart attitude? Can behavior be changed without changing the heart? How can heart attitudes be changed? Share about a time or period of time when your behavior or perspective changed significantly and explain why.

Option 2

Ask your group: In what ways do people all over the earth approach religion on their own terms or in their own strength? Does the world admire this approach to religion? If you can do "religion" on your own does this honor God? How does American Christianity in the Bible Belt fit into this "fleshly" approach?

Review the Message . . .

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Jeremiah 31:31-40

The Old Covenant...

- Adam: The covenant of creation.
- Noah: The covenant of preservation.
- Abraham: The covenant of promise.
- Moses: The covenant of law.
- David: The covenant of the kingdom.

The Problem in the Old Covenant...

- The people of God were idolatrous.
- The people of God were immoral.
- The people of God were incapable of anything different.

Discussion . . .

- Briefly review the covenants listed above. What roles do the law, knowledge, and grace of God play in each one?
- How does idolatry lead to immorality?

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- Give some examples of how idolatry can be passive, neglecting the worship of the one true God?
- In the Old Testament, what was the pattern of God's people regarding sin/idolatry? Even when they repented to what did they quickly return? As we read in the Book of Jeremiah, to what did their stubborn resistance to repentance ultimately lead?

Application . . .

- How does the sin cycle of Israel mirror our own hearts? When we sin to whom should we turn? Does God tire of forgiving our sins? Can God replace the idols of our hearts with love for Him?
- Without His Spirit and a new heart, are we capable of obeying Christ?
- Does the world teach us that we are inclined toward evil or good? How can we remain committed to the truth?
- How can a proper view of our wicked hearts lead us to the goodness of the gospel?

The New Covenant...

- Christ: The covenant of _____ consummation _____.

The Promise of the New Covenant...

- We will receive a new _____ covenant _____.
 - The law of God...
 - Old covenant: Written on _____ stone tablets _____.
 - New covenant: Written on _____ human hearts _____.
 - Our worst enemy: fleshly _____ religion _____.
 - Our greatest need: spiritual _____ regeneration _____.
 - Obedience to the law is not a _____ condition _____ for entering the new covenant.
 - Obedience to the law is a _____ promise _____ we experience in the new covenant.

Discussion . . .

- Read Jeremiah 31:31-40.
- How is the New Covenant a fulfillment of the earlier covenants?
- Can laws change behavior? Can laws change hearts?
- Read Jeremiah 17:1, 9. What is the natural condition of our hearts? Why do we need new hearts?
- How would you describe "fleshly" religion? Why is it so easy for us to fall into this trap? What, if anything, is the difference between "fleshly" Christianity and other religions? What place does pride have in "fleshly" religion?
- Would obedience flowing from a changed heart be forced or more natural?

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- What does it mean that obedience to the law is a promise of the new covenant?

Application . . .

- Why is spiritual regeneration foundational to true new covenant Christianity? Why is it sometimes overlooked, ignored, or misunderstood?
- How does seeing obedience as a promise of the new covenant rather than as a condition to entering it change your view of the Christian life?
- What are some evidences of a new heart?
- How can an emphasis on making disciples steer us away from an unbiblical view of conversion (ie, filling out a card, walking the aisle, praying a prayer without subsequent life change)? Is conversion to Christ a one-time event only or is it more than that?
- How would you share the truth of spiritual regeneration with a “good” follower of another religion?
 - The knowledge of God...
 - Old covenant: We relate to God through flawed men.
 - Limited admission to the presence of God.
 - Distant encounter of the glory of God.
 - New covenant: We are reconciled to God through a flawless man.
 - Unlimited access to the presence of God.
 - Direct experience of the glory of God.

Discussion . . .

- How or through whom did God’s people relate to Him before Christ came? Ask for examples (prophets, priest, kings) from the Old Testament.
- Read Jeremiah 31:34. Who, among God’s people, will know the Lord?
- Read Hebrews 4:16 and 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. In Christ, what kind of access do we have to God today?
- Who is our prophet, priest, and king? How does He function in those roles over us?

Application . . .

- How do we take for granted our unlimited access to God? Do we spend time in prayer and in His Word as we should?
- How do we sometimes neglect our privilege and pass off the responsibility of hearing from God to others? (the pastors, others)
- Why do we sometimes act as if certain people have greater access to God than others?
- How is knowing God in Christ superior to all religion?
 - The grace of God...

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- Old covenant: Persistent sacrifices through which God patiently passes over sin.
- New covenant: A perfect sacrifice through which God permanently removes our sin.
 - He forgives all our sin.
 - He forgets all our sin.

Discussion . . .

- Read Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 10:11-18. How did the Old Testament system of sacrifices evidence God's grace? What is the better way He has opened to us now?
- Read Jeremiah 31:34 (second half). In the new covenant, has the sin issue been dealt with once and for all?

Application . . .

- How can the finality of forgiveness in the new covenant encourage us in our daily lives?
 - For the Christian, how is Jeremiah 31:34 an antidote to shame and guilt?
 - What does the grace of God offer that no works-based religion can?
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- We will comprise a new community.
 - We will anticipate a new city.
 - For them: In light of the words of Jeremiah, look forward to the restoration of Jerusalem.
 - For us: In light of the work of Jesus, long for the re-creation of a new Jerusalem.

Discussion . . .

- Read Jeremiah 31:38-40. This passage should be read in terms of an historical fulfillment (the rebuilding of Jerusalem) and a spiritual fulfillment (the new and eternal Jerusalem of God). How long will the rebuilt city endure?
- Read Jeremiah 4:2 and 12:16. Who will be included in the new community and the new city?
- Read Revelation 21:1-4. What will this new city be like?
- What unites this new community? Does it transcend boundaries like ethnicity and nationality?

Application . . .

- How should the local church today reflect the diversity (all nations) and unity (one Lord) of the new covenant community?
- How can we as a local church make sure we remain concerned for all nations?
- How should a longing for the new Jerusalem purify our lives now? How should it focus us on making disciples of all nations?