

## Message Discussion Guide A DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 16, 2010

Isaiah 62:1-7

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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**

Invite learners to describe things/events/circumstances that keep them from sleeping at night. Then, encourage them to describe something that they couldn't keep quiet about. After a few moments, explain that today we will take a look at the things that kept Isaiah awake and spurred him from keeping silent.

#### **Option 2**

Invite learners to discuss briefly their ideas of why the contemporary church rarely talks of fasting. After a couple of moments, explain that today we will look at why Christ-followers fast and pray.

### **Review the Message . . .**

Please note that this discussion guide is based on Dr. David Platt's sermon "A Church Whose God Cannot Rest," originally taught on January 27, 2008. You may view and listen to this sermon at <http://www.brookhills.org/media/series/a-church-whose-god-cannot-rest>

#### **Why Are We Fasting and Praying?**

- Because we hunger for God's glory to be restored in His church.
- Because we hunger for God's praise to resound among the nations.
- Because we hunger for God's Son to return for His people.
  - Therefore, we will not give God rest from . . .
    - Our praising.
      - God, we will exalt Your name!
    - Our confessing.
      - God, we will reflect holiness!
    - Our praying.
      - God, we will bombard Your throne!
    - Our working.
      - God, we will accomplish Your mission!

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#### Discussion

- Note that fasting is never commanded in the New Testament but is described many times such as in Acts 13 as a practice of the New Testament church. Read Matthew 6:16-18. What does Jesus' teaching about fasting assume about its place in the life of a Christ-follower?
- Enlist a learner to read Isaiah 62:1-7. Although we do not know if Isaiah is fasting in this passage, describe his approach to God. How does the seriousness of his prayer inform the reader of his complete dependence on God?
- Explain that the background for this passage is one of God's judgment for His people. Isaiah was prophesying during the time of a divided nation: the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was being conquered by Assyria and taken into captivity because of their sin, and Isaiah knew that the same judgment would befall the Southern Kingdom (Judah) by Babylon in the future.
- Looking at verse 4, how do Isaiah's desires for Israel contrast with the reality of their current/coming judgment?
- According to verses 1 and 6, why can Isaiah neither keep silent nor sleep?
- In verse 1, what is Isaiah's desire for Jerusalem and Zion? What does this desire reveal about Jerusalem's current relationship with God?
- Looking at verses 2 and 7, why is the righteousness of Jerusalem so important? How does it affect God's reputation to the surrounding nations?
- Explain that in verse 6, the term for "watchmen" is not one simply of being a guard but of a person who is looking out for the friend of an ally who will come to help them.
- Inform learners that the nations surrounding Jerusalem would consider their judgment to be the result of their God forsaking them. What do verses 4-6 demonstrate about Isaiah's hope in a Redeemer for Jerusalem?
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 9:14-15. What did Jesus indicate was a purpose for fasting? How does this truth tie in with Isaiah's imagery of a watchman looking for help?
- In verse 7, to whom does Isaiah beg to restore Jerusalem? What does Isaiah call on the watchmen to do so that God cannot rest until Jerusalem is restored?

#### Application . . .

- What in our lives do we want more than God? How do our lives demonstrate that He is not the greatest desire in our lives?
- How often are we stirred by the lack of purity/righteousness in our lives and in our local body of believers? Why?
- Why should we be dissatisfied with the status quo of local churches today? How do our words and actions reveal that we are looking for a church full of the power of God and His Word over one full of comfortable programs?
- Are we more frustrated with any lack of programming or the lack of spiritual maturity within the Body?
- How do we encourage each other to address sins in our lives?
- How can fasting expose desires and cravings that aren't godly in our lives?

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- Why should we be so concerned with our own righteousness that we would deprive ourselves of basic needs for a time?
- How do our hearts reveal a strong desire for God's glory to be made known among the nations?
- When do we tend to give up praying for something? Why do we give up? What does giving up reveal about our belief in God and in prayer/fasting?
- How is fasting and praying not a passive part of accomplishing God's mission? How could fasting become an excuse to become passive in God's work? How can we avoid that danger?
- How can fasting help us to live in a way that expresses that we really want God, and we want Him more than anything else?
- What's the relationship between fasting and resting in the gospel moment by moment of each day? Is Christ enough for us?

Remind learners that in light of the call to fast and pray, David gave us some specific requests to pray about as we seek God in place of other cravings:

- **Praying for India...**
  - **Pray for unreached peoples to hear and receive the Gospel for the first time (over 600 million people in Northern India, less than 0.5% evangelical Christian).**
  - **Pray for indigenous church leaders to be trained and equipped for Gospel ministry.**
  - **Pray for tens of thousands who will receive food, water, and medical care through local churches.**
  - **Pray for millions of people who will have access to the Bible in their own language for the first time.**
  - **Pray for persecuted brothers and sisters in militant Muslim and Hindu regions.**
- **Praying for East Lake and Gate City...**
  - **Pray for individuals and families who are moving to this part of the city to live out the Gospel there.**
  - **Pray for small groups who are serving in a variety of ways and the individuals and families whom they will serve.**
  - **Pray for healthy partnerships with organizations, schools, and churches.**
  - **Pray for ministry to orphans and widows.**
  - **Pray for outreach initiatives focused on needs in the community.**
- **Praying for Ourselves...**
  - **Pray for our faith family to grow in Christ as we walk through the Radical Experiment.**
  - **Pray for boldness in sharing the Gospel with those who don't know Christ in Birmingham.**

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- **Pray for teams of people in our faith family who will travel around the world with the Gospel this summer.**
- **Pray for the glory of Christ to be exalted in singles, married couples, children, and families.**
- **Pray for purity and holiness throughout our faith family.**