

## Small Group Guide IN THE BEGINNING

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*January 5, 2014*

*Genesis 1:26-31; Matthew 4:18-22*

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciplinarians, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

## GETTING STARTED

### *Before Small Group*

With the “For the Love of God” sermon series, the Small Group Guide will include a list of the readings from the previous week as well as a “Where We Are In The Story” portion to give context and big picture understanding about the Old Testament and the New Testament readings. The main goal of this two-year journey is for people to read the Word consistently. As a Small Group Leader, encourage those in your small group to follow the reading plan, which can be downloaded from [brookhills.org](http://brookhills.org). Weekly sermons will focus on current passages from the reading plan, and the Small Group Guide will continue to provide discussion questions and aids relating to the weekly sermon.

### *Weekly Readings for January 1-5*

<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
<i>Genesis 1</i>	<i>Genesis 2</i>	<i>Genesis 3</i>	<i>Genesis 4</i>	<i>Genesis 5</i>
<i>Matthew 1</i>	<i>Matthew 2</i>	<i>Matthew 3</i>	<i>Matthew 4</i>	<i>Matthew 5</i>

### *Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Genesis)*

As the first book of the Bible, Genesis introduces God as the all-powerful Creator who cares about His creation, and it describes God’s creation of the universe, its contents, people, and the institution of marriage (Gen. 1-2). Genesis 1-2 answers the existential question “Who am I?” (made in the image of God), and Genesis 3 explains what is wrong with the world. Written by Moses when Israel was wandering in the wilderness, Genesis provides the history of God’s covenant with His people by telling about Adam and his descendants, which include Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Structure:** Genesis is organized into ten sections (Gen. 2:4-4:26; 5:1-6:8; 6:9-9:29; 10:1-11:9; 11:10-26; 11:27-25:11; 25:12-18; 25:19-35:29; 36:1-37:1; 37:2-50:26), and each section opens with the phrase “these are the generations of” and serves as the beginning of a genealogy. The first person mentioned in the genealogy (“these are the generations of Adam”) describes the subject of the following narrative section.

**Theme:** In Genesis 50:20, Joseph’s words highlight the central theme of Genesis – that God takes evil and transforms it for His glory. This truth is in play in Genesis 1-5 when God promises salvation after Adam and Eve sin in the Garden of Eden and explains to them the consequences of their sin (Gen. 3:15). Throughout the book, we also see the theme of blessing. God blesses His creation in Gen. 1:22-2:3 and enriches that which was good beyond its normal quality. God also blessed the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), so their family line would multiply and become the covenant people of God (Gen. 12-50). In contrast, those who opposed God’s people or plan would face judgment and separation from the place of blessing.

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### *Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (Matthew)*

Matthew is the first of four Gospels that tell about the life of Christ. As one of the twelve disciples (Matt. 9:9-13), Matthew focuses on demonstrating how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. This is why Matthew 1 includes a genealogy that begins with Abraham and includes King David, since the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham's son Judah (Gen. 49:10) and a descendant of King David (2 Sam. 7:12-13). Other fulfilled prophecies in Matthew 1-5 include how the Messiah would be born of a virgin (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14), born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), reside in Egypt (Hosea 11:1), be preceded by a prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah's coming (Isa. 40:3), and minister in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali in Israel (Isa. 9:1-2).

**Structure:** Matthew includes five collections of Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), and each of these sections concludes with a statement saying, "And when Jesus finished these sayings..." The first of these collections begins in Matthew 5 and is called "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5:1-7:29). In it, Jesus teaches His disciples about life in the kingdom of heaven and how to live as His followers.

### *During Small Group*

*Welcome* – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

*Looking Back* – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

*Looking Up* – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

### *Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)*

- *Pray for Our Lives: Ask the Spirit to guide your personal study of God's Word throughout this year, granting you understanding and insight. Pray for God to grow your affections for Him. Ask Him to help you make the most of every opportunity you have to share the gospel with the world around you. Pray we will all grow in love and unity as a faith family. Pray for a way to become more involved in spreading God's glory among the nations this next year. Pray for your small group, for the role you play in your biblical community, or for Him to lead you to one if you don't yet have one.*

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- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for our students and their leaders as they return to classes after the holiday break. We are also praying for Grace Life Baptist Church and Joel Frederick, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for the Ansari, an unreached people group in India. The Ansari are one of the largest unreached people groups in the world with a population just over ten million. They are predominantly artisans by trade and are mostly poor and illiterate. The Ansari are Muslim and practice Islamic laws for life and living, though folk Islamic practices are common. To learn more, visit [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net) and join us this week as we pray for the Ansari of India.*

## MAIN TRUTH

### Message Outline

#### IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis 1:26-31; Matthew 4:18-22

#### In the Beginning of the Old Testament...

- The purpose of our lives...
  - We have been created to enjoy God's grace in a relationship with Him.
  - We have been created to extend God's glory to the ends of the earth.
- The problem in our lives...
  - We have rejected God's Word.
  - We have rebelled against God's authority.
- The promise for our lives...
  - God will send a Redeemer to us.
  - We can be reconciled to Him.

#### In the Beginning of the New Testament...

- We have been called to be disciples of Jesus.
  - To turn from our sin and ourselves.
  - To trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- We have been commissioned to make disciples of Jesus.
  - To proclaim God's grace for others' salvation in Christ.
  - To spread God's glory through the multiplication of the church.

#### In the Beginning of 2014...

- How will I fill my mind with truth?
  - How will I read God's Word?
  - How will I memorize God's Word?
  - How will I learn God's Word from others?
- How will I fuel my affections for God?
  - How will I worship?
  - How will I pray?
  - How will I fast?
  - How will I give?
- How will I share God's love as a witness in the world?

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- Who?
- How?
- When?
- How will I show God's love as a member of the church?
  - Where?
  - What?
- How will I spread God's glory among all peoples?
  - How will I pray for the nations?
  - How will I give to the nations?
  - How will I go to the nations?
- How will I make disciple makers among a few people?
  - How will I bring them in?
  - How will I teach them to obey?
  - How will I model obedience?
  - How will I send them out?

### *Message Summary*

As we start this new sermon series as well as a church-wide Bible reading plan, we examine the beginning of the Old Testament and discover God's purpose for our lives is to enjoy Him and to glorify Him. The beginning of the New Testament reiterates our purpose in Jesus' invitation for us to follow Him and to enter into a relationship with Him. As we turn from ourselves and trust in Him as Savior and Lord, we make disciples of Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and multiplying the church. As we begin 2014, all Christ-followers should consider how they will grow as disciples of Jesus and how they will give their lives this year making disciples of Jesus.

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

### *Digging Deeper*

As we start this new sermon series, encourage those in your small group to participate in the daily Bible readings. The reading plan can be downloaded from [brookhills.org](http://brookhills.org), and over the next two years, our faith family will read through the Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice using this plan. Emphasize that missing a day or two in the reading plan is not grounds for scrapping the whole thing. Instead of giving up or feeling like you have to read all that you have missed, simply pick up with the readings for that particular day. The goal for this series is to help God's people to consistently read God's Word and to apply what they read to their lives.

Walk through the handout "A Simple Guide to Personal Worship," and ensure that everyone in the group is equipped to study Scripture on their own. Ask if anyone in the group has questions about REAP (read, examine, apply, and pray). Highlight that we do not just read God's Word for knowledge; we read for transformation. There should not be an inordinacy between reading and applying God's Word to our lives. Consider setting aside time at the beginning of each small group meeting for group members to share with each other what they are learning from what they are reading. This could be done either as a large group or by breaking into pairs or triads.

For small groups that involve couples and families, discuss the handout "A Simple Guide to Family Worship." What questions do couples have about family worship? What hinders families from making family worship time a priority? How can such roadblocks be addressed? For those that already have family worship time, invite them to share what this looks like in their family. How can families in the group begin incorporating this

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into their family's rhythm? Relay to the group that a Faith Family Worship Guide accompanies each Sunday's sermon and includes ways to discuss the Scripture readings and the sermon with preschoolers, kids, and students. This can be downloaded each week from [brookhills.org/thisweek](http://brookhills.org/thisweek), and hard copies are available at the Adult Small Group Kiosk in the church lobby each Sunday.

For the portion of the sermon under the heading "In the Beginning of 2014," challenge every person in the small group to process through all of these questions and to be as specific as possible with their responses. For example, with memorizing God's Word, what will I memorize, when will I memorize it by, and how will I memorize that verse or passage? Being specific helps us actually do the things we write down. Ask the group if they have any questions about any of the sections in the personal disciple-making plan. Also, ask the group why it is important to think through these questions and to do these actions. What should be our motivation? Our motivation makes the difference between true obedience and legalism.

How will this personal disciple-making plan affect the individuals in your small group, and how will it affect the small group when it comes together? How will you keep each other accountable? There are six sections in the personal disciple-making plan (How will I fill my mind with truth, How will I fuel my affections for God, etc.). One idea for what accountability can look like is to take the next six weeks, and at some point during the group time each week, have group members share with each other (in pairs, large group, smaller groups, etc.) their responses to the questions in one of the sections of the plan. So for next week, the group could discuss how they will fill their minds with truth, read God's Word, memorize God's Word, and learn God's Word from others. After all six sections have been discussed, choose one of these questions and make it a discussion question each week where group members can share with each other how they are doing with fasting, praying for the nations, modeling obedience for those they are discipling, etc. These are just a few ideas, but discuss with your group what accountability should look like in the group.

If anyone in the small group was here in January 2013 when Pastor David challenged our faith family to complete a personal disciple-making plan (it included the same questions as the "In the Beginning of 2014" section of the sermon), encourage them to pull out their plan for 2013 and to process how they have grown this past year, to determine areas in which they still need to grow, and to guide them in thinking through what steps they can take next.

## **NOW WHAT DO WE DO?**

### *Group Discussion & Application*

*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?).*

- Read Genesis 1:26-31 and Matthew 4:18-22. What is God's purpose for our lives? How does this contrast with the world's ideas about people's purpose? How are you living out God's purpose for your life?
- What does it look like to enjoy God? Do you enjoy God and your relationship with Him? Why or why not? What prevents us from enjoying God? Discuss the distinction between enjoying God and enjoying what God has given.
- God desires our joy. What does this mean for our lives? Do you even believe this truth? Why or why not? Discuss how our joy and God's glory are not at odds with each other. How do we glorify God?
- Read Psalm 16:11; 23:1-3; 37:4; 63:1-7; 67; 69:30-33; 70:4. What do these verses tell us about glorifying and enjoying God?
- How does God satisfy us? What part do we play in finding satisfaction in Him? What part does He play?
- Read Genesis 3:1-7. Why did God give Adam and Eve the command about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What does Scripture mean when it talks about the *knowledge* of good and evil?

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God has knowledge of the two without having committed evil Himself. This knowledge has more to do with determining what is good and evil, and when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree, they rejected God as the One who determines good and evil and assumed that responsibility for themselves. How do we see such relativism in our culture? In what ways have we – even as Christ-followers – made ourselves arbiters of truth instead of God and His Word? Why do we reject God’s Word in favor of our own?

- Have small group members practice explaining how God can show both holy love toward sinners and holy wrath due sinners at the same time.
- Read Matthew 4:18-22. Discuss what it means to follow Jesus with regard to both salvation and to daily life.
- The goal in studying Scripture is transformation not to amass information. Why is it important to read the Bible for transformation? How do we work towards this goal? What implications does this have for how we study Scripture, memorize Scripture, how we pray, etc.?
- How do we fuel our affections for God? Why is this important? How do we grow daily in our love for God? Can you look back on 2013 and say that you grew in your love for God this past year? What needs to happen in 2014 for you to grow in your love for God?
- How does fasting fuel our affections for God?
- How does giving tie to our affections? How does it fuel our affections for God? Read Matthew 6:21.
- What should be our motivation for sharing God’s love as a witness in the world?