

Small Group Guide THE GOSPEL AND SEPTEMBER 11

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

September 11, 2011

Selected Scriptures

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to 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 through 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 revisit 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 in our lives:

Sermon Outline

Two Historic (And Personal) Questions...

- Questioning God's greatness: Can He _____ prevent evil?
- Questioning God's goodness: Why does He _____ permit evil?

Four Biblical (And Universal) Truths...

- Evil is tragically _____ real _____. (Job 2:1-10)
 - The existence of evil points to the existence of _____ God _____. (Rom. 2:12-16)
 - If God does not exist, then good and _____ evil _____ do not exist.
- God is supremely _____ great _____.
 - He is sovereign over evil nations and _____ rulers _____. (Dan. 2:20-21; Prov. 21:1, Is. 37:23-29)
 - He is sovereign over the devil and demonic spirits. (Job 2; Mk. 5:6-10)
 - He is sovereign over _____ trials _____ and temptations. (1 Cor. 10:13)
 - He is sovereign over suffering and persecution. (Acts 4:24)
 - He is sovereign over moral atrocities and natural _____ disasters _____. (Job 1-2; 37:10-14)
 - He is sovereign over disease and _____ death _____. (Deut. 32:39; Acts 10:38)
- God is absolutely _____ good _____.
 - He relates to sin in many ways...
 - He _____ prevents _____ sin. (Gen. 20:6; Ps. 19:13; 1 Cor. 10:13)

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- He permits sin. (Ps. 81:11-12; Rom. 1:24)
- He limits sin. (Job 1-2)
- He uses sin. (Gen. 50:19-20)
- He never sins, directly causes sin, or is blamed for sin (in Scripture). (James 1:13-15)
- He relates to good and evil in different ways....
 - Good:
 - Everything that is good is under his sovereignty. (Ps. 107:1; Ez. 33:11)
 - Everything that is good is morally attributed to him. (James 1:17; Rom. 3:10-12)
 - Evil:
 - Everything that is evil is under his sovereignty.
 - Nothing that is evil is morally attributed to him. (Job 1:20-22:10)
 - God is sovereign over sin.
 - We are responsible for sin. (Is. 66:4; Rom 3:12)
- The cross is shockingly glorious.
 - The goodness of God: He is present amidst evil.
 - God ordains the murder of His Son to be the means of our salvation. (Acts 2:22-23)
 - The greatness of God: He is victorious over evil. (Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:55-56)
 - Jesus overcomes the price of sin through the power of resurrection.

Three Practical (And Inevitable) Conclusions...

- Our gospel is true.
 - Jesus deserves our praise.
 - Jesus demands our lives.
- Our mission is urgent.
 - We need to act swiftly.
 - We want to love sacrificially.
 - It will be costly.
 - It will be worth it.
- Our hope is sure.
 - We will forever worship God in his greatness.
 - We will forever enjoy God in his goodness.
 - We will never experience evil again.

Message Summary

There are times in our lives when circumstances can drive us to question everything we believe about God including if there really is a God. These circumstances can range from a national historic event such as September 11, 2001 or personal tragedies and struggles like cancer or death. Two main questions seem to emerge as the most prevalent faith struggles: 1) Is God limited in power to prevent evil? and 2) If God can prevent evil and doesn't, how can He be good?

Scripture is clear that evil does exist in this world and that it is heartbreaking. However, the Word is also clear that God is sovereign over all things, including evil. Although He is not the source of or the cause of evil, He remains sovereign over it. God is also always absolutely good, immeasurably powerful, and eternally holy. He cannot sin, nor does He cause sin. In His good sovereignty, He can prevent, permit, limit, and use sin for His ordained will, but individuals will always be responsible for their decision to sin.

The mystery between God's sovereignty and individual's responsibility merges most profoundly at the cross. God ordained the murder of Jesus through individual's actions to be the means of salvation for all sinners. His sovereign ability was made clear in the power of the resurrection. Therefore, in the face of such a glorious

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gospel, the church can hold firm to the truth of the gospel as they urgently go about the mission of God and anticipate with confident hope His return.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- Why must our theological questions be accompanied by a heart that is softened by the Holy Spirit and made sensitive to the heartbreaking reality of evil?
- What kinds of events of life make us struggle the most in our beliefs about God?
- How do these events ultimately point us to the existence of an absolute sense of right and wrong and a God who is decidedly good?
- Why is the sovereignty of God not jeopardized by the occurrence of evil? Would we be able to truly say that He was the true God, worthy of the worship of the entire world, if He were not entirely sovereign?
- Why would we want to worship a God small enough to be understood by human wisdom? What does it say about us as rebellious people that we need to be able to place God inside our own boundaries?
- What boundaries have we placed on God that we need to remove?
- What impresses us the most about Job's response to the difficulties he was facing in Job 1-2? What about his relationship with God allowed him to remain firm in his convictions while facing tragedy?
- How can we develop the kind of trust that Job had in God?
- A tragedy can increase our trust in God's character or diminish our trust in Him. What makes the difference in our response to tragedies and evil?
- Why is the belief in God's goodness and wisdom essential to trusting in His sovereignty?
- How does Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and His glorious resurrection display a picture of God's sovereignty over evil and His goodness at the same time?
- Even in the midst of questions, how can we make a commitment to confirm the Word of God as the basis of our beliefs and the content of the true gospel? How can such a resolve guide us to respond to questions about God?
- How does the cross drive us to embrace God's urgent mission?
- How do the tragedies of this world also drive us to embrace God's urgent mission?
- How does the cross help us to respond to tragedy with hope?
- How does a clear picture of the consummation of all things described in Revelation 20-22, help us as we face tragedies and evil in this world?
- Knowing theological answers does not take away pain. Keeping this in mind, how can we best respond with the compassion of Christ to others who are experiencing pain?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. 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 the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to 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 message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

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Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from the worship guide)

- ***Lives and Church:*** *Pray that our elders and deacons would exhibit gospel-shaped character and humbly serve for the good of the body and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Pray also that we would earnestly advance and defend the truth of the gospel to all nations.*
- ***Local:*** *This week we are praying for college students in our city, around our state and across this nation as they begin a new semester of school. We are also praying for North Shelby Baptist, Alan Murphy, Pastor.*
- ***Global:*** *This week we are praying for our partners, Sanford and Mary B., serving in East India. We are also praying for Brook Hills Short-Term teams serving in Thailand and South East Asia.*