

## Message Discussion Guide UNSTOPPABLE

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*January 23, 2011*

*Acts 4–8*

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.

### ***Encouragement/Accountability...***

Briefly review last week’s message on Acts 3–4.

Ask small group members how they applied the teaching on boldness to their daily lives. Did their understanding of the saving power of Christ, the sovereign power of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit give them boldness to share the gospel? Rejoice with each other. Share examples. Encourage each other. Apply grace, not guilt, in any case.

### ***Connect . . .***

*Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.*

#### **Option 1**

Dr. Platt began his sermon with this statement: “The purpose of our lives is to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth.” What is your initial reaction to this statement? How does this statement challenge you? How does it embolden you?

#### **Option 2**

What goals in your life can be derailed by sickness, death, or other circumstances beyond your control? What goals, or purposes, cannot be affected by circumstances? Will God’s purposes always be accomplished? What does this suggest about the kinds of goals and purposes we should choose to spend our lives on?

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

#### **UNSTOPPABLE**

Acts 4-8

- O God, give us confidence in \_\_\_\_\_ prayer \_\_\_\_\_.
  - We pray to...
    - The One who is \_\_\_\_\_ in control \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.
    - The One who is \_\_\_\_\_ always faithful \_\_\_\_\_ to His Word.
  - We pray for...
    - The \_\_\_\_\_ honor \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.
    - The \_\_\_\_\_ boldness \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.
    - The \_\_\_\_\_ advancement \_\_\_\_\_ of the kingdom.

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#### Head . . .

- Read Acts 4:23–31. Why should we have confidence in prayer? Read these verses as follow-up: Psalm 22:27; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 47:9; Psalm 66:4.
- To what will God always be faithful? How should this fact inform our prayers? How should this encourage us to know His Word?
- Based upon reading Acts 4:23–31, what should be the focus of our prayers? If we were more concerned for Christ's honor, the church's boldness, and the kingdom's advancement, how would that affect our daily prayers?
- Should we bring all our requests before God? Why? How can we form our prayers in a more Christ-centered, gospel-advancing manner?

#### Heart . . .

- Ask small group participants to reflect silently on these three questions: Is prayer a priority in your life? How often do you pray? What is the typical content of your prayers?
- Do we pray about what is important to us? What kinds of outcomes do we usually pray for? (success, safety, blessings, healing, etc.) Is there anything wrong in praying for these things? Should we continue praying about these matters? However, what do they suggest about our priorities?
- What heart change is needed in order for our prayers to better reflect the kinds of prayer we see in Acts 4–8, especially Acts 4:23–31? Are Christ's honor, the church's boldness, and the kingdom's advance important to you? Why or why not?
- Can God advance His kingdom through suffering, persecution, and sacrifice? Can God do greater things than we can request or imagine, in ways only He can dream up?
- What heart change is needed in order for prayer to become a greater priority in a person's life?
- Spend time in confession and supplication. Ask God to forgive the weakness of our love for Him and ask Him to give us a more intimate connection with Him through prayer. Pray that His desires would become our desires for prayer.

#### Hands . . .

- What schedule changes might be necessary in your life to focus on prayer?
  - Who are you praying for regularly? Who should we praying for? Is there an unbeliever you can pray for regularly?
  - Are you praying for boldness to share Christ with that person and others?
- 
- O God, make us generous with \_\_\_\_\_ possessions \_\_\_\_\_.
    - We own \_\_\_\_\_ nothing \_\_\_\_\_; Christ owns \_\_\_\_\_ everything \_\_\_\_\_.
    - We give \_\_\_\_\_ humbly \_\_\_\_\_.
    - We give \_\_\_\_\_ sacrificially \_\_\_\_\_.
    - We give \_\_\_\_\_ honestly \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Head . . .

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- Read Acts 4:32–37 and Deuteronomy 15:4.
- Who owns all we possess? How did the first Christians live out this truth? Do you think it was difficult for them? Why or why not?
- What do you think it means that “the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul”?
- What attitudes should characterize our giving?
- How does humble, sacrificial, and honest giving advance the kingdom of God? What kind of witness does this type of giving demonstrate to an unbelieving world?

#### Heart . . .

- How can materialism impede the advance of the gospel? Has it ever affected your desire or ability to advance the gospel?
- How could sacrificial giving cause the gospel to advance more rapidly?
- How can we more effectively meet the needs of the lost, the poor, and the needy within our church, our city, and the world?
- Do you see the purpose of your blessings as a means to bless others?
- What resources are you holding on to as your own? Surrender them to God in prayer. Confess your need for heart change to God and ask for His help in the days ahead.

#### Hands . . .

- Ask the group to consider individually and as a whole: How do you think Jesus would use your resources? Think about ways that you’re already spending your resources in Christ-honoring ways. Think about new ways to give of your resources for the advance of the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- Pray about these issues as a group and silently as individuals. Ask God for wisdom, direction, and a desire to see His kingdom advance.

- O God, help us to live in \_\_\_\_\_ purity \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Head . . .

- Read Acts 5:1–11. You may want to review briefly Joshua 7:10–26 as well.
- What was the heart of Ananias and Sapphira’s sin?
- What does God think of impurity and sin in the church?
- Can one person’s sin affect the community of believers? How?
- After the incident in Acts 5, do you think the early church took a casual attitude toward sin?

#### Heart . . .

- Ask the group to silently consider if they are harboring any unrepented, secret sin?
- Consider what you say, what you watch, what you do, your attitudes, your thoughts. Consider also things you should be doing but are not doing.

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- Ask God to forgive your sins, cleanse you from unrighteousness, and help you live in purity. Ask God to give you a desire for purity; a desire for Him; and not the things of this world. Thank Him for His grace.

#### Hands . . .

- Determine any action steps you need to take toward purity this week. Do you need to get rid of anything, stop doing something, or start doing something?
  
- O God, grant us joy amidst \_\_\_\_\_ persecution \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Our suffering is \_\_\_\_\_ inevitable \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Our mission is \_\_\_\_\_ unstoppable \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Satan’s strategies to \_\_\_\_\_ stop \_\_\_\_\_ the church will ultimately serve to \_\_\_\_\_ spread \_\_\_\_\_ the church.

#### Head . . .

- Read Acts 5:17–42. Focus on verses 29 and 41. Whom did the apostles choose to obey? What was their attitude toward suffering for Jesus’ name? Did they stop teaching and preaching about Jesus?
- Read Acts 6:1–7. Are you surprised a division arose within the church? How was it handled? Could the situation have impeded the advance of the gospel if not dealt with?
- Read 2 Timothy 3:12. Who will be persecuted? What does this mean for us in Birmingham?
- Read Acts 7:54–60. Stephen, the deacon, was the first martyr. Did his death stop the mission of the church?
- Whom did Stephen and the apostles fear? See Matthew 10:28. Do you think they remembered these words from Jesus?
- Read Acts 8:1–4. Did Satan’s strategy ultimately backfire? How? Do you think the church was uncomfortable as it spread out? Do you think the church understood God’s plan at first? Why or why not?

#### Heart . . .

- Have you ever had to suffer for Jesus’ sake? What was your reaction?
- What persecution might you face for sharing the gospel? In your family? In this city? Around the world? What are you most afraid of? Bring those fears to God in prayer now.
- Are there ways you have valued comfort more than the advance of the gospel? Ask God for forgiveness and grace to value Him more than anything else.
- Whom do you fear? Whom will you choose to obey? Why? How can Matthew 10:28 provide comfort? Consider memorizing this verse.

#### Hands . . .

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- Learn more about the persecuted church. Make brothers and sisters around the world a matter of prayer. Discuss how you might encourage brothers and sisters facing persecution.
- Pray for and determine to have a joyful attitude in all circumstances this week.
- O God, send us out in \_\_\_\_\_ proclamation \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The Holy Spirit will \_\_\_\_\_ lead \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - The Holy Spirit will \_\_\_\_\_ empower \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - The Holy Spirit will \_\_\_\_\_ use \_\_\_\_\_ us...
    - To advance the \_\_\_\_\_ gospel \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
    - To show the \_\_\_\_\_ greatness \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

#### Head . . .

- Read Acts 8:4–8; 26; 35. In verse 4, who is involved in sharing the gospel?
- Who was leading Philip everywhere he went? Was Philip obedient?
- Who engineered the circumstances of Philip bringing the gospel to the man from Ethiopia and ultimately to the continent of Africa? Can God use one person to bring many to Christ?

#### Heart . . .

- Do only some believers have the gospel and the Holy Spirit? If all do, how does this both encourage and challenge us to be witnesses for Christ?
- Does God use perfect people to show the world His greatness? Why does He love to use us in our weakness? How can this encourage us?
- Does our pride or fear sometimes keep us from witnessing?
- Confess any heart attitudes that keep you from being a witness to Christ. Ask Him for a desire to share all He's done for you.

#### Hands . . .

- If you would like more training in evangelism, consider taking a course from the Brook Hills Disciple-Making Institute.
- Pray for boldness and opportunities to share the gospel this week. Make sure you are prepared to share a brief testimony and/or gospel presentation.
- Pray for opportunities to serve in Jesus' name this week.

### **Breakout Session . . .**

Break into smaller groups, perhaps divided by same gender.

Review and discuss briefly the five main points of the message: Prayer, Possessions, Purity, Persecution, and Proclamation. They are easy topic headings to remember throughout the week.

Ask small group participants to identify at least one person with whom they can share the main points of this week's message.

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Within their smaller groups, encourage each participant to identify at least one specific action step to take related to one or more of the five main points of the message.

Ask the smaller groups to end in prayer, pleading with God for grace to transform their minds, change their hearts, and enable them to obey His Word.