

Small Group Guide The Gospel and the Next Generation

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

May 8, 2011

Psalm 78

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:

THE GOSPEL AND THE NEXT GENERATION

Psalm 78

The Situation...

- Percentage of people who profess to be born again Christians who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation:
 - Over 65 years old: 65 %
 - From 46-64 years old: 35 %
 - From 34-45 years old: 15 %
 - From 16-33 years old: 4 %
- Percentage of high school students who attend church and then leave the church within 4 years of graduation: 70 %

The Solution...

- What is NOT the answer...
 - New methods .
 - More programs .

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- Cooler _____ personalities _____.
- What is the answer...
 - The _____ Word _____ must be foundational.
 - The _____ family _____ must be strong.
 - The _____ church _____ must be accountable.
 - The family includes non-Christians...
 - But the church includes _____ only _____ Christians.
 - The family is a temporary institution...
 - But the church is an _____ eternal _____ institution.
 - The family has a role in the Great Commission...
 - But the church is _____ responsible _____ for the Great Commission.
 - The family has a unique responsibility for children in the home...
 - But the church has a _____ shared _____ responsibility for children in the body.
 - The church must strengthen _____ parents _____...
 - To make disciples _____ in _____ their homes.
 - To make disciples _____ through _____ their homes.
 - The church must streamline a _____ process _____...
 - That involves every _____ member _____ of the church.
 - That intentionally _____ trains _____ children and students for the world.
 - We don't want the next generation to _____ survive _____ in the world with the gospel.
 - We want the next generation to _____ thrive _____ in the world with the gospel.

What We Do...

- We _____ teach _____ the Scriptures.
 - We teach them _____ who _____ God is.
 - We teach them what God has _____ done _____.
 - We teach them what God has _____ said _____.
- We _____ tell _____ the stories.
- We _____ warn _____ against sinfulness.
- We _____ exalt _____ the Savior.
 - God responds to our failures with His _____ forgiveness _____!
 - God responds to our faithlessness with His _____ faithfulness _____!

What Will Happen...

- They will _____ know _____ God in their minds.
- They will _____ trust _____ God in their hearts.
- They will _____ obey _____ God in their lives.

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The Bottom Line...

- If we are going to be successful at making disciples of all nations, must be intentional about making disciples in succeeding _____ generations _____.
- Let's live today so that our generations to come know, love, and spread the glory of our God.

Message Summary

The church as a whole, every member, must be engaged in taking the gospel—the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes—to the next generation.

Pastors David Platt and Scott Kindig began by presenting some distressing statistics that indicate the U.S. church is currently ineffective in reaching younger generations, especially those 33 years old and under. The solution to this problem does not lie in methods, programs, or personalities. Instead, the Word must be foundational, the family must be strong, and the church must be accountable. Both the family and the church have their roles and responsibilities for the next generation, and neither can be elevated to the exclusion of the other.

When we teach the Scriptures, tell the stories, warn against sin, and exalt the Savior, the next generations will know, trust, and obey God. We must be intentional about making disciples among our own children, among the children of Birmingham, and among the children in all nations. Let's live for the glory of God now and for the sake of generations to come.

Discuss

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

- Briefly review the statistics presented. What is your reaction to these percentages? Why do you think the American church is seemingly ineffective in reaching and discipling the younger generations?
- How might solutions such as new methods, more programs, and cooler personalities sometimes be true attempts at meeting the real and legitimate needs of younger generations? Why do these faulty solutions have mixed results at best? What is lacking? Why do we seek these “magic bullets” to speak to our young people?
- What is the foundation of the only real solution for reaching the next generation? How does the gospel address the real needs of all generations?
- Does God's power lie in methods, programs, and personalities? Where is His promised power found?
- When discipling the next generation, why should neither the family nor the church be elevated to the exclusion of the other?
- Read Matthew 10:35–39. Who is worthy of our ultimate allegiance? Read Matthew 22:30. Does marriage/family last into eternity? What does last? Read Matthew 28:18–20. To whom was the Great Commission given? Was it given to them in their roles as husbands and fathers or as apostles? How do these facts lead us to understand that every member of the church has a shared responsibility for the discipling of the next generation?
- We do have unique responsibilities for our relatives and immediate families. Read 1 Timothy 5:8. What responsibilities do you think could be included here (both in the passage and beyond)?
- How can the church and family work together to make disciples of all generations in all nations? How can fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, and singles all have a role through the church discipling the next generation?
- How can you help strengthen parents within and outside the church to make disciples in and through their homes?

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- Read Psalm 78:1–8. What are the responsibilities of the church toward her children? Who is the focus of our teaching? What is the purpose of our teaching?
- How can we encourage our children to love God with their hearts, their minds, and their lives? What are ways that parents can teach the Scriptures, tell the stories, warn against sin, and exalt the Savior on a regular basis?
- What are ways that men and women (married or not) of the church can influence children toward the gospel? How have we sometimes abdicated that responsibility in the past?
- If our purpose is to make disciples of all nations, then how does making disciples of succeeding generations fit into that?
- What changes in our lives can we make that will show we take reaching the next generation seriously?
- How can we live in such a way that will show the next generation and generations to come that God is good and deserving of our worship, even our very lives?

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.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Lives and Church:** Spend some time this week confessing the ways that you have sinned and fallen short in your family relationships, accepting the forgiveness that your Father offers you in Christ, and asking for the power of the Spirit to order you life according to His Word.
- **Local:** This week we are praying for Jessie's Place Christian ministry shelter for women and children. We are also praying for Cahaba Heights United Methodist Church, James Calhoun, pastor.
- **Global:** This week we are praying for Jayson and Ashley, long-term missionaries to East Asia. We are also praying for a Brook Hills team in the Dominican Republic.