

Ebenezer
Part 3: The
Sermon Small Group Notes
Speaker: Pastor Dave Patterson

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
 1. one section of questions
 2. one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

INTRODUCTION

Ebenezer = "The Rock of Help" : the monumental moments in our lives that have set the course for our future! An altar, a memorial, a life changing event...

Today we conclude this series by looking at two Ebenezer moments in the life of our church that have set the course for what we do.

MESSAGE

How do we make a bigger place for God in our lives?

1. Intentionally bring an extravagant offering

Extravagant = beyond reasonable or necessary, over the top!

“You’ll know it’s extravagant because someone will tell you it’s a waste”

[Matthew 26:6-13]

⁶ Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. ⁷ While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume and poured it over his head.

⁸ The disciples were indignant when they saw this. “What a waste!” they said. ⁹ “It could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.”

¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, replied, “Why criticize this woman for doing such a good thing to me? ¹¹ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. ¹² She has poured this perfume on me to prepare my body for burial. ¹³ I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

Something had happened in her that required an extravagant offering. When you get a glimpse of Jesus your sacrifice is "reasonable".

2. Eliminate anything that grieves the Holy Spirit

[Ephesians 4:30]

And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.

[1 Thessalonians 5:19]

Do not put out (extinguish) the Holy Spirit’s fire

“The Fire of God on the altar of your heart is either extinguished or increased by what you are putting on it”

3. Make more places in your life for the presence of God

“Worship is the act of intentionally making places for God in your life.”

The Altar of Caring for the Poor (it’s an altar)

- requires sacrifice,
- takes obedience

- It pleases the Lord
- It's an act of worship

[Luke 3:8&11]

Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. ... The crowds asked, "What should we do?" John replied, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry."

[Luke 18:22] (Jesus speaking to the rich, young ruler)

When Jesus heard his answer, he said, "There is still one thing you haven't done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

[Luke 18:8] (the crooked tax collector's response to grace)

Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people I will give them back four times as much!"⁹ Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today

[Matthew 25:34-36] (the evidence of true faith)

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

Caring for and meeting the needs of the broken and hurting is not optional for the house of God, it is a requirement.

What the Bible promises to those who build this Altar ...

[Proverbs 22:9]

*The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor.*

[Proverbs 19:17]

*If you help the poor, you are lending to the LORD—
and he will repay you!*

Proverbs 28:8

Income from charging high interest rates will end up in the pocket of someone who is kind to the poor.

[Proverbs 28:27]

*Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing,
but those who close their eyes to poverty will be cursed.*

GOD'S INTENTION is that His community of believers would have more than enough to care for their communities.

[Deuteronomy 15:4-6]

⁴ "There should be no poor among you, for the LORD your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession. ⁵ You will receive this blessing if you are careful to obey all the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today. ⁶ The LORD your God will bless you as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations but will never need to borrow. You will rule many nations, but they will not rule over you.

Extravagant worship is impractical. Urgently displaying complete and total adoration to the Lord Jesus Christ is impractical in the world's eyes. It is impractical to spend 5 hours a week in church when life is so busy. It is impractical to spend an hour per day in prayer and Bible study when your schedule is so tight you can't fit anything else in. It is impractical to sacrificially give to the Lord when you live from paycheck to paycheck. It is impractical to take time out of your busy life to prepare a birthday cake for a child you don't even know. These things are tremendously impractical. But they reveal our great love and adoration for our Savior.

Let's not let another day go by without making room for the altars of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you remember the first time Christ's love toward you overwhelmed you?
2. What represents extravagant worship in your life?
3. What are your biggest distractions that hinder you from going to the altar of worship?
4. What could you remove or adjust in your busy life to give more time to God and His presence?
5. Have you built the altar of worship? What does that look like or should look like?
6. Is there an altar for the broken and hurting people in your life? What does that look like or should look like?
7. What can your small group, practically do in the next couple of weeks to help the broken and hurting?

8. End your small group spending some time at the altar of worship. Plug in a CD and begin to exalt His Holy name, no agenda, just adore Him.