



Small Group Guide

“We Invest Sacrificially”

Romans 12:4-13

In this sermon series, we will look at eight identity markers that describe who God calls us to be and what He calls us to do as a local church. Through our sermon series in Acts last year, we saw that worship, nurture, and mission are three dimensions of kingdom service, and in the We Are series, we will flesh out what it means to be the body of Christ and how we can accomplish these three primary tasks as a church. In doing so, we will see evidence of fruit and God’s grace in many areas, but we will also note areas in which further growth is needed. As we identify ways in which The Church at Brook Hills will take intentional steps forward, use these eight markers to assess your own life, and as a small group, discuss how you will live them out as we all come together to “glorify God by making disciples of all nations.”

Message Summary

When considering the type of community that Jesus intended to unleash on the world, the New Testament depicts the local church as a group of Christians who are meaningfully connected and who sacrificially spend time together and invest in each other. The Holy Spirit intentionally gives spiritual gifts to each believer for the benefit of the church and the advancement of the Kingdom, so we do not just follow Jesus faithfully for ourselves. It is also for the benefit of others. God calls us to invest in others both through our teaching and through our example, which means that we must be applying what we learn and relaying it to others. This also necessitates allowing others to be close enough to you so that something God is working in *you* can become something that God is working in *them*. Such personal exchanges with other believers contribute to a strong and healthy church. In light of these things, Brook Hills, invest sacrificially by joining a small group, giving strong, and signing up and serving within this faith family.

Discussion & Application Questions

After briefly reviewing the message summary, use these questions to further examine the sermon and to discuss how these truths apply to daily life, so we can “be doers of the word, and not hearers

only" (Jas. 1:22). Based on your knowledge of the people in your small group, **select the questions that will best help you frame the group's discussion of this sermon and sermon text.**

God Has Put Things in You that Really Belong to Us.

1. As a Christ-follower, what does it mean to "invest" in someone?
2. Read Romans 12:3-8. How has God gifted you for service? Why has He given you those particular gifts?
3. If you do not know how God has gifted you, how can you begin to figure this out?
4. **Application:** How *are* you using the gifts and the time that God has given you to benefit the church and the lost? How *can* you use your gifts to serve those in this small group and in our church?
5. What is a disciple? What is discipleship? Describe characteristics of a disciple of Jesus.
6. As a disciple, what things should you be teaching to those you are discipling? How are you helping others learn to love Jesus more? How are you equipping them to make disciples?
7. How does our relationship with Jesus affect our motivation for obedience with regards to serving and investing in others?

Invest Through Your Teaching

8. What is the danger of being in a "perpetual state of learning" without relaying or teaching what you're learning to others? Why is it important for us to not just read or hear God's Word but to apply it to our lives?
9. Read Titus 2:2-6; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; and Psalm 78:1-8. What will happen to younger believers if the older generations of believers do not invest in them? Why is the wisdom of older believers is needed?
10. What keeps older believers from investing in younger believers?
11. Who around you needs to hear about who God is? Who around you needs to learn more about how God calls us to live as Christ-followers?
12. **Application:** No matter how old you are or how long you have been a Christian, how are you teaching the truth that you are learning from God's Word? If you are not sharing what you are learning with others, what would it look like for you to take a step to do this?

Invest Through Your Example

13. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:7; Hebrews 13:7; Philippians 4:9. Why is it important to have a relationship with those you are teaching? How do these relationships positively affect your teaching?
14. In what ways did Jesus model relational ministry?
15. How is life-on-life discipleship the making of a strong and healthy church? What happens if a local church lacks such personal exchanges among its members?
16. **Application:** How is life-on-life discipleship happening in and through your small group? If it is not occurring, why? What needs to change in order for this to be a priority?
17. What do you want those in whom you are investing to learn from you? How are you modeling such things and teaching such things to them?
18. **Application:** In what way(s) do you need to grow in what you model? How can you take a step to grow in that area this week?

So Brook Hills...Join a Small Group, Give Strong, and Sign Up & Serve

19. **Application:** In what ways do we need to grow as a small group (i.e., praying for each other, caring for each other, encouraging each other, strengthening each other for service, etc.)? How can we begin to work on one of these areas? What would it look like for each member of the group to contribute in working on that identified area?
20. Why is it important to financially invest sacrificially in the local church?
21. What lessons of faith can we only learn through the practice of generosity?
22. What are the current serving opportunities and needs within The Church at Brook Hills?
23. **Application:** How can each member in our small group serve this local church? If this is not already happening, what does someone in the group need to do in order to get started?
24. What keeps us from investing and being “all in” with the people in our small group?
25. If we are not willing to be all in, what does this indicate about our relationship with God and our view of God?
26. **Application:** If we are not desiring to be all in, what step can we take to change our thinking and our attitude?
27. What is the danger of waiting on a particular feeling or desire before obeying or serving?
28. What does a healthy small group look like? How healthy is this small group? What describes a healthy church member?
29. **Application:** How can you as a church member contribute to the health of our church?

Things to Consider

If you have people in your group **who did not hear the sermon**, read the sermon text (Rom. 12:4-13) together and briefly summarize the main points of the sermon.

Since the focus of the sermon is investing sacrificially in each other as a church, **open the group time** by having the group members split into pairs or triads and share about a Christian who has had significant influence on their life. Who is someone who took time with them, and what is one thing that person taught them either explicitly or by their example?

Because investing sacrificially is the sermon’s central theme and because it is a biblical concept, **focus application on how the people in this group can invest in someone else**. Emphasize that we will never reach a point where we know all that we need to know in order to teach, nor will we do everything perfectly. The Great Commission applies to *all* believers, not just those who are in ministry or have spent years studying theology. No matter how long someone has been a Christian, they are still called to obey God’s command to invest in others. It may take individual conversations with group members for you to know what making disciples looks like in their life, but challenge the group members to identify someone to invest in, to make time for that person and to build a relationship with them, and to relay to them what God is teaching you through His Word.

With regards to **spiritual gifts**, consider these things as they relate to your small group:

- If your group members **do not know their areas of gifting**, they can take a spiritual gifts survey, but as the group leader how you have seen the Spirit working in this person? In what ways do they naturally tend to serve? In what ways do they enjoy serving the body? Also, encourage the individual to find out what needs our faith family currently has, to pray for these needs, and to sign up and serve. Sometimes we discover our gifts while serving,

and sometimes we serve because there's a need, whether or not is our area of gifting or passion.

- Encourage those in the group to **consider how they are using their gifts** to benefit this small group and/or the church as a whole. If they are not using their gifts, challenge them to identify ways they can do so and to take action.
- **Identify Brook Hills' current serving opportunities** by visiting brookhills.org/serve. Immediate needs are flagged and contain serving descriptions as well as the contact information for the staff member who works with that particular area. Share these opportunities with the group and discuss ways that group members can help fill these gaps.

At the **end of the group time**, follow up on application from last week's sermon and group discussion either as a whole group or in smaller groups (same gender if a co-ed group). What was the one area of needed growth they identified from last week and how did they attempt to grow in that area over the past week? If group members did not take a step, encourage them to reflect on why and how they can do things differently this week. This is not about condemning each other but about helping each other apply God's Word to our lives. For this week, identify one step of obedience each person will take, and encourage group members to check in with each other during the week about that step.

Weekly Prayer Focus

Pray for Our Church:

- Praise God for His generosity toward us.
- Pray for the Spirit to guide our understanding of giving and generosity and that we will give out of joy and love for others.

Pray for Our City:

- Pray for the gospel to advance rapidly among every people group and social segment within our city.
- Pray for God to use our faith family as ambassadors for Christ to boldly proclaim His message of reconciliation to those around us.
- Pray for North Park Baptist Church, Trussville, and for Pastor Bill Wilks.

Pray for Our World:

- Pray for Long-Term missionary Kristina J. serving in Pune, India, as the director of the Bright Star School, which serves underprivileged children. Kristin also serves at Houses of Hope, a home for children affected by HIV/AIDS. To learn more about Kristina and these ministries, visit her blog: mountainsintotheseas.blogspot.com.