



Small Group Guide: A Heart That Struggles for the Church

Based on Colossians 2:1-5

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever met someone wearing your favorite team's shirt while traveling? What was that connection like? How does that compare to meeting a fellow believer in an unexpected place?

Key Scripture

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ." - Colossians 2:1-2

Main Takeaways

1. The church and our own faith will flourish when we develop a deep love and concern for one another.
2. The church and our own faith will flourish when we set our minds on what Christ has accomplished for us.
3. The church and our own faith will flourish when our hearts bleed for one another.

4. The church and our own faith will flourish when we keep our eyes fixed on Christ.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Struggling for One Another (15-20 minutes)

1. Paul says he "struggles" for a church he's never met. What does this word picture reveal about his commitment to them? What would it look like for us to "struggle" for one another in our small group?
2. The pastor confessed his struggle to pray for people in Iran rather than just wanting military action. What groups of people (either in our church or in the world) do you find hardest to pray for? Why?
3. **Personal Reflection:** On a scale of 1-10, how often do you think about and pray for other believers during your week? What prevents you from doing this more regularly?
4. The sermon challenged us to text or call someone in the room and ask how we can pray for them. Who came to mind when you heard that challenge? Will you reach out to them this week?

Section 2: Encouraged Hearts (15-20 minutes)

5. Paul prays that hearts would be "encouraged" - which means urged, challenged, strengthened, and steadfast. How is this different from our cultural understanding of encouragement as just "feeling good"?
6. The pastor shared the story of the sharpshooter's wife who wasn't afraid because "he was aiming at the candle, not at me." How did this perspective help the imprisoned pastor endure torture? How can this perspective help us in our daily struggles?
7. **Group Exercise:** Take turns completing this sentence: "When I'm discouraged, I need to remember that Christ has accomplished _____ for me."
8. What "plausible arguments" (from podcasts, news, social media, etc.) are currently competing for your attention and threatening to delude you from gospel truth?

Section 3: Love That Identifies Us (15-20 minutes)

9. Jesus said the world would know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35). Why do you think Jesus chose love as the identifying mark rather than knowledge, service, or worship?

10. The pastor asked: "Could it be said by someone outside of this room: 'I don't know what goes on at Exchange Church, but they love each other'?" How would you honestly answer that question about our church? About our small group?
11. What are practical ways we can demonstrate love for one another that goes beyond Sunday morning interactions?

Section 4: Eyes Fixed on Christ (10-15 minutes)

12. Paul prays that believers would know Christ and that He would "open up the storehouses of wisdom and knowledge." What does it look like practically to grow in your knowledge of Christ?
13. The sermon ended by asking: "What are your eyes fixed on?" Be honest - what has been capturing your attention more than Christ lately? (Problems, circumstances, worries, entertainment, success, etc.)
14. How does fixing our eyes on Christ change the way we view our current circumstances - without ignoring them or pretending they don't hurt?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge (Choose 1-2):

Option 1: Prayer Partner

- Reach out to someone in the church (in or outside your small group) and ask them how you can specifically pray for them this week. Set a reminder to pray for them daily.

Option 2: Gospel Preaching

- Each morning this week, take 5 minutes to "preach the gospel to yourself." Remind yourself of one thing Christ has accomplished for you and what that means for your identity.

Option 3: Global Church Focus

- Research and pray for persecuted believers in one country this week (Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, etc.). Use resources like Voice of the Martyrs to guide your prayers.

Option 4: Struggling in Prayer

- Pick one person in your small group and commit to praying for them every day this week. At the end of the week, send them a message letting them know you've been praying for them.

Option 5: Love in Action

- Identify one practical way you can show love to another believer this week (meal, encouraging note, help with a task, quality time, etc.) and do it.

Closing Reflection Questions

- What is one thing God spoke to you about during this discussion?
- What is one thing you will do differently this week because of what you learned?
- How can we pray for you right now?

Closing Prayer

Pray for one another using Paul's prayer from Colossians 2:2-3:

- That hearts would be encouraged and strengthened
- That the group would be knit together in love
- That each person would grow in knowledge and understanding of Christ
- That eyes would remain fixed on Jesus despite circumstances

Additional Resources

- **Book:** "The Voice of the Martyrs" - stories of persecuted believers
- **Scripture Memory:** Colossians 2:2-3
- **Worship Song:** "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" or "Fix My Eyes"