

Group Study Guides

Eternal Impact

Week 1

From Foundation to Mission

Group Study

1. The name of this study is *Eternal Impact*. Many things make an impact in our world today. Name some of them. List these. How big is the impact of each? How long does that impact last?

2. What do you think makes the greatest impact? What makes an eternal impact?

3. Watch DVD segment 1.

4. Talk about a time you were physically lost. How did you feel? What did you do?

Have you used maps off the Internet to help you know each turn to take to reach your destination? Did this increase your confidence in reaching your destination on time?

Have you ever used a GPS (global positioning system) when you drive? How does such a system change your confidence about going to a place you've never been before?

The New Testament book of Acts is God's roadmap for the church to accomplish God's goal of reaching all people in every nation on earth with the good news of Jesus Christ. With God's guidebook, Acts and other books in the Bible, we can work with confidence in leading and growing our churches.

5. Read Matthew 16:13-19.

Sing or read the words to "Jesus Is the Cornerstone" and "The Church's One Foundation." You can find words for both of these on the Internet.

What do the words of these familiar songs say about Peter's confession and Jesus' response? How would you apply these verses from Matthew's Gospel and the words to these two songs of faith to the church today?

6. Pull your keys out of your pocket or purse. What do they represent? Perhaps they mean ownership of a car or home or business or part ownership as you partner with a lending institution. Or they may mean permission to enter someone else's home or business. In verse 19, what is the significance of the "keys of the kingdom"? Who has them? Who owns the kingdom? Who has permission to use them? What responsibility comes with the permission given to holders of the keys?

7. Read Acts 2:44-47.

Dr. Hemphill begins the preface to *Eternal Impact* with questions. As an introduction to this study, read and answer these questions.

8. If you have not already done so, read devotionals in week 1 of the member guide and section 1 in *Eternal Impact*.

9. Pray for your church to become all that God wants it to be and to do all that God wants it to do in reaching people for Christ.

Eternal Impact

Week 2

From Foundation to Mission, continued

Group Study

1. List types of power.

Recall a time when you “lost power.” How did you feel? What did you do?

2. Read Daniel 7:14; Matthew 7:29; 8:9; 28:18-20; and Ephesians 3:8-11.

What is the source of your power as a Christian? What power did Jesus have while on earth? How are Christians today to access and use that power?

3. What divides churches today?

Read Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 2:44-47; 4:12; and 2 Peter 3:9.

What mission should unify the church?

If someone were to look at the budget, schedule, and priorities of your church, would they conclude that it exists primarily to complete the discipling of the nations?

4. What is your church’s plan for discipling the nations?

List ways your church seeks to reach people for Christ in your community, state, nation, and world.

How do individual church members have opportunities to participate in each area? How have you personally participated in these opportunities? Why have you participated as you have?

5. Are you satisfied with the church’s work in each area to reach people for Christ?

Where are the gaps?

Who does your church partner with to ensure that it has a comprehensive strategy to reach all nations?

6. Read section 2 of *Eternal Impact* in preparation for the next two weeks’ discussions.

7. Pray that your congregation will be united in reaching their city and the world for Jesus Christ.

Eternal Impact

Week 3

From Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth

Group Study

1. What is the greatest distance you have ever traveled from the place where you were born? What was the purpose of your journey? In what ways did you represent Christ during your travels?
2. Watch DVD segment 2.
3. Read Acts 1:3. The “convincing proofs” (NASB) that Jesus is the Messiah, God’s only Son are His resurrection appearances. What was the convincing proof that led you to belief in Jesus? How have you shared that convincing proof with others? If so, describe your most recent experience of sharing your testimony with someone else.
4. Read Luke 24:45-47 and Acts 1:4-8. What role did obedience have among Jesus’ followers after He was gone? What is the evidence of their obedience? What are the expectations for Christ followers today in obeying God’s Word and Jesus’ commands? What is the evidence of believers’ obedience today?
5. Read Acts 2:1-4. Where were Jesus’ followers when they received the power of the Holy Spirit? When has your church experienced the Holy Spirit’s power? What happened in individual lives? What happened to the church as a whole?
6. Recall the most recent time you experienced a feeling of God’s Spirit moving in your church. Did you alone feel the Holy Spirit move, or did many experience God’s power at the same time? When you felt God’s Spirit move, what resulted from that experience?
7. During the following week read devotionals in week 2.
8. Pray that God’s Spirit and power will be evident in your church and that individuals will respond as God directs.

Eternal Impact

Week 4

From Jerusalem to the Ends of the Earth, continued

Group Study

1. Have you ever been a member of another church? How did that church compare with your own in its attempts to reach people nearby and around the world for Christ?
2. Read Joel 2:27-32. How does God promise to pour out His Spirit?
3. Acts 2:17. In our post-Pentecost era, the power of God's Holy Spirit is available to all who call Jesus Lord and Savior. Do you see God's power being poured out in the world today? Why or why not?
4. Read Acts 2:32. Peter witnessed Jesus' resurrection. He was there to see the risen Christ. We know this is true from what Peter and the other disciples told us. But we also know because of God's grace and work in our own lives, bringing together what God has done throughout history and what He is doing in our lives today. What is your message, your witness, based on historical events when Jesus came to earth, your own salvation experience, and what God is doing in your life today?
5. Read section 3 of *Eternal Impact* in preparation for the next four weeks' discussions.
6. Pray that each person present will hear and obey God's call to tell someone about Jesus this week.

Eternal Impact

Week 5

From Character to Function

Group Study

1. Does character matter in the world today? What evidence do you see that character does or does not matter?

In our lesson today and for the next three weeks, we will look at the early church's character and those character traits that God desires churches to have today.

2. Watch DVD segment 3.

3. Read Acts 2:41-42. How are God's power and the people's prayers linked together throughout the book of Acts.

4. Read Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35. How is Jesus the model and mentor for empowering prayer?

5. What was Paul's advice about power-hungry church members? Read 1 Corinthians 3:1,5; 2 Corinthians 12:9. How do Paul's words apply to churches today?

6. During the following week read devotionals in week 3.

7. Pray that your church will recognize the contributions of all members and see all as equals before Christ's throne.

Eternal Impact

Week 6

From Character to Function, continued

Group Study

1. Who is the church has good character? Who is involved in the work of the church yet is not power hungry? Whom do you admire as an ideal church member?
2. Read Acts 6:1-6. What were the reasons for enlisting deacons? Apparently the apostles were both praying and leading the church in prayer. Do you leaders spend more time ministry or in preaching and in prayer?
3. How would you describe your church's prayer life? How would you describe the way God is working in your church right now?
4. Read Acts 9:31. What were the characteristics of the early church?

What characteristics does your church have? Thank God for all the gifts He has given your church.

5. Read Acts 11:26. This verse links intensive study with those who are called Christians. What are the strong points of your church's Bible and doctrine teaching ministry? How could it improve? How can your church get more people involved in studying God's Word and learning sound doctrine?
6. Read Acts 2:46-47. Worship wasn't a one-hour, once-a-week time for people in the early church. It was a part of who they were, of what they did each day.

How important is worship in your life? in the life of your church? What can your church do to teach people the importance of worship? What can you do to ensure that people connect with God when they come to your worship services?
7. Read Acts 4:8. What were the circumstances for Peter's preaching? In the early church the spread of the gospel was accompanied by opposition, imprisonment, persecution, and even death? Have you ever suffered because you told others about Jesus? What keeps more people from telling others the good news? Whom will you tell this week?
8. Continue to read section 3 of *Eternal Impact* in preparation for the next two weeks' discussions.
9. Pray that Christians will obey God's Word and show God's love in all their dealings with others this week.

Week 7

From Character to Function, continued

Group Study

1. In daily life, which character trait is most important to you? Why? Which character traits of the church that we've studied so far is most important to you? Why?

In our lesson today we will continue to look at the early church's character and those character traits that God desires churches to have today.

2. Watch DVD segment 4.

3. Read John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:9.

With whom are Christians to find fellowship?

Why is fellowship with both God and other believers essential?

How does your church practice Christian fellowship.

4. Read Acts 4:32-36. How would you describe stewardship among members of the early church?

How would you describe stewardship among members of your church?

Why is stewardship an important church characteristic?

5. During the following week read devotionals in week 4.

6. Pray for yourself and other members that you will find fellowship with one another and encourage one another in stewardship.

Eternal Impact

Week 8

From Character to Function, continued

Group Study

1. Which personal character trait is important to you? Which characteristics of a church are important to you? If you were looking for a new church to join, what would you hope to find? Are these characteristics evident in your church? If not, what can be done to develop those characteristics?

2. Read Acts 1:8; 13:1-3. The early church had a fourfold strategy—pray, go, send, and give—to reach the nations with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. How does your church engage in each of these four functions?

3. Read Acts 11:27-30. This example shows how the early churches collected money for a need greater than any individual or small group could meet alone.

What are some ways your church cooperates with other churches to meet needs? Include both giving and doing ministry.

5. Read Acts 11:26. In this passage how were the church leaders fulfilling the Great Commission? How is your church growing disciples? How does this relate to your church's fulfilling the Great Commission?

Read Galatians 5:22-25. Pray that these characteristics will be seen in the lives of those present in all their relationships this week.

8. Read section 4 of *Eternal Impact* in preparation for the next two weeks' discussions.

9. Pray that your church will have the New Testament characteristics that will enable it to do its work for Christ. Pray that leaders and members will receive God's direction to help the church strengthen these characteristics.

Eternal Impact

Week 9

From Leadership to Gifted Membership

Group Study

1. Think of a time when you and/or your family received ministry from a pastor, another minister, a deacon, or a church member. What did receiving ministry mean to you?
2. Think of a time when you ministered to someone else. What did this opportunity to serve mean to you?
3. Watch DVD segment 5.
4. Read Galatians 6:1-6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14. List the duties of these early Christian leaders. How do these responsibilities compare to what pastors and other ministers do today? How do they compare specifically to ministers in your church?
5. Read Acts 6:1-7. What roles do deacons in your church play? Do their roles match the model in Acts 6?
6. During the following week read devotionals in week 5.
7. Write down the names of your pastor, church ministers, and additional church staff. Think about what each does and the persons with and to whom each ministers. Think about the needs of these church leaders, and pray for each of them.

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Week 10

From Leadership to Gifted Membership, continued

Group Study

1. Think about promises of God found in the Bible. Recall Scriptures that state God's promises.
2. Read Exodus 19:3-6 and 1 Peter 2:9. What does God promise His people? What does God expect from His people?
3. Read Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:1-3, 11. Who has spiritual gifts? How did they get them? How should people use their spiritual gifts?
4. Read Ephesians 4:11-12 and Hebrews 13:20-21. How are people equipped to serve in your church? How does this "equipping" enable people to do more of the church's work? How does equipping lead to the church's fulfilling its mission?
5. Read section 5 of *Eternal Impact* in preparation for the next two weeks' discussions.
6. Write down the names of deacons, those who lead church programs and ministries, teachers, and other church leaders. Pray for these church leaders by name and by need.

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Week 11

From Opposition to Victory

Group Study

1. During this study what have you learned about what the Bible says about the early church?

What have you learned about your own church?

What have you learned about your own role in your church?

What action will you take to make a greater eternal impact through your church in your community and the world?

2. Watch DVD segment 6.

3. Read Acts 6:1-7. How is your church organized to meet people's needs?

Read Acts 13:3. How is your church organized to reach people for Christ? Does your organization facilitate or hinder meeting people's needs and reaching people for Christ? Explain your answer.

4. Read Acts 20:17-24. What opposition did leaders in the early church experience? How did they stay focused on their mission rather than the opposition? What opposition do churches in the twenty-first century experience? How can they stay focused on their mission? What is the same about the opposition the church faced two thousand years ago and today? What is different?

5. During the following week read devotionals in week 6.

6. If you are aware of individuals who create opposition or disrupt unity in the church, pray for them now and every day this week. Ask God to help you be a positive example in the life of a disgruntled church member.

Eternal Impact

Week 12

From Opposition to Victory

Group Study

1. Think of a time when you worked hard for a personal victory. How did you feel when you reached your goal? How were able to discipline yourself to reach that goal?
2. Read Ephesians 1:15-23. What did Paul pray for the church at Ephesus? If your church could do anything at all, with no thoughts of financial or human limits, what would you like to do?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14. What has God done for people and for the church? What is stopping your church (and others) from attempting great things for God? What can your church do to reach its potential?

3. Read Revelation 1:17-18. What is the good news Christ wanted John to write?

John highlighted things the churches were doing well: working hard, strong foundation, response to persecution, resolute faith, and others. As John wrote about the problems in the seven churches, he mentioned tolerating evil, false teachers/teaching, abandoning their first love, idol worship, immorality, and others.

What is your church doing well? What cautions do you think John might write, as Christ led, to warn your church about practices it needs to change?

Throughout Revelation, John calls the churches to remain faithful to God's Word. How is your church doing that?

John also seeks to encourage the churches. Do your leaders need encouragement? Plan a way to encourage them.

4. Read Ephesians 1:20-23. What did Paul write in these verses about the church and its Head? What power does Jesus have? How does Christ choose to work on earth?

That's reason to celebrate!

Make a list of recent praises about your church, its work, and individuals in it.

5. Pray, thanking God for working through your church.

Week 13
Commitment and Celebration

1. Read Acts 2:44-47.
2. Think about your dreams for your church as you watch DVD segment 7.
3. Brainstorm characteristics of the early church highlighted in this study.

Which characteristic is most meaningful to you personally?
Why?

Which characteristic of your church is most like the New Testament church?

Which characteristic of the early church would you most like your church to develop?

How do you think your church can do this?

4. List all the ways you can for your church to fulfill the new work you believe God is calling your church to do.

What difference would this change in your church make in your life? in your community?
in God's kingdom?

How can you personally help your church go in this new direction?

5. Write a prayer here, thanking God for your church. Include in your prayer your desire to do what He wants you to do in His church.