



WEEK 4 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

In the message Chad talked about having that 'first love.' Do you remember your first crush or first boyfriend/girlfriend?

SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "Heritage."

When we hear the word 'heritage,' most of us think about a legacy or maybe deeply held values; the word itself sounds stoic and lofty. When we hear 'heritage' we think of how our past has formed who we are today.

Today, Red Rocks Church is one church in 6 locations. 2 of those locations meet in prisons, and we are nearly 10,000 people in weekly attendance. We are all one church, in various buildings, but at one time, we were only one tiny location with about 50 people and one life group. What has never changed is who we are. We are imperfect people being transformed by a perfect God. All that has happened at Red Rocks Church is because of Jesus Christ at work.

If you are sitting in a group today talking about this series, the chances are you most likely weren't able to attend our first service on January 9, 2005, nor would you probably have wanted to make that journey willingly. Imagine walking through the snow through a desolate, run-down theme park only to find a tiny church having their grand opening service in a building with plumbing, electrical and pest control problems ... at least there were excited people greeting you with hot coffee; a sort of hospitable, yet apologetic peace offering for the long walk to the building!

For those of us who were there at the start, when we hear the word 'heritage,' we think of Heritage Square Theme Park and over a decade of issues as our little church grew up there. Year after year, we battled frozen pipes, electrical outages, parking problems, and constant costly construction projects. Many of you who have attended our Golden Campus have experienced many of these issues more than you would have liked. So here we are, eleven years later and it is time to leave, but as Shawn stated in the message in week 1 of this series, **"the Square is going away ... our heritage never will."** A location is changing, but who we are as a church family never will.

The church isn't a building, it is a body of believers; it's the people who are the church. We are those people and regardless of the building we meet in, we are still Red Rocks Church. Throughout this series, we are going to talk about how there are seasons and situations in our lives that God can use to teach us great lessons, if we are willing to listen and keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ. So whether you were here in the beginning or this is your very first week, allow God to speak to you about your own life as we look for the lessons that God might be trying to teach us.

Red Rocks Church exists today, because of generations of faithful Christian leaders and pastors who stepped onto new beachheads to spread the gospel of Jesus to lost people. In 100 AD there were 181 million people on earth and about 500,000 were born again Christians. By 1000 AD there were 270 million people on earth and 1 million were followers of Christ. By 1990, of the 5.2 billion people on earth, there is one Christian to every 9 people with 510 new Christian churches being formed every day across the globe. The Christian faith has exponentially grown and is booming in Asia and Africa. As Christ followers, we are part of an unstoppable movement of God. Even the most die hard atheists would agree. Yemelian Yarlovsky, who made it his life's goal to wipe out Christianity from the earth said, "Christianity is like a nail ... the harder you strike it, the deeper it goes."

Why do you think Christianity has only grown when it's people are insulted, persecuted and oppressed?

Do you think that God can allow us to go through difficulties individually and as His followers to help us grow closer to Him?

Have you gone through a difficult time that helped grow your faith and actually served as a way to share your faith with other people?

GROW

Let's read Acts 5:27-42

In J.B. Polhill's *New American Commentary: Acts*, we delve into this scene and the importance of Gamaliel's statement:

The Gamaliel in question here was Gamaliel I, who is referred to in several places in the rabbinic literature, though surprisingly sparsely for a man of his stature. He was the son or grandson of the famous Hillel and seemed to have been at the prime of his influence from about A.D. 25–50. Rabbinic tradition gives him the title of Nasi, or president of the high court, and has his son Simeon follow him in that role. His grandson Gamaliel II held the presidency after A.D. 90, when the court met at Jamnia. Perhaps nowhere is the esteem in which he was held better expressed than in the following statement of the *Mishna*: "When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died." For Christians he is best known through his pupil, Paul (Acts 22:3).

5:34–39 Gamaliel's power in the Sanhedrin is subtly reflected in his ordering the apostles to be removed "for a little while." Such matters were generally the prerogative of the high priest, and his reference to "a little while" reflects his confidence that it wouldn't take him long to sway the court. He began by urging the court to "consider carefully" what they were about to do to the apostles. Considering that the death penalty had just been suggested, he was implying that this might be a bit rash and bring unfortunate results down on them, particularly given the Christian popularity with the masses. There was a better way. Simply leave the movement alone. Leave it to God. If he was not in it, it would fizzle out (vv. 38–39).

Why do you think the apostles were so bold in front of such powerful people?

The apostles said, "We must obey God rather than human beings!" How can this have repercussions on our lives as followers of Jesus?

Why was Gamaliel's advice so persuasive to the Sanhedrin?

Lastly, why would the apostles rejoice after being flogged?

MOVE

As we conclude this series, we are reminded that we are never to despise the days of small beginnings.

The church isn't about all the amenities or magnificent buildings, but it's about all of God's people and a magnificent Savior. We are reminded of what God can do with a small group of people committed to Him, each other and the mission to go and make disciples of all nations. It is about being faithful with a little. It is about growing where we are planted. We have read and talked about the explosive growth of the church in Acts and how we are a part of that same movement today. God is continuing to draw ever-increasing amounts of people to Himself and delights in using us, His people.

As we continue to be obedient to God's leading as a local church, we must never forget that it is God who gets all the glory. We must not lose sight of what is most important. Whether you are a pastor, life group leader, kids rock worker, worship leader or volunteer to serve the local church, we must never lose sight of our first love. Your hard work is noticed; you do such a great job and persevere even when things aren't ideal. What is always most important is our relationship with Jesus.

Let's read Revelation 2:1-7

Even the most dynamic and hard working churches of the New Testament were admonished and urged to remember what is most important. God urges us to evaluate the temperature of our hearts in loving Jesus. It is easy for all of us to fall into many traps, even when we are part of a thriving church.

Which of the following traps would you say you are most likely to fall into?

- Serving God to try and earn your approval or acceptance
- Feeling like you need to perform for God and others to be loved
- Trying to modify your behavior by sheer will instead of reliance on God's power
- Drifting from spending time learning and memorizing God's word
- Acting first and praying only as a last resort
- Forgetting God's delight and love for you and allowing self-condemnation or other's condemnation to steal your joy
- Feeling like a hypocrite, so you won't accept the grace that God offers you

God tells us to remember to "... do the things you did at first." When you started your relationship with Jesus, what do you remember doing in the beginning?

What is the one thing this week you can begin to start doing again to get back to your first love?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the situations that people might be facing today.

TO GO

Revelation 2:7a

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.