

Small Group Materials (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read the passage out loud as a group. Option: Give the group 5 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

This Week's Passage

Scripture Reference

2 Cor. 4:1-6 (NIV—2011)

¹ Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Discussion

Ask the Group: What about this passage stood out to you?

Leaders' Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the "observation" level.

Ask the Group: In verse 1, why does Paul say that we should not lose heart when ministering to others?

Possible Answers: Because God is in control. It's only through God's mercy that we have the opportunity to minister to others. We have the Holy Spirit working with us and transforming us (2 Cor. 3:18) into God's image.

Leaders Note: Because verse 1 starts with "therefore" it may be helpful to point your group back to 2 Corinthians 3:18 in order to connect the ideas.

Ask the Group: In verse 2 Paul says that when we are ministering to others we are not to deceive them or distort God's Word, but rather we are to be truthful. Why is this so important to Paul?

Possible Answers: It fails to bring glory to God and may even bring disgrace to His name. The ministry is God's in the first place, and we have no right to alter it.

- What are some reasons for why we may be tempted to distort God's Word when ministering to others?

Possible Answers: Fear, uncertainty of how to defend our beliefs, pride, etc.

- How can we prepare ourselves to overcome these temptations when they arise?
Possible Answers: Study the Word, know what you believe, seek to know and believe in God's ultimate power over all circumstances and that your value is found in Him alone, etc.

Ask the Group: According to Paul, what prevents some people from seeing the glory of God? (See vs. 4.)

Possible Answer: Satan (god of this age) blinds their minds.

- **Ask the Group:** What methods do you think Satan uses to blind unbelievers' minds?

Possible Answers: Lies, pride, fear, etc.

Ask the Group: In verse 5, what are some things Paul says we should keep in mind when ministering to others?

Possible Answers: We are not preaching ourselves. We are preaching Christ as Lord. We are servants to others. We do all of this for Jesus' sake (glory of God)

To summarize, God and others come before we do, and our goal should be to be move out of the way so that God is more visible.

Ask the Group: Read verse 6. Why do you think Paul references the Genesis passage about the creation of the world (i.e. "let light shine out of darkness") here?

Possible Answers: Because when God makes His light shine in our hearts, "conversion," we are a new creation. This is also the dawning of a new covenant in which we can have open communion with God because of Christ.

Ask the Group: According to Paul, how is someone able to know the glory of God?

Possible Answer: God made His light shine in our hearts.

Leaders Note: What we think is important to emphasize in this question is that God is the one performing the action in this passage and not us. It's not anything that we do that gets God to shine His light in our hearts.

Application

Ask the Group (small or large): As you go through your week, are your words and actions calling attention to yourself or to God?

Ask the Group (small or large): As you interact with others, are you portraying the truth of the gospel at the risk of offending those around you?

Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out during the week to encourage your group.

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

Ask the group (small or large): What is one way that you can contemplate (meditate, think about) God this week that will allow Him to make you more like Him?

Ask the Group (small or large): What is one practical way that you can exercise your faith in God with boldness this week?