

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Leaders Note: For this passage we thought it would be beneficial to use the NLT version (instead of NIV) as it is much more direct and clear in the following areas and thus avoids much of the confusion imparted by the NIV's word and grammar choices.

-NLT uses the word "bodies" rather than "dwellings"

-vs. 5- in the NIV can lead to misinterpreting Paul's point to imply God's main purpose in creating believers is for them to have heavenly bodies.

-vs. 6- grammar much more clear in NLT and consistent with Paul's main message.

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 Corinthians 4:16- 5:10 (NLT)

Leaders' Note: Study focus is on 5:1-10, but 4:16-18 included in reading to preserve the continuity of Paul's message.

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

¹ For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ² We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. ³ For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. ⁴ While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

⁶ So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. ⁷ For we live by believing and not by seeing. ⁸ Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

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: How is living in a tent different than living in a house?

Possible Answers: Tent-living is temporary, tents are flimsy and wear out faster, tents don't protect well from the elements, less space, fewer comforts, dirtier, simpler.

Leaders' Notes: Focus especially on mindset differences between tent-living and living at home. Recall that Paul's job was a tentmaker. Ensure group members realize that Paul is contrasting believers' earthly bodies with their future heavenly bodies- this is less obvious in the NIV translation.

Ask the Group: Why would we groan and long for our heavenly bodies?

Possible Answers: We're discontent on earth (we weren't made for this world), we fight against our flesh & sinful desires, we face pain/poor health/physical trials, we long to be with Christ, etc.

Ask the Group: What do you think of when you hear the end of verse 4?

Leaders' Note: Focus on Paul's choice of words in "swallowed up by life"- guide discussion towards not only intellectual meaning, but also personal / emotional response.

Ask the Group: Looking at vs. 5, what is the Holy Spirit guaranteeing?

Leaders' Note: The greek word for 'guarantee' was used in legal and commercial purposes to describe a 'payment of part of a purchase price in advance,' a first installment, deposit, down payment, and pledge. In modern greek, the greek word is translated to mean, 'an engagement ring.'

In the NIV, be wary of group members misinterpreting vs. 5 as discussing the chief purpose of man.

- How does the Holy Spirit act as "a guarantee"?

Possible Answers: He is active in our lives now with us now while we long to be in the fullness of God's presence in heaven and to be renewed. His presence is a demonstration of God's promise that He will dwell with us. His work in our lives points to the trinity as a whole.

Ask the Group: Note that the ESV translates vs. 6 to read "So we are always of good courage..." How does the guarantee of the Spirit affect the manner in which we live now?

Possible Answers: His presence gives us confidence that we have something to look forward to—that the circumstances we face now are only temporal. He gives us hope—an eager expectation for an ultimately good outcome. It strengthens us when we face trials.

Leaders' Note: Focus on interpreting and applying verses 5-8.

Ask the Group: Re-read vs. 9-10 from the passage; and read 1 Cor. 3:12-15.

- As believers, what will we receive for our disobedience to God?

Possible answer: Forgiveness

- What will we receive for the good we "have done in this earthly body"?

Leaders' Note: Be very careful about group discussion wandering into "works-based faith". Possible Answers: We will be held accountable for how we presented Christ and lived for Him while on earth—not because we can earn our salvation, but because an outpouring of our love for God should be evident in our actions.

Application

Ask the Group (small or large): Do you tend to think of your body and life on earth as a "tent" or a "house"?

- How can you strive towards a more biblical perspective about your life on earth this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): What gets in the way (or holds you back) from remembering that what you do will be held accountable to Christ?

- What steps can you take this week to remove those barriers?

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): How does the fact that Jesus rose from the dead give you hope in suffering?

Ask the Group (small or large): Where are you experiencing suffering right now?

- What from our study today can you focus on to encourage you this week?