

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

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

This Week's Passage

Scripture Reference

2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. **12** We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. **13** If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. **15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. **2** For he says,

"In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

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 11, Paul says he tries to “persuade men.” What is Paul trying to persuade others toward?

Possible Answers: The Gospel.

Leaders’ Note: This question admittedly has a “Sunday school” answer, but it leads into the subquestion.

- How does fearing God motivate us to share the gospel?

Possible Answers: By acknowledging our own sin and the sin of the world and knowing that we will someday face judgment, we are able to recognize the world’s need for Christ. Also, in recognizing God’s sovereignty we will be encouraged to serve and glorify Him through spreading the gospel.

Leaders’ Note: For context it might be helpful to read 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Ask the Group: Verse 12 contrasts those who take pride in what is seen as opposed to what is in the heart. What does it look like to be a person who takes pride in what is in the heart?

Possible Answers: Those who take pride in what is seen are more concerned with their own self-worth and what others think of them, while those who take pride in the heart are focused on Christ. As you look at the verses that follow it is apparent that this leads to serving and focusing on others above yourself.

Ask the Group: In verse 13 Paul talks about being out of his right mind for the sake of God and in his right mind for the sake of the Corinthians. What does he mean by this?

Possible Answers: The Gospel is counter cultural and goes against what we are inclined toward as sinners, so in following God we might be perceived as being “out of our minds”. On the other hand, Paul wanted to reassure the Corinthians that his theology was sound and he was teaching the true Gospel, so he would have to be in his right mind for their sake.

Leaders’ Notes: You could discuss how Paul was viewed by his culture. Paul was not afraid to speak his mind and speak the truth even if it meant sacrificing his reputation.

Paul had an elaborate conversion experience while he was on the road going to Damascus (Acts 9). This conversion experience may have caused people to believe that Paul was suffering from religious mania.

Ask the Group: (Read verse 14.) As followers of Christ, His love should be what compels us in our life to live as He lived. What are the areas in your life where it is easier or harder to live being compelled by Christ’s love?

Leaders’ Note: You may want to start this discussion by sharing a personal area of your life where it has been harder or easier to live your life compelled by Christ’s love.

- In verse 16, Paul goes on to discuss how this changes our point of view. How is our view of people changed when we are compelled by Christ’s love and the gospel?

Possible Answer: Our love fails because of sin. Recognizing the greatness of His love allows us to expand our ability to love others.

Ask the Group: What does Paul mean when he says we are a “new creation” in verse 17?

Possible Answers: We are no longer enslaved by sin, “the flesh”, and have new eyes—Christ’s eyes—to view those around us with His love. We have a new purpose. We have died to our old selves and live in Christ.

- What inherent changes happen as a result of becoming a follower of Christ?

Leaders' Note: Talk about the change that occurs not because of anything we do, but because of Christ.

Ask the Group: What is significant about the message of reconciliation? (vs. 18)

Leaders' Note: Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the noun katallage (reconciliation) and verb katallasso (to reconcile). Reconciliation is both a state of being (we are reconciled to God inherently through Christ's death) and a process (we choose to undergo the process of reconciliation on a daily basis as we are sanctified by Christ). The basic idea is to change or make otherwise. Being reconciled implies that there is a need for change and that something is wrong!

Ask the Group: Paul talks about us receiving the ministry or reconciliation in verses 18-21; what does it mean to be an ambassador for God?

Possible Answers: By receiving the message of reconciliation we become ambassadors for God. Thus our responsibility becomes to pass this message of reconciliation onto others. Basically the reconciled become reconcilers.

Application

Ask the Group (small or large): How does your life reflect that you are a new creation in Christ?

Ask the Group (small or large): We are all in need of continual reconciliation. (vs. 21). Are there any areas of sin in your life that you need to allow Christ to "be the sin" for?

Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out through email or The City during the week to encourage your group.

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

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?

Announcements (See On Ramp/The City for more information!):

Men of Hope:

Winter Bonfire

Dec. 10, 6:30 PM