

LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

2 Corinthians 4:7,16-18, 5:1

LEADER'S STUDY

This Light, Momentary Affliction

2 Corinthians 4:7, 16-18, 5:1

What is happening?

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth about suffering. He acknowledges that he and his team have endured much as they traveled to various parts of the world with the gospel. But how could they not preach it? God has shone His light into the darkness of their lives in order to reveal His glory through Jesus, a gift that Paul calls a treasure. This treasure is poured into a common clay pot, one that can be easily broken (i.e., their weak, mortal bodies). God could have found a better way to carry such a precious commodity, but He chose this way in order to demonstrate that the power is His, not the vessels' (v. 7).

Paul summarized some of the many things they endured. But even after all that, he says, they don't lose heart, for it's all for the sake of bringing others into God's kingdom. This is an eternal work that brings glory to God; any collateral suffering is comparatively minor, and it lasts just a moment in light of eternity. Paul wasn't a blind-to-reality optimist when he wrote these things, nor practicing "the power of positive thinking." Rather, he expressed the most reasonable view, given the truth of God as revealed through Christ.

Where is the gospel?

The gospel draws us out of the darkness of this present world and into the light of Christ's kingdom. The gospel gives us a new, heavenly perspective that those who are still lost in their sins can't see. Only God can bring this kind of sight to the blind, and only through Christ's resurrection can we be assured that physical death is merely the portal through which we pass into eternal glory with our Savior. The worst we can possibly face in the here-and-now is just a light, momentary affliction in comparison to that glory, and all the pain will seem like a hangnail once we're on the other side.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: Do I dwell on my problems and allow them to consume me? Or do I look beyond them and seek Christ's purposes through them? Do I consider the gospel to be a treasure to be shared with others? How is God calling me to think and to live differently? How does this change my perspective today? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on this passage as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Psalm 22:24, 26; 44:6-8; Proverbs 28:26; Isaiah 40:3-31; Jeremiah 17:7-8; Luke 18:9-14. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ 2 Corinthians 4:7, 16-18, 5:1

and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation.

Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective. (The New Living Translation is particularly helpful with this passage)

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

Every verse of scripture points to the gospel. Look for how this passage points to Jesus and what He has done.

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

What is significant, surprising or confusing from these verses?

What seems to be the main point of this letter?

How does this portion of scripture point to Jesus and the gospel?

What parts of this passage are challenging to your current way of thinking?

What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?

What parts of this passage can you relate to?

Look at one or two key words and define them really clearly, then look at them in context with that definition. Does this change your understanding?

Why did God bring me to this scripture today?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How is God calling you to obey, based on this passage?

or

What is your "I will" statement?

(Encourage everyone to steer clear of "we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?