

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

COFFEEHOUSE FIVE CHURCH
COUNTER CULTURE
FAITH
2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18
11/19/2017



MAIN POINT

As we believe the gospel with deep-seated conviction in our lives, let's proclaim the gospel with death-defying confidence in the world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Many people do not share their faith because they say, "It's private." Is it possible to have a private faith?

Those who believe the gospel proclaim the gospel. Every day thousands upon thousands die without ever having the chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. This should be intolerable to the church of Jesus Christ. God created every man and woman to be a disciple who makes disciples. If we do not give our life to intentional disciple making we are missing the entire point of what it means to be a Christian. Among all we've discussed in this study, the gospel is the most counter cultural claim of all. The world is too perilous and the gospel is too glorious for us to remain silent.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-15.

What hope do all who believe in Jesus Christ have? What should this hope motivate us to do in response?

According to verse 15, why did Paul share the gospel with the Corinthians? What did he expect the Corinthians to do as well?

What is the difference between being motivated to share the gospel by guilt and by glory? Which approach describes you most often?

Read Romans 1:16. Why should we preach the gospel no matter the cost? What makes it a unique message?

For those who do not know Christ, an eternal, conscious, torment awaits them in hell. But those in Christ will be raised with

Him. The resurrection is the foundation of our hope as we share the gospel with the lost. Paul was so consumed with the glory of God, he could not stop speaking about Jesus. This motivation for the glory of God should lead all of us to passionately share the gospel in places where God has put us. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. When we speak the gospel, people will be saved, and God's kingdom will be built.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18.

Why should we expect suffering as we share the gospel? What is the danger of embracing safety and being unwilling to suffer for the gospel?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4. Why do unbelievers not recognize the glory of God in Christ? What implications does that have as we go on mission to the lost?

As Christians suffer, what perspective should they maintain? Is it difficult for you to cultivate and maintain this attitude? If so, why?

The word in Greek translated "beyond all comparison" is where we get the English word "hyperbole." What does this help us understand about what awaits every Christian?

The god of the world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the gospel and do not want to see the gospel. The reason so many people remain unreached is they are hard to reach. They don't want to be reached. They are opposed to the gospel. Taking the gospel to these nations will result in suffering, but through many hardships we enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). We suffer for the gospel because when we do we are preparing for an eternal weight of glory like nothing we can imagine. Our hope is incomparable.

How did Stephen's suffering build the church?

Does anyone know brother and sisters who serve in difficult places with hard to reach people? What are some unique challenges they face in their context?

Re-read verse 18. How do we maintain perspective of the things unseen when what we see in front of us is difficult and hard?

It has been said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Perhaps the most impactful witness we can have is an unshakable faith in our God exhibited through suffering and persecution. Romans 8 makes it clear that if God is for us, who will ultimately stand against us? The purpose of God to build His church is an endeavour He has chosen to involve us in. Let's embrace hardship and suffering, looking to things unseen and the glory of God among all peoples.,

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you really believe this gospel? What will it motivate you to do or change about your life? How does it change the way you relate to and respond to social justice issues?

Who are 3-4 people in your sphere of influence who do not believe the gospel? Will you commit to pray for opportunities to share the gospel with these people?

Have you ever gone to another part of the world to share the gospel? What was that experience like? How did it change the way you live at home?

PRAY

Pray that God would use you, your small group, and your church to proclaim His eternal glory to all the nations of the world. Ask for an all-consuming passion to see more and more people hear and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Commentary

2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18.

4:14-15. Notice Paul's use of you and your in these verses. See also 4:5 and 12. These verses provide evidence of Paul's objective in helping the Corinthian Christians. He acted out of unselfish motives. Paul's experience of salvation motivated him to share the good news with others. After he had believed, he wanted to share the gospel message (see v. 13). Although Paul's critics had accused him of acting out of selfishness, he refuted that charge in verse 15. His statement that all things are for your sakes included not only his preaching ministry but also the abuse he had endured from his enemies. The last part of verse 15 suggests that Paul expected the Corinthian Christians to join him in spreading the gospel. The result would be that more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

4:16. The Greek word translated "therefore" turns our attention to what Paul had previously written, particularly 4:1-15. His expression we do not lose heart repeats a portion of 4:1. In 4:1 Paul did not lose heart because of God's mercy and because of the greatness of the ministry God had given him. Paul humbly realized that the ministry he was engaged in was a consequence of God's mercy to him. In 4:16 Paul stated that he did not lose heart because even though his outer man was decaying, his inner man was being renewed day by day. By the phrase our outer man is decaying, Paul referred to the aging process of the physical body, perhaps including all its faculties and energies such as mental processes. This reference to the outer man should not be confused with Paul's references elsewhere to the "old self," a reference to the unregenerate nature (see Rom. 6:6).

The form of the word translated is decaying indicates a constant and irreversible process. In contrast to this constant decay, Paul stated that our inner man is being renewed day by day. By use of the expression inner man, Paul referred to the real but unseen aspect of himself. The expression denotes the source of a person's will, emotions, thoughts, and affections. In Ephesians 3:16 Paul prayed that God would grant believers "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." In effect, Paul contrasted his deteriorating physical body with his growing spiritual nature. The deterioration of his physical body was related to his afflictions and persecutions (see 4:17). Paradoxically, Paul was wasting away and growing at the same time. We must always remember, however, that Paul anticipated the believer's future existence with God not as disembodied souls but rather as whole persons with resurrection bodies.

4:17-18. Although Paul never invited persecution or bodily pain, he viewed all the suffering he endured as momentary, light affliction. Certainly Paul's sufferings for the sake of Christ were not trivial or inconsequential. Paul's statements in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 clearly show that his suffering was intense. Why then did Paul refer to his suffering as momentary, light affliction? The key lies in Paul's perspective on life. Paul's afflictions seemed light and insignificant in contrast to the eternal weight of glory he anticipated.

Furthermore, Paul's sufferings for Jesus' sake led him to depend on God instead of on himself. If Christians are prepared to be identified with Christ in this sinful world and accept the sufferings that come as a consequence, they will share Christ's glory (see Rom. 8:17). Paul described this result as an eternal weight of glory, thus making his afflictions seem as nothing in comparison. Although Paul once had acted from the perspective of a zealous Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians, his perspective forever changed on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9). To the Christians at Philippi, he wrote: "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:8-9).

The Greek verb translated "look . . . at" in 2 Corinthians 4:18 carries the concept of fixing one's gaze intently or concentrating on something. As a Christian, Paul did not value material, temporal things visible to physical eyes. Rather, he valued spiritual, eternal things. Jesus changed Paul's perspective and enabled him to see what really mattered in life.