

Ministry of Reconciliation

January 1, 2012

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2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-6:2

Week's Core Competency:

Giving Away My Faith- I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. 20 For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should. (Eph 6:19-20)

Using This Study

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

2 Corinthians 5:1-6:2

11 Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord, we seek to persuade people. We are completely open before God, and I hope we are completely open to your consciences as well.

12 We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who take pride in the outward appearance rather than in the heart.

13 For if we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we have a sound mind, it is for you.

14 For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died.

15 And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.

16 From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him in this way.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

18 Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."

21 He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 Working together with Him, we also appeal to you, "Don't receive God's grace in vain."

2 For He says: I heard you in an acceptable time, and I helped you in the day of salvation. Look, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation.

EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

Thus far Paul has emphasized the glorious power of the new covenant, a power that gives the apostle hope even in the fear of death. Now he moves on and details more specifically what the good news of the new covenant is all about: God has reconciled sinful people to Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the core of the gospel.

Motivation for ministry (5:11-15)

1. To what do the words "since, then" (5:11; Greek "therefore") refer?
2. Referring to your answer to question 1, what does Paul mean in this context by the expression "fear the Lord" (5:11)?
3. Why was Paul so concerned to justify his apostolic ministry to the Corinthian Christians (5:12)?
4. According to Paul, how were his opponents building themselves up at Paul's expense (5:12)? Contrast their behavior with Paul's.

If we are out of our mind (5:13). No doubt a charge leveled at Paul by his opponents in Corinth. Exactly what led them to do so remains unclear. Among the possible accusations are: (1) Paul's esoteric teachings, often difficult to understand or accept, led his detractors to label him as "out of his mind." (2) Paul is referring to his mystical experiences such as "tongues" and visions (see Acts 22:17-21). (3) Paul was often carried away with emotion. (4) Paul was preoccupied with self-commendation (3:1; 5:12). (5) In Jewish eyes, Paul's conversion was sheer lunacy.

5. Do you think the word "all," which occurs three times in 5:14-15, refers to all people in general or all people who believe in Christ? Why?
6. Write out 5:15, substituting "I" and "me" where appropriate.
7. What is one way in which you would like to "live for Christ" this week?

The message of reconciliation (5:16-6:2)

From a worldly point of view (5:16). Literally, "according to the flesh." In Paul's letters "flesh" is often used to denote a perspective opposed to the things of God—in other words, a worldly point of view (since Paul views the world as sinful). See Romans 8:1-17 for Paul's classic treatment of the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh (which the NIV translates as "sinful nature").

8. Paraphrase 2 Cor. 5:15-17, making use of the clues from the word *therefore*.

Study Skill—Inferences

Words such as "since, then" (5:11), "so" (5:16) and "therefore" (5:17) are used to indicate inferences. That is, the sentence or paragraph which precedes such words serves as an argument or an evidence for what follows. The French philosopher Descartes' statement, "I think, therefore I am," is a classic example of such an inference.

In following Paul's line of argumentation, it is important to pay close attention to such inferences. In each case, the reader should look at the statement preceding a word such as "therefore" in order to discover the basis for what Paul says after the "therefore." For example, in the NIV 2 Cor. 5:16 begins with the word "so." The reader should then look at the statement which precedes (5:15) to see if 5:16 is a reasonable inference from it.

In rare instances a "therefore" statement is supported by a statement which does not immediately precede it. In 5:17, "therefore" refers to 5:15. (In the Greek, "so" in verse 16 and "therefore" in verse 17 are the same word so it's clear they are parallel statements referring to verse 15).

9. Read 5:16-17. Contrast a worldly point of view ("the old") with a Christian point of view ("the new") about Jesus, the Bible, human nature, and the future.

the old view	the new view
Jesus	
the Bible	
human nature	
the future	

10. Look up "reconcile" in a dictionary and write out a definition that fits Paul's usage of this word in 5:18-20.
11. How was the Holy God able to accomplish reconciliation between Himself and sinful humanity (5:21)?

We urge you (6:1). The verb translated "urge" here is derived from the same word Paul uses in 1:3-7 when speaking of the "comfort" of God. See the note on comfort from 1:3-7 in lesson 1.

12. In 5:20 and 6:1 Paul appears to be making evangelistic appeals to people who are already Christians (i.e., his Corinthian readers). How do these appeals relate to his overall concern that the Corinthians recognize and accept his apostolic authority?
13. How does Paul indicate that this reconciliation is not confined to the future, but is happening at the present time (6:1-2)?

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

1. **For Thought and Discussion:** Discuss ways in which we sometimes take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart (5:12).
2. **For Thought and Discussion:** How can a Christian be motivated both by the fear of the Lord (5:11) and Christ's love (5:14)?
3. **For Further Study:** Compare 2 Cor. 5:17 with Romans 12:2; Ephes. 4:22-24; and Col. 3:1-11. Write down what it means to you to be a "new creation" in Christ.
4. **Optional Application:** As you pray this week, thank God specifically for sending Christ to die for your sins, and pray for wisdom and strength to live for Christ rather than for self (5:15).
5. **For Thought and Discussion:** Why was it necessary for Christ to die in order for us to be reconciled to God (5:21)? (You may wish to refer to Paul's lengthy discussions in Romans 3:21-31 and Romans 5:12-21.)
6. **For Further Study:** Compare and contrast Paul's statements concerning Christ's sinlessness (5:21) with those of 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:15; and Hebrews 7:26.
7. **For Thought and Discussion:** What does it mean to "receive the grace of God in vain" (6:1)?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to **KNOW**...

Write about how God wants you to **FEEL**...

Write about what God wants you to **DO**...

Sermon Notes

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ