

COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE**But Not...**

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-16

OVERVIEW

Everything—literally everything—in heaven and on earth is being united in Christ (1:10). Only when we understand who Christ is can we begin to understand who we are. We often read Paul’s letters thinking about all Scripture calls us to do. But before Ephesians calls us to do anything, it reminds us what God has done in Christ.

Our identity is not based on what we do, but who we are. Our identity is not earned and achieved but declared and received. Our identity, as Christians, is found “in Christ.” We are united to Christ—and that changes everything about us! Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus explains what we were (apart from Christ), who we are (in Christ), and then how we should live as followers of Christ, all for the glory of Christ.

APPLY // 1 CORINTHIANS 4:7-9, 16-18

1. Read 1 Corinthians 4:7-18.
2. How does being a “jar of clay” show the surpassing power of God?
3. What do we miss when we do not understand ourselves to be “jars of clay” but try to be “ornate crystal vases?” How does embracing our weakness allow us to live in freedom?
4. In verses 17, Paul says our problems are light and momentary when compared to eternal glory. Why is it important to realize Paul doesn’t just say our problems are light and momentary? How does this comparison provide a more realistic understanding of the weight to our affliction?
5. Paul tells us how he anticipates the glory that is to come in heaven. How is this different than simply comparing or enduring to get through bouts of suffering? How does this magnify the glory that is to come?
6. How does paying attention to the truth of what is seen help us anticipate the glory of what is unseen? Provide specific examples.

STUDY // ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

Study the passage of Scripture aiming to faithfully interpret and apply what you observe. Remember we study God’s word not just to increase our knowledge, but to increase our trust in and treasuring of Jesus Christ.

1. Read Zechariah 1:1-6. (This sermon will focus on verses 1-6).
2. Who is the author? When is he writing? To whom is he writing?
 - a. Zechariah means “God remembers” or “God has remembered”
 - b. Read Ezra 5:1-6:16, which gives the background to Zechariah. The setting for Zechariah is after Israel’s return from exile in Babylon (post-exilic). Soon after the

Israelites returned to Jerusalem (538 BC), they started to rebuild the Temple but stopped because of opposition (about 534 BC). The chief purpose of Zechariah was to rebuke the people and motivate them to complete rebuilding the Temple. They started rebuilding the Temple during the second year of Darius (520 BC) and finished around 516 BC. (Note: the Temple was the centerpiece of Israel's communion with God.)

- i. "Ezra gives the background to the Book of Haggai [and Zechariah] and describes how the Samaritans hindered the building of the temple and wrote a letter to the Persian King. Initial optimism was dampened by hardships. They gave up the relative comfort of Babylonian culture to pioneer and land filled with enemies. Finding it easier to stop building than fight their neighbors work on the Temple ceased in 534 BC. The pessimism of the people led to spiritual lethargy, they became preoccupied with their own building projects. It was in this context that God called his prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the same task of urging the people to complete the Temple." (Adapted from *Talk Thru the Bible*).
 3. In verse 2, what does it mean the Lord is angry with "your fathers?" According to verses 4, why is the Lord angry?
 - a. What does this tell us about the character of God?
 - b. What does this tell us about the Israelites?
 4. In verse 3, what does the Lord of hosts say? What does it mean for the Israelites to "return to me"? What does it mean the Lord of hosts will "return to you"? Note that it says "return to me" not to the law, to good deeds, etc.
 - a. What does this tell us about the character of God?
 5. In verse 5, what questions does God ask? Why does he ask these rhetorical questions?
 6. How does verse 6 contrast with verse 5? What's the point of the Lord's words in this verse?
 7. According to the end of verse 6, how do the people respond? What do you notice about their words?
 8. How do these verses point us to the person and work of Jesus?
- General Bible study questions:
 - **God:** What does this passage teach me about the character of God?
 - **Humanity:** What does this passage teach me about myself and my need for God?
 - **Christ:** How does this passage teach me that God has met my needs in the person and work of Jesus Christ?
 - **Response:** How should I respond with my affections and my actions?
 - **God:** How does this passage help me hope in heaven?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Relationships developed and deepened during accountability provide regular encouragement, and when necessary admonition, to spur each other on to delight in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Ask one another heart-probing, clarifying questions, and help each other apply the gospel to your lives.

QUESTION: How have you experience God's surpassing power in your weakness?