

# PRODIGAL

## CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



## PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2) - 7 RULES FOR LIFE

### Community Group Study Guide 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 - Week of September 26

#### Introduction

- As a church with a lot of young people, we have many who are trying to “find themselves.” The more you look for yourself, though, the more you lose yourself and more lost you get. It’s by finding God, letting yourself be found by him, that you will find yourself.
- In the introduction of *Institutes*, John Calvin, posited: (1) Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God, and (2) Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.
- In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul is concluding an argument that he began in 2:14. He claims that you can only know God unless he’s revealed himself to you, and you can only know God unless he’s revealed the piercing truth of the gospel to your heart. We preach the gospel because that’s the only way people get saved, and, he continues, as we preach the gospel there is a double effect. To those being saved the gospel gives an aroma of life, and to those refusing to believe the gospel gives an aroma of death. The aroma of death comes not just because people reject the gospel and find it irrelevant and/or offensive, but also because by rejecting the gospel their fate is sealed.
- As Paul closes his argument in chapter 4, he explains that the way to be used by God is to know God and know self. In a sense, he’s expressing that in order to find yourself learn to speak for God. In learning to speak for him you will know yourself better, speak for him better and speak for what is truly good. He provides “7 Rules for Life.”

#### 1. Live with Heart

- v1: Though tempted, we do not lose heart. Charles Spurgeon wrote in his *Lectures* about the tendency for a minister of the gospel to “sink to the dust.” No disciple of Christ knew this experience more than Paul when one considers the personal attacks that he faced from opposition and from churches (that he planted, especially the church of Corinth). Paul didn’t sink, but he continued to love from the heart and defended the integrity of his ministry, point-by-point.
- A lot of people lose heart quickly because they’re so used to winning and being successful. They don’t know how to take a loss and keep trying at something.
- Christians need to ask themselves, “How is my heart?”, and remember that gospel ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit is glorious work. It is not a ministry of faint-heartedness, but boldness. Paul continued doing bold ministry because he never forgot that God saved him. See v.16; Acts 9:15-16; 1 Timothy 1:12-17.

#### 2. Live with Integrity

- v2: Paul embraced integrity in his method of ministry by rejecting all deceit, trickery and watering down of God’s word. He lived and spoke as if God was always watching him.
- True gospel ministry does not use slyness, cunning and stealth like Satan. See 2 Cor. 11:3
- Paul’s rejection of trickery here was a response to the behind-the-back attempts to bring him down by the false teachers who have influenced the Corinthian church.
- The way that many false teachers deceive and trick people in churches today is by teaching from a presupposition of unbelief in the inspiration, authority and efficacy of the Scriptures. They do this by removing sections of text from their context, using the Bible simplistically as a code of ethics, a motivator for altruism, or a means to promote their hobbyhorse. We can only read scripture with the presuppositions provided by scripture.
- Most often though, God’s word gets watered down by a preacher’s laziness.
- We need to ask ourselves if our ministry to the world is one of integrity in the sight of God. (See v2; 1 Tim. 2:15). We need to preach and share God’s word with bold simplicity and clarity.

#### 3. Live with Spiritual Perception

## DISCUSSION GOALS

### Head

To understand that proper understanding of self and God cannot be found apart from one another.

### Heart

To trust that God can save us and use us despite our sinfulness and frailty.

### Hands

To carry on in faithful ministry to the Lord, viewing all of life’s challenges and trials within the framework provided by God in scripture.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Baptism Seminar** will be held on October 3 after the 11:15 service ends (at 1PM). Please RSVP to [admin@mosaicboston.com](mailto:admin@mosaicboston.com) if interested.

Members please **RSVP to Mosaic’s 10th birthday gathering**. See the latest email from Chloe.

**HELP IS NEEDED for setup and teardown for Mosaic’s 10th Birthday Party.** Sign up here: <https://mosaicboston.churchcenter.com/people/forms/284110>

- v3-4: When Paul preached and shared the simple gospel, he perceived the interior, spiritual reasons for rejection. When the gospel was rejected he knew it happened because a veil was over the heart/mind of his hearers because of their unbelief. He didn't question the power of the gospel or take rejection personal.
- Paul knew firsthand what it was like to be blind to the truth before being dazzled by the glory of Christ. This gave him the insight to understand his ministry engagements properly and compassion to continue to preach the gospel when he faced rejection and scrutiny. See Acts 26:12-18.
- If the gospel doesn't make sense, if the glory of Christ is mystical jargon, one must ask God to remove the veil. When a person does this, the logic of the gospel and the transforming glory of Christ become clear, and he/she will have the organizing reality for their existence.
- We need to see past the physical when we engage the world, and trust in God's good hand to work for our good and the conversion of sinners. We can't take rejection from the world and individuals personally. We should expect rejection, and acceptance as we carry out faithful ministry.

#### **4. Live to Exalt Jesus Christ**

- v5: The antidote to the veil of blindness is lifting up Christ. Preaching "Jesus Christ as Lord" is preaching the gospel. It is proclaiming Jesus as the "Christ," "the anointed one," and "the Messiah," who is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In him there is salvation. See Luke 2:29-32; 1 Cor. 15:3-4.
- Proclaiming Jesus as "Lord" is an acknowledgement that the incarnated crucified and resurrected Christ has been put into an exalted position of lordship in heaven by the Father, from which he rules the world. Where Adam, and all man has failed, Christ has triumphed.
- Romans 10:9: All who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead will be saved.
- 1 Cor. 12:3: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit."

#### **5. Live with Creation Confidence**

- v6: Satan may have blinded people and ushered them into darkness, but divine grace and light is more powerful.
- Paul makes an analogy between conversion and creation. As one who knew first hand what it was like to be blinded by sin and saved by the light of Christ's glory (literally), he suggests that the kind of transformation that happens in a person when they are converted in Christ is the creation of a whole new person. As the Lord spoke the creation, the light, out of darkness, he uses his word in the gospel to call us out of darkness and into light, into a new existence. When the light shines into our life, we finally see/know ourselves properly (as sinners in need of God's grace in order to be restored into his presence) and see/know God properly.
- People still living in darkness will believe anything, and turn to anything in pursuit of peace, love, knowledge, and joy that can only be found in saving relationship with God through faith in Christ.
- The new knowledge and life that Christians have in Christ should give them a confidence and boldness to confront Satan, sin and the world, and proclaim the gospel in boldness.

#### **6. Live with Paradoxical Power**

- 2 Cor. 4:7: While God's message, which he uses to save people who are dead in sin, is majestic, those whom he calls to proclaim it are fragile, unimpressive jars of clay. God uses unimpressive people, like Paul and us, so that there is no mistake about the "surpassing" power of God that saves and creates new people in Christ.
- v8-10: Our weakness invites God's strength, and ultimately reveals his power. He should get all the glory in all that we do in the ministry. Often, he allows his servants to suffer, so that it's clear to everyone that they too need a Savior. We get knocked down, but not knocked out.
- v11-12: The same hostility from unbelievers and the demonic realm that crucified Jesus is directed against those who speak on Christ's behalf. This points us to great exchange that occurs when we place our faith in Christ: Christ life for ours. Life comes through suffering. To give life one must give life, as a mother bears a child and a parent foregoes the opportunity to live for themselves in order to invest in the development of a child.
- v13-14: Psalm 116:10 is quoted. It is a psalm in which David talks about a time when he almost died and God delivered him. Paul is saying that Christians should let the world do its worst, as it did to Jesus, but that victory will be ours at the end.
- v15: The more people who come to faith in Christ, the more thanksgiving and praise will be offered to God. God is worthy of all glory and we want to see him receive the glory that he's due, so we tell people about Jesus for His sake and their sake and take on some of the pain of the work.

#### **7. Live with Daily Renewal**

- v16-18: He could lose heart and focus on all of the troubles that come with ministry, but Paul focuses on happier things when he contemplates the glory to come when he will share in the triumph to Christ. He values the way that challenges in the ministry prepare him for eternity in the presence of Christ.
- Like Paul, we need to let the guarantee of Christ's ultimate triumph power us forward on a daily basis. We can live life like children because we are God's children. We don't have to shoulder the burden for all responsibilities because the Father does so for us. We can appreciate our daily bread and work and enjoy life because we know who we are, who God is, and where we're going.
- Conclusion: Eminem was right...partially. You don't find yourself by looking for yourself; you find yourself by losing yourself in God. Lose yourself in God, for God, to find God, and be found in him.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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### **Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18**

1. What are some things that you have done in order to “find yourself”? What did you find?
2. What kind of knowledge and transformation has come into your life since you first submitted to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
3. Can someone remind the group of the “7 Rules for Life” that Pastor Jan discussed during the sermon?
4. Which of the 7 Rules for Life was most insightful and/or helpful to you? Why?
5. **Read verse 4.** Why do people who are very successful in “life” tend to “lose heart” very quickly in Christian ministry/life?
6. What understanding about his salvation enabled Paul to avoid losing heart, and helped him to persevere and thrive in his ministry?
7. What is the common presupposition that is behind the tampering and watering down of God’s word by false teachers today?
8. What did Pastor Jan mean when he said to “live with spiritual perception”?
9. How would you rate your present ability to speak to a person’s soul? How would you rate your confidence level for doing so?
10. After hearing this sermon, how would you engage a friend who tells you about things that they are doing in order to “find themselves” differently?