

Small Group Study Guide

2 Corinthians 4: Treasures in Clay Pots

Icebreaker Question

Share about a time when you felt "hard-pressed on every side" but experienced God's faithfulness. What did you learn through that experience?

Key Scripture

****2 Corinthians 4:7-9**** - "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."

Main Takeaways

1. ****Ministry is a Gift from God, Not Personal Ambition****
 - Paul's calling came from God, not from his own five-year plan
 - When we know God has called us, we don't lose heart in difficulties
 - Our security comes from knowing who chose us, not from our own abilities
2. ****We Are Clay Pots Holding God's Treasure****
 - God deliberately uses weak, ordinary vessels (us) to display His power
 - This ensures God receives the glory, not us
 - The most valuable gift (relationship with Jesus) is entrusted to fragile humans
3. ****Suffering Has Purpose in the Christian Life****
 - Trials help us identify with Christ's sufferings
 - Our struggles allow others to see God working in us
 - Suffering develops character, depth, and wisdom for ministry
4. ****Focus on the Eternal, Not the Temporary****
 - We must shift from a horizontal (earthly) to vertical (heavenly) perspective
 - What we see is temporary; what we don't see is eternal
 - Our light afflictions are working an eternal weight of glory

Discussion Questions

1. ****Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.**** What does Paul mean by "renouncing the hidden things of shame"? How does this apply to ministry and Christian living today?
2. ****According to verses 3-4, what blinds people from seeing the gospel?**** What are the four reasons given in the sermon that people are indifferent to God's Word?
3. ****Explain the metaphor of "earthen vessels" (verse 7).**** Why would God choose to put His treasure in such fragile containers?

Personal Reflection

4. ****Paul lists several paradoxes in verses 8-9**** (hard-pressed but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, etc.). Which of these resonates most with your current life situation? Share why.

5. **The sermon emphasized that "we don't have to change who we are (*personality*) to serve God."** How does this challenge or encourage you in your understanding of God's calling on your life?

6. **Verse 18 says we should "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."** What are some "seen" things that distract you from focusing on eternal realities? How can you shift your focus?

Application

7. **Paul says in verse 5, "we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."** How can we ensure our service and witness point to Jesus rather than ourselves?

8. **The sermon mentioned that suffering allows others to see God working in us.** Can you think of someone whose faith during trials encouraged you? How might your current struggles be used to minister to others?

9. **Paul had boldness to speak because of his faith (verse 13).** What holds you back from boldly sharing your faith? How does understanding that "God does the work" help remove that pressure?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

****Option 1: Shift Your Perspective****

- Each time you face a frustration or trial this week, pause and ask: "How might God be using this for eternal purposes?" Journal your observations.

****Option 2: Share Your Story****

- Identify one person who needs encouragement and share how God has worked through a difficult season in your life.

****Option 3: Embrace Humility****

- Look for one opportunity to serve someone this week in a "behind the scenes" way where you won't receive recognition.

****Option 4: Focus on the Eternal****

- Each morning, read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and ask God to help you maintain an eternal perspective throughout the day.

Memory Verse

****2 Corinthians 4:7**** - "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

Prayer Points

****Praise:****

- Thank God that He chooses to use ordinary people for His extraordinary purposes
- Praise Him that our weakness displays His strength

****Confession:****

- Confess areas where you've focused on temporary things rather than eternal realities
- Ask forgiveness for times you've sought your own glory rather than God's

****Intercession:****

- Pray for those who are spiritually blinded (verse 4)
- Pray for believers facing persecution in other countries
- Pray for anyone in your group facing trials or "hard-pressed" situations

****Personal:****

- Ask God to help you embrace your role as a "clay pot" that displays His treasure
- Pray for boldness to share the gospel this week

Closing Thought

"We are all going to have trials and struggles, but if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, there's a purpose in your trial. There's a purpose in your struggle. And that's to draw you closer to Jesus Christ, to let you see the power of God work in your life, and it's for you to be a testimony to others."

For Next Week

Read 2 Corinthians 5 in preparation for next week's study.

Consider: What does it mean to be "absent from the body and present with the Lord"? How should the reality of eternity affect how we live today?