

# Small Group Guide: 2 Corinthians 5

## "Living with an Eternal Perspective"

### OPENING PRAYER & ICEBREAKER

**Prayer:** Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and to help the group apply these truths to their daily lives.

**Icebreaker:** Share about a time when you went camping in a tent. What was challenging about it? How did it feel to get back home to your regular house?

### KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (Primary passage)
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (Context from previous chapter)
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (Ministry of reconciliation)

### SERMON SUMMARY

Paul uses the metaphor of tents and houses to contrast our temporary earthly bodies with our eternal heavenly dwelling. He teaches that:

- Our physical bodies are like tents that will wear out
- We have an eternal home in heaven prepared by Jesus
- The Holy Spirit is our guarantee of this future inheritance
- We should live with an eternal perspective, not focused on temporary things
- We are ambassadors for Christ, called to the ministry of reconciliation
- Jesus took our place on the cross, reconciling us to God

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Understanding the Text

1. **The Tent and the House:** What does Paul mean when he describes our bodies as "tents"? Why is this such an effective metaphor? How does this change your perspective on aging, illness, or physical limitations?
2. **The Holy Spirit as Guarantee:** According to verse 5, the Holy Spirit is described as "earnest money" or a guarantee. What does this mean practically for believers? How have you experienced the Holy Spirit as a "down payment" on your eternal inheritance?
3. **Present vs. Absent:** Read verses 6-8. What does Paul mean when he says "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord"? How does this contradict popular cultural beliefs about what happens after death?

## Going Deeper

4. **The Bema Seat Judgment:** The sermon explained the difference between the Bema Seat judgment (for believers) and the Great White Throne judgment (for the lost). How does understanding that the Bema Seat is about rewards (not salvation) affect how you live for Christ today?
5. **Walking by Faith, Not by Sight:** In verse 7, Paul says "we walk by faith, not by sight." What are some "seen" things that distract you from the "unseen" eternal things? How can you practically shift your focus?
6. **New Creation:** Verse 17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." What does it mean to be "in Christ"? The sermon emphasized this isn't just attending church or making a one-time decision. How would you describe what it means to be "in union with Christ"?

## Application & Reflection

7. **Making It Your Aim:** Verse 9 says, "Therefore we make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him." What specific areas of your life need to be realigned to this aim? What would change if your primary goal each day was to please Christ?

8. **Ambassadors for Christ:** According to verses 18-20, believers are "ambassadors for Christ" with a "ministry of reconciliation."
  - What does it mean to be an ambassador in a foreign land?
  - How does viewing yourself as an ambassador change how you interact with your workplace, neighborhood, or family?
  - Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear about reconciliation with God?
9. **The Great Exchange:** Verse 21 describes substitutionary atonement: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
  - How does understanding that Jesus literally took your place on the cross affect your daily walk?
  - How should this truth impact how we view ourselves and others?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Eternal Perspective Matters:** Our physical bodies are temporary, but our eternal home is secure in Christ. This should change how we view suffering, aging, and death.
2. **The Holy Spirit is Our Guarantee:** We have the down payment of heaven living within us right now, guiding, comforting, and assuring us of our salvation.
3. **We Are Ambassadors:** As believers, we represent Christ in a foreign land. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we're here on assignment.
4. **God Made the First Move:** We were enemies of God, but He reached out to reconcile us through Christ. We didn't earn it; He provided it.
5. **Live to Please Him:** Whether we're alive or with the Lord, our aim should be to please Christ in all things because of what He's done for us.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

## This Week's Challenge:

Choose **ONE** of the following to practice this week:

**Option 1 - Eternal Focus Exercise:** Each morning this week, before checking your phone or starting your day, spend 5 minutes reminding yourself:

- My body is a temporary tent
- My real home is in heaven
- Today I represent Christ as His ambassador
- I will focus on eternal things, not just temporary concerns

**Option 2 - Reconciliation Ministry:** Identify one person in your life who needs to be reconciled to God. Pray for them daily this week and ask God for an opportunity to share about what Christ has done for you. Don't force it—just be available and watch for God's timing.

**Option 3 - Gratitude for the Exchange:** Write out 2 Corinthians 5:21 and carry it with you this week. Each time you're tempted to feel guilty, condemned, or "not good enough," read it and thank God that Jesus took your sin and gave you His righteousness.

**Option 4 - Ambassador Mindset:** Before entering your workplace, school, or any situation this week, pause and pray: "Lord, I am Your ambassador here. Help me represent You well. Let people see Jesus in me today."

# ACCOUNTABILITY & PRAYER

## Share & Pray:

- What is one specific way you want to live with a more eternal perspective this week?
- What struggles or fears about death, suffering, or the future do you need to surrender to God?
- Who do you know that needs to hear about reconciliation with God? How can the group pray for that situation?

## Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for the finished work of Christ on the cross
- Ask for the Holy Spirit's help to live as ambassadors
- Pray for those who don't yet know Christ
- Pray for an eternal perspective in daily challenges
- Thank God for the promise of our eternal home

## CLOSING THOUGHT

*"We are not just our physical bodies. We are eternal souls. When this tent wears out, we don't cease to exist—we simply change residence. And that residence is with Jesus, in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Let that truth change how you live today."*

## FOR AFTER CHRISTMAS

- Read 2 Corinthians 6 in preparation for next week's study (or the next sermon topic)
- Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."
- Be prepared to share how you practiced being an ambassador for Christ this week

**Group Leader Note:** Be sensitive to group members who may have recently lost loved ones or who are facing serious health challenges. The discussion about death and eternal life should be handled with pastoral care and compassion. Emphasize the hope we have in Christ, not fear of death.