

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

SAY: “In our last session, we looked at how God uses us to bring comfort to others. Today we look specifically at how we are to use our brokenness as a way to share the gospel.” Invite members to turn to **page 3** in the **Personal Study Guide (PSG)** and review session titles.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture (**PSG, p. 134**) as you introduce **Question #1: What marketing methods are least likely to persuade you?**

OPTION: IN ADVANCE, invite someone in your group or church who is known to be a soul winner to briefly share (2-3 minutes) how he or she does this in a genuine way. Emphasize that everyone’s story has an aspect that can be used to connect with those who have not yet come to Christ.

SESSION 5

A PASSION TO SHARE THE GOSPEL



The Point

God calls us to share the gospel.

The Bible Meets Life

One of the beauties of life is the uniqueness each one of us brings to it. We are created by God with particular interests, abilities, and personalities. Our individuality is compounded by our history—

including our sins, failures, and victories. We are all unique, but God calls us to the same task: to share His gospel. Our individual histories and experiences provide opportunities for us to bring the gospel into the lives of others.

The Passage

2 Corinthians 5:11,14-21

The Setting

About A.D. 50–52, Paul founded the church at Corinth and ministered there for 18 months (Acts 18:11). Paul corresponded with (and visited) the Corinthians over the next three years, attempting to answer questions and correct wrong thinking and behavior in the church. In A.D. 56, Paul wrote Second Corinthians (his fourth letter, only two of which survived) to refute false teachers who had infiltrated the Corinthian church and were questioning his apostolic credentials and integrity.

2 Corinthians 5:11

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

KEY WORD

terror (v. 11)—A reverential awe for God, in light of His perfect holiness, righteousness, omniscience, and omnipotence, that leads a person to live in obedience to Him.

The fear of the Lord motivates us to share the gospel.

Verse 11. It has often been said that whenever we see the word **therefore** in Scripture, we need to understand what it is there for. It is an important transition word, connecting truth that precedes it to the truth that follows it.

In chapter 5, Paul briefly noted the future life in heaven that believers will experience after their struggles and groanings in this life. This future life will be far different from what believers experience on this earth. Even so, while we continue to live on this earth we have a responsibility to do what pleases Christ. We do this out of love for what Christ has done for us on the cross. But we also do this because one day all of us will stand before Christ's judgment seat to give an account for our lives—for all our actions and the motivations behind them. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10). As one commentator notes, "The teaching about the judgment seat before which all believers must come reminds us that we have been saved, not for a life of aimlessness or indifference, but to live as to the Lord (see 5:15). This doctrine of the universality of the judgment of believers preserves the moral seriousness of God....The sure prospect of the judgment seat reminds the Corinthians—and all believers—that while they are righteous in Christ by faith alone, the faith that justifies is to be expressed by love and obedience (Gal 5:6; Rom 1:5), and by pleasing the Lord (v. 9)."¹

1▶ In verse 11, Paul noted the driving force behind his ministry—the **terror of the Lord**. The word *terror* may bring to mind a phobia—such as the fear of public speaking, spiders, or the dark. Our word *phobia* comes from the same Greek word *phobos* used in this verse. However the term is

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 135)**. Highlight the author's marketing examples from the business world. Point out that while Jesus and the gospel have nothing to do with marketing, persuasion certainly is involved. Let's consider what persuades us to share Christ with others.

Reinforce the importance of sharing the gospel with others by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 135): God calls us to share the gospel**.

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to help us share the gospel with others. Thank Him for the way He uses our brokenness to help others.

STUDY THE BIBLE 2 Corinthians 5:11



10 minutes

GUIDE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 138.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:11.

GUIDE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 1 on page 139 and this page as well as the **KEY WORD** on page 139 (**PSG, p. 136**) to explain the *terror* of the Lord.

SUMMARIZE: Use the information on **PSG pages 136-137** to highlight the two ways psychologists define motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic.

1. Extrinsic motivation

is what causes us to do something to get an external benefit. For example, when a student wakes up at 4:30 a.m. to deliver newspapers, he is not doing it for the exercise! He is doing it for the extrinsic motivator: money.

2. Intrinsic motivation

is what prompts us to do something for internal satisfaction, without any regard for receiving anything from another person. For example, the parent who wakes up early to cook breakfast for her family is not doing it to receive a parent-of-the-year award! She does it out of love and appreciation for her family.

used in this verse of the reverential awe believers have toward God. This reverential awe for God, in light of His perfect holiness, righteousness, omniscience, and omnipotence, leads a person to live in obedience to Him. ◀

Because Paul had experienced this fear of the Lord, he sought to **persuade men**. To *persuade* means “to convince someone.” A primary focus of Paul’s life was sharing the gospel with others. He gave evidence from Scripture that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Paul proclaimed that faith in Jesus is the only way to be made right with God. He presented the truth and allowed God’s Spirit to bring conviction and confirmation. Paul’s motivation for this work came from the fact that he had experienced a personal encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. This focus on preaching the gospel, making disciples, and teaching them to grow in Christlikeness was the hallmark of Paul’s ministry.

The persuasion Paul mentioned could also refer to his efforts to assure the Corinthians that his apostleship was from God and his sufferings gave validity to his calling. Paul’s motivations had always been plainly evident to the Lord. **We are made manifest to God** can be translated *We stand open to God*. God knew Paul’s heart and motives, as well as his words and actions. Paul also had **trust** that the Corinthians would clearly discern his motives. Since Paul’s ministry was approved by God (1 Thess. 2:4), his hope was that the Corinthians would return to a true understanding that Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ and that he was acting for the benefit of the Corinthians. Paul had already stated, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (2 Cor. 1:12). As Paul’s conscience testified that he was acting in obedience to God and His will, so too he appealed to the **consciences** of the Corinthians. Paul wanted them to draw a conclusion based on the evidence of his life rather than the skeptical words of his critics.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The love of Christ compels us to share the gospel.

2 ▶ **Verses 14-15.** Paul shared the gospel because of **the love of Christ**. This could mean his love for Jesus or the Savior’s love for him. Certainly apart from Christ’s amazing love Paul could not have known or loved Christ. This was what compelled Paul to continue to share the gospel.

In considering the gospel, Paul had weighed the evidence and had become convinced that **if one died for all, then were all dead**. Of course, Paul was referring to the death of Jesus, His atoning sacrifice “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Before Christ came, every human being faced death—eternal separation from God—because of sin. Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty of our sins. Thus, no one has to face death (in the sense of eternal separation from God) because of his or her sins. Be assured, however, salvation isn’t automatic for anyone simply because of Christ’s atoning death. It is only effective for those who receive it—who trust what Jesus did on their behalf and confess Him as Savior and Lord.

Because Christ willingly **died for all**, Paul emphasized **that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves**. These words echo Paul’s previous words to the Corinthians: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). They also reflect his mind-set of giving Christ full control of his life: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20a). Ultimately Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to stop living for themselves, focused on their own self-interests. This was why the Corinthian church continued to have ongoing problems. Instead of living for self, Paul urged them to live for Christ—**him which died for them, and rose again** from the dead

DISCUSS: Question #2
(PSG, p. 137): **How can the fear of the Lord be a good motivator for our witness?**

(Alternate: What comes to mind when you think of persuading others to follow Christ?)

TRANSITION: “In the next verses, Paul described how Christ makes us new creatures through His death and resurrection.”

STUDY THE BIBLE 2 Corinthians 5:14-17



15 minutes

READ: Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

LEADER PACK: Point to **Item 12: In Christ**. Ask a volunteer to read the verse.



GUIDE: Use Bible

Commentary 2 on page 141 and this page to describe the essentials of the gospel that lead to new life: the death and resurrection of Jesus.

SUMMARIZE: Several things stand out in this passage that are a part of the message of Christ that Paul was compelled to share: (**PSG, p. 138**):

- **Christ died for all** (2 Cor. 5:14-15). *Every one of us has sinned. The penalty for failing to live in total obedience to God is death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), but Jesus willingly took upon Himself the death we all deserve (Heb. 2:9).*
- **Christ was raised for all** (2 Cor. 5:15). *God raised Jesus from the dead, and all who believe and trust Jesus will be granted eternal life (John 11:25-26; Rom. 6:5-9).*
- **We can live for Christ** (2 Cor. 5:15). *Christ comes to dwell in His followers; we are not on our own, but He gives us His Spirit to help us live and bring glory to Him (Rom. 8:14-17).*

(Continued on next page.)

so they could experience eternal and abundant life. Living for Christ means that Christ's will is given first priority in the believer's life. ◀

Verse 16. At the moment of salvation, life changes for an individual, both in this world and eternally. Through faith in Christ, a person's mind is transformed so he or she can discern truth beyond what is visible. **Wherefore henceforth** (from now on), believers will **know ... no man after the flesh**. This was certainly true after Paul experienced God's salvation and began living for **Christ**. God transformed his natural human thinking. Paul had come to realize there is more to people than meets the eye. Some realities can only be discerned through the Spirit; that is, with spiritual eyes. This was not what the Corinthians were doing, however. Worldly perspectives had continued to guide their thinking. They especially looked at Paul's sufferings and considered them inappropriate for a man who supposedly had been commissioned by Christ.

At one time this kind of human thinking was normal for Paul. Before his conversion, he had **known Jesus after the flesh**, viewing Jesus as a pretender and blasphemer. Therefore, he imprisoned followers of Jesus and zealously sought to destroy the church. But after his encounter with the risen Christ, Paul declared, **now henceforth know we him no more**. The word *know* refers to knowledge that comes from experience. Paul wasn't saying he no longer knew Jesus at all—far from it!—rather, he was admitting that he had gained an entirely new, spiritual understanding of the Lord Jesus and how believers should live once they realized all Christ had done for them. This new understanding was what Paul gained not only in his initial experience with Christ (Acts 9:1-6) but also since that time as he followed Christ, shared in His sufferings (Phil. 3:10), and also shared in the comfort He gives (2 Cor. 1:4).

3 ▶ Verse 17. When **any man** or woman, boy or girl experiences God's salvation and comes into a faith relationship with His Son Jesus, he or she is said to **be in Christ**. This means the person is joined with Christ in His death and resurrection, (Rom. 6:3-11) and so experiences forgiveness of sin and eternal life. In this new relationship, the believer becomes **a new creature**. As *a new creature*, the believer acquires a new direction, allegiance, or perspective. In Christ, the believer experiences a

transformation Paul elsewhere described as “the renewing of [the] mind” (12:2). This transformation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process where we surrender ourselves to God so He can bring about a continuing renewal. It will be complete only when we are glorified with God in heaven.

Being in Christ means **old things are passed away**. This certainly includes sin and its selfish actions that are part of everyone’s life before they come into a relationship with Christ (though believers still struggle with these to a certain degree as well). These old things also include worldly human viewpoints and value systems, which were especially prevalent in the lives of the Corinthian believers.

Paul noted that **all things are become new**. This includes a new relationship between God and the believer, as well as a new relationship between believers—all of whom make up the body of Christ, His church. These new things include a new way of life—one guided and controlled by Christ rather than by worldly (sinful) human thinking. This newness will be culminated in the new heavens and new earth that will come one day (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). ◀

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

KEY WORD

reconciliation (v. 18)—Meaning “exchange” in the sense of restoring to favor, in the New Testament it refers to being changed from God’s enemy to friend through Christ.

- **We are made new in Christ** (2 Cor. 5:17). *Jesus doesn’t just remove what kills (our sin); He gives us a fresh start, a new life (Eph. 2:10).*

DISCUSS: Question #3
(PSG, p. 139): **What are the basic truths of the gospel every person needs to hear?**

GUIDE: Use **Bible Commentary 3** on page 142 and this page to describe the transformation from old to new that we experience through Christ.

DISCUSS: Question #4
(PSG, p. 139): **How does the love of Christ change our view of the world and the people we encounter?**

(Alternate: What does it mean to be a new creation?)

TRANSITION: “The next verses demonstrate how sharing the gospel is the natural outgrowth of our transformation.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

2 Corinthians 5:18-21



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

GUIDE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 4, the **KEY WORD** on page 143 (**PSG, p. 140**) and **DIGGING DEEPER (PSG p. 141)** to explain the *reconciliation* of Christ and the ministry of reconciliation we have been given.

SUMMARIZE: Describe the additional metaphor Paul uses of being “an ambassador for Christ” (**PSG, pp. 141-142**):

The principal duty of an ambassador has not changed since Paul’s day. An ambassador represents his country on foreign soil. When a United States ambassador speaks to a foreign government, it is the United States speaking!

(Continued on next page.)

The commission of God charges us to share the gospel.

4 ▶ **Verses 18-19.** Paul emphasized that **all things** he just discussed—all that is part of this transformation from old to new—**are of God**. This was God’s idea and God’s work; humans neither initiated the idea nor brought it to fruition.

God ... hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. To *reconcile* means to bring together—in relationships it reflects the idea of enemies becoming friends. As a result of sin there was enmity between us and God. We could do nothing to change this enmity; therefore, God did something about it. **God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.** God came to earth as Jesus Christ and paid the debt we owed for our sins; therefore, for those who place their faith in Christ, God is **not imputing**—crediting, charging—**their trespasses unto them**. Without a debt nothing was left to be counted. The word *trespasses* refers to intentional sins we know are wrong—contrary to God’s will. Because of reconciliation we are brought into a right relationship with God. Of course, this new relationship only comes to those who repent of their old way of life and turn to God, trusting that Jesus died for their sins and was resurrected from the dead so they could have eternal life.

God **committed unto us the word of reconciliation**. Because we have received, we must give. God wants to use us to help others experience the friendship with Him (salvation) we have experienced. ◀

Verse 20. Those who share this message of reconciliation **are ambassadors for Christ**. An ambassador was a representative who was sent to another country by a king. The envoy did not speak for himself; rather he spoke the words of the one who sent him. A Christian ambassador is sent from God to humanity with His message of forgiveness and restoration through Christ.

Several factors differentiated a governmental envoy from God’s ambassador. The governmental representative might have been sent to secure an alliance with another country or to seek the favor of a stronger power. In addition, most ambassadors in the ancient world were treated with great respect by the receiving countries and were not subject to prosecution or imprisonment where they were sent. This was not the typical experience of an ambassador for Christ. Paul’s life was an example of the scorn, suffering, and even imprisonment Christ’s representatives sometimes experience.

While all believers *are ambassadors for Christ*, in this context Paul as an ambassador for Christ specifically appealed to the Corinthians. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, through whom God was making his appeal to the Corinthians. Paul's plea was a message from Christ—**in Christ's stead**—via His ambassador to the Corinthians. While Paul issued a direct command to them, his words came from the heart of an apostle who loved the Corinthians and wanted the best for them. This is evident from his initial words in the request—**we pray you**. By embracing false teachers and rejecting Paul, the Corinthians demonstrated in a significant sense that they still needed to **be ... reconciled to God**.² Paul was right to be concerned about this. Thus Paul appealed to them to turn back to God.

Verse 21. Paul wrapped up this section with a summary of his message, describing the basis for our reconciliation to God. The sinless Jesus, **who knew no sin**, was our substitute. He took the place of humanity and became **sin for us**. This does not mean Jesus sinned in His death; rather, He took our sins upon Himself and experienced the consequences of sin every human deserves—the wrath of God and alienation from God. We repent and accept what Jesus did for us, so **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**. As noted in verse 17, this happens only for those in Christ (**in him**)—those who have been joined with Christ in His death and resurrection through faith and thus experience forgiveness of sin and eternal life (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11). This righteousness comes initially through justification (the moment of salvation where the believer permanently receives the perfect righteousness of Christ and God declares him or her not guilty of all his or her sins, Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:13-14) and continues in sanctification (the ongoing aspect of salvation where the believer continues to grow in Christlikeness, 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Thess. 4:1-7).

This message of reconciliation is one every person needs to hear. People need to understand the consequences of their sins as well as the provision God has made for them to be forgiven and have eternal life through Jesus Christ. They can't understand unless they hear the message, and they won't hear unless we, who have experienced reconciliation with God, allow God to speak His message through us to them.

1. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 277.

2. David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 299.

In the same way, we represent Jesus. We are the ambassadors of King Jesus in a place that is not our true home. We are to live in such a way that when people see us, they see Jesus.

You are an ambassador for Christ, and God wants to use you to share the gospel with others.

DISCUSS: Question #5

(PSG, p. 142): What are some ways we can participate in the work described in these verses?

(Alternate: What qualities of an ambassador should be true in our lives?)

DO: Invite volunteers to share responses to the activity on **PSG page 142: "Ambassadors for Christ."**

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point: God calls us out of our brokenness to share the gospel.**

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out (PSG, p. 143;** see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Emphasize that God transforms us into ambassadors for Him that we might share His ministry of reconciliation with others.

PRAY: "Father, thank You for making us new creatures in Christ and for giving us this wonderful ministry to share the gospel with others."

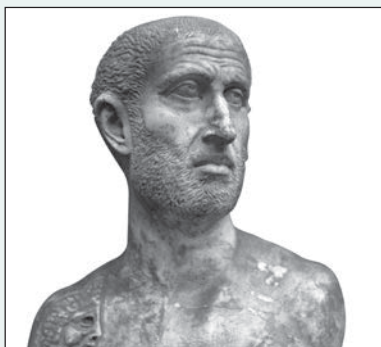
LIVE IT OUT

What steps can you take to share the gospel this week? Consider these applications:

- ▶ **Begin with prayer.** When you wake up in the morning, get on your knees and ask God to work through you. Tell Him, "Here I am Lord, please use me to be a blessing to others today. Help me to be Your ambassador today."
- ▶ **Learn to share.** Talk to your pastor or a leader in your church to get some practical tips for sharing the gospel. Consider using the inside front cover of this book as you talk to another person about Jesus.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask God to grant you one opportunity this week to be a blessing to others and share the gospel with them in both words and actions.

God has blessed you to be a blessing. God wants to work through you to see His kingdom come in your neighborhood, workplace, and city. Are you ready to go?

BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



Bust of Ignatius, who was pastor of the church at Syrian Antioch and one of the earliest writers of Christian theology. Ignatius encouraged the church to appoint a deacon to be an ambassador for the church.

The noun translated “ambassador,” “delegate,” or “representative” is used twice in the New Testament (Luke 14:32; 19:14). The general meaning of the term is “a person who has been given authority to communicate or to act on behalf of a ruler,” which is still today what an ambassador does. The New Testament twice uses the verb form for this word, namely in 2 Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20, where Paul spoke of serving

as Christ’s representative while in chains in prison.

Often the setting was one of war in which a leader sent a representative or a delegation to the other party to decide on the terms for surrender or for ending the conflict. The ambassador was the king’s representative who went with the king’s authority to negotiate the peace terms.

The context of 2 Corinthians 5:20 shows that Paul was using the imagery of an ambassador being sent to establish a peace agreement rather than being sent to celebrate with the Corinthians. The Corinthian Christians had displayed a negative attitude toward God . . . so Paul and Timothy had the role as ambassadors to communicate God’s willingness to reach a peace agreement by which the Corinthian Christians would be reconciled to God.

The excerpt above is from the article “An Ambassador’s Role” (Spring 2010), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

We can be reconciled to God! Jesus death on the cross and His resurrection makes it possible for us to receive forgiveness for our sins. This is surely good news.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, “Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All,” on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

Grow with other group leaders at the [Groups Ministry](http://GroupsMinistry.com) blog.

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry