

Small Group Questions

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Sermon Title: A New You

Sermon Series: Believe

Week of 17 June 2018

Theme/Concept

So how do we put it all together: Think, Act, Be Like Christ; MindShaping, LifeShaping, HeartShaping?

One step at a time, one choice at a time, one day at a time. Remember, we are not simply people who've been refurbished or remodeled. The resurrection power of the Holy Spirit made us alive and is bringing us to maturity in Christ. After a review of the three major concepts, each person is invited to commit themselves to becoming the new person who thinks, acts and lives like Christ.

APPLICATION: God's Spirit is changing us from the inside out to think, act, and live like Christ.

CHARGE: Become the new you God wants you to be.

Opening Questions

After making each individual feel welcome to the small group, a question or series of questions like the following can give everyone an opportunity to participate, start thinking about a concept from the passage and gradually share more openly the deep work that God is doing in our lives.

- O1. What change(s) have you noticed in yourself or in someone else since you or they became a believer?
- O2. As a believer, has anyone ever told you they noticed a change and asked how that change happened?

Scripture Reference: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (NLT)

Background/Context:

Earlier in this chapter, Paul compares our present earthly body with the believer's anticipated heavenly body. He says, "We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. (v.2) As we look at our earthly bodies, "we want to put on our new bodies so these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life." He reminds us that God has promised to give believers new heavenly bodies, a promise that is guaranteed and sealed by the Holy Spirit now indwelling their earthly bodies. Our goal is to please God while in our earthly bodies and we are held responsible for the good and evil we have done, "for we all must stand before Christ to be judged."

¹¹ Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. ¹² Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, ^{*}so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. ¹³ If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. ¹⁴ Either way, Christ's love controls us. ^{*}Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ^{*}¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, ^{*}so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Understanding the Scripture

A question like one of the following may help your group understand the content of the passage. Answering all of these questions exactly as written isn't necessary or recommended. Allow time for the application and Mission Statement questions.

- U1. Verse 11: What is the “fearful responsibility to the Lord” that Paul refers to here?
- U2. Verse 12: Why does Paul want the Corinthians to be proud of him and his fellow workers? What answers would they give?
- U3. Verse 13-14a: How can acting “crazy” bring glory to God? Contrast that behavior with being “in our right minds” for the Corinthians’ benefit. How does Christ’s love control either behavior?
- U4. Verse 14b-15: What do believers need to stop doing? What do believers need to start doing, and why?
- U5. Verse 16: What might have caused Paul and his fellow workers to stop thinking of others and Christ from a human point of view? In what different ways would they know Christ now?
- U6. Verse 17: If a believer is still stuck in his or her earthly body, how can Paul say a new life has begun?
- U7. Verse 18: What is Paul referring to when he says, “All of this”? What three things did God do, according to Paul in this verse?
- U8. Verse 19-20: How does Paul define *reconcile* in this verse. Why did God give us His wonderful message? What role have believers been given and what are they to do?
- U9. Verse 21: Why do you think Paul tagged this statement on the end of this passage?

Applying the Scripture

Small groups are a primary way of *building a community fully alive in Christ*. A small group facilitator can use questions like the following, adapted to the context of the particular small group, to help the group move beyond understanding the passage to allowing *Jesus Christ to fully change our lives* by the passage.

- A1. How has your thinking changed since becoming a believer? Since you have been part of the Believe series?
- A2. In what ways are you acting as one who has been given a new life?
- A3. What does it look like when one is being or living as an ambassador for Christ? What wonderful message are you bringing to others?
- A4. How is the Holy Spirit changing you from the inside out to think, act, and live like Christ?
- A5. What issues or circumstances in your life are you still looking at from a human point of view?

Missional Strategy: Invite, Connect, Grow, and Serve

Use questions like the following, adapted to the context of your particular small group, to work toward the milestone for the year. **Milestone:** By this time next year each of us will have taken at least one step to become more like Jesus in our upward connection (connect), inner strength (grow) and outward focus (serve).

- M1. Who do you need to invite into your group to provide or experience a new point of view regarding others and Christ?
- M2. In what ways can your group grow in Christ by moving from just thinking like Christ to acting and being like Him?
- M3. How might your group members become more connected with one another and with other groups?
- M4. In what ways is your group acting as an ambassador for Christ? In what new ways is God leading your group to serve in Christ’s name?

Closing Prayer

If your small group prays together, some of the following concepts might be helpful to invite the Holy Spirit to help each member of the group grow in areas that may have come up during the group’s discussion. Pray:

- That each member would be prompted and directed by the Holy Spirit to think, live, and act like Christ.
- That the group might find ways to be Christ’s ambassadors by working together to identify and meet specific physical, emotional, and spiritual needs within and outside the group.
- That members would encourage one another in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit to live the new life God has given us through Christ, despite our earthly bodies.