

## Small Group Guide

### LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY

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The Church at Brook Hills

Jonathan B.

July 8, 2012

2 Corinthians 4:1–18

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

### **Relate . . .**

*Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:*

***Welcome**—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.*

***Review**—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.*

***Prayer**—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.*

### **Reflect . . .**

*Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)*

#### Living in the Light of Eternity 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

We do not lose heart...

- **God's power is sufficient to save us.**
  - **Our confidence is in Christ.**
    - **Trust in him for salvation.**
  - **Our competence is from Christ.**
    - **Speak honestly of Jesus our Lord.**
- **God's power is sufficient to sanctify us.**
  - **Our weakness magnifies God's strength.**
    - **Submit humbly to the work of the Spirit.**
- **God's power is sufficient to sustain us.**
  - **Our suffering magnifies God's sustenance.**

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- **Endure for the sake of Christ.**
- **God's power is sufficient to shine through us.**
  - **Our selflessness magnifies God's grace.**
    - **Serve others for the sake of Christ.**
- **God's power is sufficient for our glorification.**
  - **Our hope magnifies God's glory.**
    - **Anticipate his return.**
    - **Live with eternity in view.**

### Message Summary

*Living in light of eternity, we do not lose heart as we follow Christ even in the midst of false teaching and persecution. God has saved us. God is sanctifying us. God will sustain us. And God will shine through us. Ultimately, we are given strength for today and hope for tomorrow, because we know eternity with God awaits us.*

*We know that God's power is sufficient to save us and to save others. Our confidence is in what Christ has done, not our works or abilities. We can trust that no one is beyond His reach, freeing us to speak honestly, simply, and clearly of Jesus Christ our Lord to everyone.*

*The Spirit is sanctifying us. We can submit to Him knowing that even our weakness magnifies His strength. We can endure trials and suffering because God's power is sufficient to sustain us.*

*Motivated by God's glory, we can serve others. As we serve, His grace will reach more and more people. Finally, we have a great hope—Jesus will return for us. The glory to come far outweighs all present suffering. We will be with Him forever.*

### Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Read 2 Corinthians 3:4 and 4:1–6. Have you ever asked yourself, "Have I done enough to be saved?" Why does this question miss the whole point of the gospel? Regarding our salvation, in what/whom should we place our confidence?
- Once saved, does God abandon us to our own strength? Or is His strength still at work in us? How can that fact encourage us in our daily walk? How do we rest in His strength?
- From where does our competence to share the gospel come? How should that fact affect our approach to evangelism (before, during, and after a witnessing opportunity)? Is anyone beyond God's reach?
- Jonathan B. shared a story from his experiences in Central Asia. Did the young believer try to debate her relatives in order to win an argument? What did she do instead? Why should confidence in God's power to save anyone free us from manipulation or deception in evangelism?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–10 and 12:8–10. What does *sanctification* mean? Does it include more than just leaving behind sinful actions and attitudes? What actions or attitudes or values might God want to change in our lives to make us more like Christ?
- Can God's power be manifested in saving us from suffering? How? Can God's power also be displayed in our times of suffering, trial, and weakness? How? Can you think of examples of each from the Bible and from your own life?

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- Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. How do we come to know God's comfort? Does God want to spare us from all pain and suffering? Why or why not? How can God's comfort prepare us to comfort others?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:10–15. How does Christ's grace free us to be selfless? How does a selfless attitude flowing from Christ's grace change our motivations for serving others?
- Can service to others be selfish? In what ways? How does selfless service to others bring glory to God?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 and 11:24–28. Why can Paul call his troubles "light and momentary"? What is his standard of comparison? Do you think the Bible dismisses the reality or intensity of our present sufferings? Why or why not? What outstanding truths in verses 16–18 cause us not to lose heart?
- We are all "wasting away." How have you reckoned with that fact? Why is it sometimes easy to ignore? What is worth living for? What is eternal? How can we keep our eyes on Christ as Paul encourages us to do in 2 Corinthians?
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:5–7. How can you walk by faith and not by sight this week? One day we will see the object of our faith (read Revelation 21:22–25). How does our future give us strength for today?
- Is there someone you can comfort with God's comfort this week? Is there someone you can serve for Christ's glory? Is there someone with whom you can share the gospel? Ask God for wisdom, boldness, and opportunity.

## Respond . . .

*Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:*

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

## Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Pray for Our Lives:** *In light of our knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, thank God for shining in our hearts and granting us this knowledge. Pray we will not lose heart as we await Christ's return, regardless of what we might face in life. Pray we all willfully and joyfully serve others for Jesus' sake. Pray the life of Jesus will be manifested in our bodies in the way we live our lives. Thank God for all of the many ways His grace has been extended to you. Pray for God to help us be ever mindful about what is transient and what is eternal.*
- **Pray for Our City:** *This week we are praying for Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Dr. Michael Wesley, pastor. We are also praying for several Rock the*

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*Blocks (Backyard Bible Clubs) occurring in the urban Birmingham area. As you pray, consider joining one of these efforts to platform the gospel among the poor and fatherless in our community.*

- ***Pray for Our World:*** *This week we are praying for our short-term teams serving in North Africa and Ecuador. We are also praying for Brook Hills long-term missionary, Melissa Garner. Melissa is currently serving as a teacher in South Sudan. Her main role is to train and equip local teachers and to disciple those with whom she is building relationships.*