

Life Group Guide 2 Cor 4:7–18 “Finding Freedom from the Performance Traps”
For the Sermon Preached on Sun Dec 17 & For Use in Life Groups through Sun Dec 24

Icebreaker Question

What do you look forward to every year at Christmas? When the thing you look forward to finally arrives, are you ever disappointed? Why?

Pastor Richard’s Sermon Outline

- I. Remember the world has a “performance trap” mentality (vv. 7-12).**
 - a. Paul was confident that a sovereign God had a purpose for whatever came into his life (v. 7).
 - b. Five Core Heart Idols that Drive Us to Perform
 - i. Self-Righteousness (Rom. 3:10, 10:3)
 - ii. Self-Justification (Rom. 5:1)
 - iii. Self-Reliance (Rom. 5:6-8; 2 Cor. 12:9)
 - iv. Self-Pity (Gal. 2:20)
 - v. Self-Esteem (Ps. 16:2; Luke 12:7; Rom. 5:8)
- II. Reject failure as defined by the world’s performance trap (vv. 13-15).**
 - a. Defined by the world’s performance trap Paul was a complete failure!
 - b. Four reasons every believer should reject the performance trap of the world and its accompanying fear of failure.
 - i. We have the assurance of ultimate victory (v. 14).
 - ii. We have the assurance that God will be glorified in our obedience (v. 15).
 - iii. We have the assurance that our trials work for us and not against us (vv. 16-17).
 - iv. We have the assurance that the temporal things of life pale in comparison to the eternal glories that awaits us (Matt. 6:21; v. 18).
- III. Rejoice in your victory over the world’s performance trap (vv. 16-18).**
 - a. Paul understood that victory over the world’s performance trap was a matter of maintaining a kingdom focus.
 - b. Breaking Free from the Bondage of the Performance Trap
 - i. Trust God’s call not your own perceived qualifications (Exod. 3:11, 4:10).
 - ii. Trust that God will equip you for whatever He calls you to do (1 Cor. 1:25-29; 2 Cor. 9:8).
 - iii. Trust God’s call regardless of your present circumstance (Joshua 1:9).

2 Cor 4:7–12

Read 2 Cor 4:7–12: Observation:

1. What treasure is Paul talking about in v. 7? (Hint: look at 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.)
2. Where do we keep this glorious treasure according to v. 7?
3. According to v. 7, why would God keep such a valuable treasure in such a fragile vessel?
4. According to vs. 8-11, what are we? What are we not?
5. Why does God allow his people to suffer according to vs. 10-12?

Interpretation:

6. Paul presents an important list in vs. 8-11 of what we are and are not. Review that list again. What does each word mean? How are they related to one another? What hope is Paul offering here?

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Application:

7. Memorize v. 7 this week and use it to comfort someone else. Also, let it serve as a reminder of your life’s mission: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

8. What are some ways that we can effectively use our own difficulties and suffering to minister the gospel to others? Describe some positive opportunities you have had to do this and brainstorm with your group some potential future opportunities.

2 Cor 4:13–15

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–15: Observation

9. According to v. 13, where does the gospel and this teaching that Paul is sharing with the Corinthians come from?

10. Whom did God raise from the dead according to v. 14? Whom else will God raise?

11. Why does God not bring us into his presence (i.e. take us to heaven) now? According to v. 15, what is God waiting for?

Interpretation

12. Every time Paul discusses suffering, he never fails to remind us of the resurrection of Jesus. How are suffering and the resurrection of Jesus related? (Hint: start your discussion in v. 14.) What hope does Jesus’ resurrection offer to us as we suffer?

Application

13. If someone said to you, “Wait! The gospel is in the Old Testament? I thought that was a Christian/New Testament thing,” how might you show them the gospel from the Old Testament?

2 Cor 4:16–18

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18: Observation

14. According to v. 16 what should we not lose?

15. What is happening to our outer self in v. 16? What is happening to our inner self?

16. In vs. 17-18, how does Paul describe all our suffering?

Interpretation:

17. In vs. 16-18 Paul makes another argument about suffering that puts our suffering into its proper perspective. Paul’s argument appears to have three parts to it (v. 16, v. 17, and v. 18). What argument does Paul make? How should we understand and then live out this truth?

Application:

18. What are some ways that we can minister to both the theological and practical needs of someone who is suffering? Brainstorm with your group.
