

# GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 4

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 5TH

## EXPRESSING HOPE

*THE SPIRIT OF  
THE CHURCH*

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### GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2017 – EXPRESSING HOPE WEEK 4 – FEBRUARY 5, 2017 - 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

#### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) If you could be an ambassador to anywhere in the world, where would you want to go?

#### SETTING THE CONTEXT

Paul reminds the Corinthian church that being in Jesus brings about a radical change in a person's life. Once a person makes a decision to follow Jesus they see the world in a new way and their values and behaviors should begin to change.

Paul is concerned about the concept of reconciliation. He realizes that if the Corinthians are to understand what reconciliation amongst themselves and the world is all about, they must first understand the reconciling work that God has accomplished through Jesus. The problem that Paul was having with the church in Corinth was that they were not doing a good job of being reconciled with one another. They were not acknowledging the wrongs that had been committed and the need for forgiveness.

Paul reminds them that the work of reconciliation actually began with God sending Jesus into the world. Jesus' death removed the barrier to reconciliation with God that had previously existed. Up until the crucifixion, humanity had been alienated from God because of their behavior. The reconciliation that Paul describes has to do with the mending of a relationship where God justifies us and makes things right again.

Paul goes on to say that this ministry of reconciliation belongs to us as well. The word he uses for "ministry" in verse 18 has to do with a humble servant who waits on tables. It refers to a work that is done on behalf of someone else. To be a reconciler involves more than just talking about what God has done for humanity through Jesus Christ. It means that we must be like Jesus and enter into the chaos and seek to bring harmony. We have to be willing to suffer in order to bring restoration and hope.



Paul says that he is an ambassador for Christ. Ambassadors during the times of Paul were sent to places to extend friendship and good will, or to make alliances. They were also sent to Rome to plead the case of a certain community or city in order to gain favor. God is now sending out ambassadors to proclaim his kingdom. God doesn't wait for someone to approach him, but instead God approaches humanity through Jesus. And Paul says that a part of his task is to proclaim and live out this message of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is something that is very tangible for Paul. It is not just a doctrine. Reconciliation means that we must recognize our own responsibility in our alienation from God and one another. We must also realize that God has reconciled himself to us and that we need to order our lives around God. The church must figure out ways to be a force of healing and helping and hope.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

*<sup>16</sup>So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

- 2) The church in Corinth had been in conflict with one another as well as with the apostle Paul. Now Paul tells them that they need to figure out how to be reconciled to one another. Have you ever faced a situation where you helped to bring about reconciliation?
- 3) Webster's says that to reconcile is to "restore to friendship or to harmony." The apostle Paul says that we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. What do you think he meant by that? How did that reconciliation happen?
- 4) What are the similarities or differences between forgiveness and reconciliation?
- 5) The apostle Paul makes it clear that the Corinthian church needs to be involved in the reconciling work of Jesus. Where do you think the church of today needs to be engaged in reconciliation?
- 6) 2 Corinthians 5:20 says that we should consider ourselves ambassadors for Christ. Do you ever think of yourself like that? Why or why not? Is that a helpful image?
- 7) Jesus had to sacrifice his life in order to reconcile humanity to God. He had to suffer in order for things to be made right. Have you felt like you have ever had to suffer or deal with persecution or ridicule because of your faith?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Is there some place in your own life where you feel as though God is calling you to be His ambassador?