

It's Personal

DISCOVERING A GOD WHO CARES ABOUT YOU
SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 11, 18, 25 + MAY 2

Week 1(April 11): My Relationships **2 Cor 5:11-6:2**

Open It

Today we begin a four week journey to discover a God who cares about us on a personal level. We will be talking about God's involvement in our relationships, tragedy, victory over sin, and His provision in our lives. Today we start with talking about relationships and reconciliation.

1. When have you seen someone change in a significant way?
 - What led to that change?
 - What impact did that change have on you?

Read It

Open your Bibles and read 2 Cor 5:11-6:2.

Explore It

1. The purpose of Paul's ministry was to persuade others to follow Christ. Why was this so important to him? (5:11)
2. Why was Paul concerned about justifying his ministry to Christians at Corinth? (5:12)

The personal defense which follows (vv. 11-12) indicates that Paul met opposition in carrying out that commission. Understandably, a Christian's message is intimately bound up with his life and ministry (1 Thes. 1:5); the two are hardly separable. Since this is so, Paul had to justify and defend his conduct in order to win a hearing for his message. He followed the tactic used earlier in the letter, affirming before God the sincerity of his motives (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12, 23) and calling on the Corinthians to confirm this by their own experiences with him (cf. 1:14; 4:2).

The apostle, unlike his opponents, put no stock in external credentials or associations (3:1-2; cf. 5:16a). It was not the externality of the Law but the internality of the Spirit that authenticated his ministry (3:3; cf. Rom. 2:28-29). Nor was he concerned simply about his own reputation among the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:6).

What did concern him was the reception of his message. He needed to be regarded as a servant of Christ so that his message would be regarded as the message of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1).¹

3. In what ways might Paul's personal experience with God's grace have propelled him to carry forth the ministry of reconciliation? (5:14)

Paul's testimony can be found in Phil 3:1-8 and 1 Tim 1:12-17.

4. What does Paul state as a reason that Christ died for everyone? (5:15)

Death to selfishness!

5. How did Paul's own reconciliation with God change how he looked at people? (5:16)
6. What does God do with our sins when we are reconciled to Him? (5:19)
7. What connection does Paul make between being reconciled to God and serving as Christ's ambassador? (5:20)

Our lives have been transformed; now God uses us to encourage others to experience the grace of God.

An ambassador is one who is appointed by God to declare his will (in the same manner that an ambassador represents the President of the United States).

8. Paul is trying to persuade the Corinthians to respond to God's Word. What hope and encouragement does he embrace? (6:2)

Get It

1. Briefly describe how you recognized your need for Christ (age, life stage, etc.). What obstacles did you have to overcome to surrender your heart to Jesus? (If your group is large, do this in groups of 2-3 people).
2. What are your thoughts regarding the issue of selfishness described in 5:15?

¹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (2:566). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. How would you describe your heart/passion for people who do not know Christ?

Apply It

1. How can you personally be involved in the ministry of reconciliation?
2. Are there any relationships you need to reconcile this week? (Matt 5:22-24)
3. Is God asking you to share the ministry of reconciliation with someone in your life path right now? If so, who? How do you plan to go about that task?

Pray It

Close today by praying into areas revealed in your discussion.

Reminders

- Be sensitive to anyone who may need to hear the gospel. If you need help sharing the gospel in such a way that others can respond, call Mickey at 296-1356.
- Baptism Sunday is May 9th. Invite people in your group to consider being baptized if they have never done so.

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Week 2 (April 18): My Tragedy Job 13:15

Open It

Tragedy is defined as a disastrous event.

1. What tragedies or suffering have you seen or heard of recently that causes you to wonder how God allows such events to happen?

Read It

Open your Bibles and read Job 13:13-28.

In this passage, Job is petitioning God for a courtroom hearing. Job wants an answer for the suffering he has endured. It's normal for us to want an answer for the trials and tragedies we face in life.

Explore It

1. What do we know about the life and character of Job as defined in scripture? (1:1-5)

He was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.
He had seven sons and three daughters.
He was wealthy.
He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

2. Why did this tragedy happen to Job? (1:6-12, 2:1-5)
3. How did Job respond to the calamity that destroyed his wealth and family? (1:20-22)

It's common to stop reading Job after the first two chapters. The majority of the remaining chapters provide an interesting dialogue between Job and his

friends. Finally, God speaks to Job personally in the last few chapters. Let's turn to Job 13:13-28 again.

4. What does Job want to do? (13:3)
5. What kind of support does Job feel like he is getting from his friends? (13:4-5)
6. What did Job think would happen if he defended himself before God? (13:15)

Get It

1. As a group, brainstorm all the sources of human tragedy and suffering you can think of.

Here is a partial list if your group is stalled on how to answer:

Sin
Flesh
Satan
God
Accidents
Carelessness
Wickedness
Fallen nature

2. If you have endured personal tragedy, how did you deal with it? What was helpful? What was not helpful?
3. How important is it for you to know "why" a tragedy happened?
4. How do you relate to God when there is not a clear answer?
5. Where is God in the midst of tragedy? Psalm 46:1
6. Read 2 Cor 1:3-11.
 - What is the common denominator in 2 Cor 1:3 and Job 1:20? Praise
 - Where is God in the midst of our troubles? (2 Cor 1:4) Comforting us
 - What explanation does Paul offer for his suffering in 2 Cor 1:9?

Apply It

1. If a close friend of yours was suddenly struck with a tragedy, how would you respond?
 - What would you say?
 - What would you do?
 - What scriptures would you point them to?

2. How should we demonstrate our hope in God in times of trouble?
 - Consider reading Psalm 42 this week as part of your time alone with God.
3. Are there any disappointments in your life that need to be released to God?

Pray It

Close today by praying into areas revealed in your discussion. Pray through Romans 8:35-39.

Reminders

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Week 3 (April 25): My Victory 1 John 5:1-5

Open It

Sin is not a fun topic to talk about, yet all of us are sinners. Today we want to explore how a personal God helps us find victory over sin in our lives.

1. Can you think of a time as a child or an adult where you won a game or award that meant the world to you? How were you victorious?
2. When the topic of sin comes up, what emotions, images, or feelings come to your mind?

Read It

Open your Bibles and read 1 John 5:1-5.

If love for God and one's fellow Christians is at its core obedience to God's commands, how can these be carried out? Are they beyond the capacity of a believer? In this section John pointed to faith as the secret of a victorious, obedient life.

5:3b-5. As a matter of fact, God's commands are not burdensome (cf. Matt. 11:30). This is because the principle of victory resides in everyone born of God. Every such person has already overcome the world (cf. 1 John 4:4). His faith in Christ, by which he was regenerated, constitutes a victory over the world system which is satanically blinded to the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4). Who is it then that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. With these words, the writer affirmed that a believer is a world-conqueror by means of his faith in Christ. This suggests that such faith is the secret of his continuing victory and, for that reason, obedience to God's commands need not be burdensome.²

²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:901). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explore It

1. According to John, who is it that overcomes the world? (5:4-5)
2. What additional insight do we gain from 1 John 4:4 on being overcomers?
3. To get a better understanding of victory and sin, let's look at the following scriptures. What truths related to victory and/or sin do you see in these verses?

Proverbs 11:14

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Proverbs 24:6

for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers.

In our battle against sin, it's helpful to get other godly people involved.

Psalm 33:16-21

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. *17*A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. *18*But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, *19*to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. *20*We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. *21*In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

Romans 7:14-25

*14*We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. *15*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. *16*And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. *17*As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. *18*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. *19*For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. *20*Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. *21*So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. *22*For in my inner being I delight in God's law; *23*but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. *24*What a wretched man I am! *Who will rescue me from this body of death?* *25*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

We will never overcome sin in our own strength. God alone is our deliverer.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Get It

1. What does it mean to overcome the world?
2. What additional insight does Paul give us in overcoming sin according to Rom 8:10-14?
3. What role does confession play in our battle with sin?

Psalm 32:5

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Apply It

1. Which of these descriptors best describes your current walk with Christ?
 - Lethargic
 - Exhausted and worn down
 - Overcomer
 - Mighty conqueror
2. Based on this brief study and what God’s word says about you, what steps can you take to live a victorious life?
3. Is there any secret or habitual sin that you need to confess to God? Others? When do you plan to deal with this?

Pray It

Close today by praying into areas revealed in your discussion.

Reminders

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Week 4 (May 2): My Provision **Psalm 147, Phil 4:19**

Open It

Our final discussion in this series pertains to God's provision in our lives. A walk through scripture provides a comforting look at how God provides for all creation, including you and me.

1. Think back to your childhood. Do you remember how money affected the quality of life in your home growing up? Was money tight? Abundant? What impact did that have on you?

Read It

Open your Bibles and read Psalm 147.

Explore It

1. Encourage group members to identify examples in this text of how God provides for his people, land, and animals. It's easy to overlook the fact that God is the provider for all creation.
2. What other scriptures can your group think of that demonstrate God's provision for all creation?

Here is a starting place if the group is having trouble.

Psalm 65:9-13

You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. 10 You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. 11 You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance. 12 The grasslands of the desert overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. 13 The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

Job 38:39-41 (a conversation with Job)

“Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions
40when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? 41Who provides
food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack
of food?”

Luke 12:24

Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or
barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!

3. Now let's look at some examples of how God provides for people:

Philippians 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ
Jesus.

- What do you think Paul means by “needs” in this text?

The Greek word here means “what is needed”

- Does the language “what is needed” change your definition any?

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times,
having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

- What can we learn from the context in this passage? Read a few verses
before and after 9:8 to gain a better perspective on this verse.

2 Corinthians 8:14

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their
plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality,

- This is an interesting concept. My plenty (abundance) will meet other
people's needs.

Acts 27:3

The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to
go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.

- Who provided for Paul's needs?

Acts 28:10

They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

- Who provided for Paul's needs?

Notice that in these last two references, God used other people to meet Paul's needs.

Apply It

1. Do you feel like God adequately meets all your needs? (Don't provide what you think is the right answer --- be honest)
2. Can you think of a time when God used someone else to provide for your needs?
3. Has there been a time where God used you to meet someone else's financial need? Tell the group about it!
4. Do you feel like generosity (tithing) plays a part in God's provision for people?
5. What unique obstacles and/or benefits do we have, as citizens of the richest nation in the world, when processing the provision of God?
6. Answer this rhetorically:
 - Do you think God sees you as a giver or a taker when it comes to your personal finances?

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