

Learning a Lesson, Cultivating a Vision

2 Cor. 4:7-11

Uncertainty. Disruption. Loss. Whatever word you would choose, these days are certainly not “normal.” And though all of us long for a return to “normal” we don’t want to miss what God might want to teach us in these days. In no way are we suggesting that God sent the coronavirus to teach us some lesson, but we do believe that God wants to use the hardship of these days to teach us and change us. In this study, we are looking at 2 Corinthians 4 where Paul gives a perspective on hardships. While the current hardships associated with COVID-19 are very different than Paul’s, if we are teachable, we can learn some of the same lessons that he did.

Opening Question: What one word would you use to describe what you have been experiencing the past couple of weeks?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

1. What is the treasure that Paul talks about? And what is the “earthen vessels” (v. 7)?
2. What does Paul say is the reason that God put the treasure in earthen vessels?
3. What kind of hardship and afflictions had Paul and his coworkers experienced?
4. Paul said that they were “perplexed.” In what ways do you feel perplexed these days? Do you think it is possible to be perplexed, but still have joy? Why or why not?
5. What did Paul and his coworkers desire to manifest through their bodies (vv. 10-11)?

6. Read 2 Cor. 12:8-10. How does this passage relate to the passage we are considering? What did Paul learn from his thorn in the flesh (which was likely some kind of physical weakness)?

Steve said:

Because Paul willingly suffered hardship (being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, knocked down) and persevered, his life was a parable of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because he **learned humility and suffered well, he embodied the gospel** whereby people heard and saw the truth about Jesus. . . .This current pandemic provides an opportunity for every single one of us to deepen our humility in some way. I'd have you evaluate what you've been experiencing the past couple of weeks and what you experience in the days ahead. Pay attention to what aspect of humility God might want to teach you.

7. How might you learn humility during these weeks of uncertainty, disruption, and loss?

Steve said:

We need to understand that **if Paul hadn't learned humility through his suffering, he never would have embodied the gospel**. Because he learned humility through his weaknesses, he didn't fear suffering for the cause of Christ. He knew that God's grace was sufficient; God's power showed up in the midst of his weakness. Paul basically said to God, "I am willing to endure any amount of hardship and suffering because that's what that what it means to **be** a disciple and that's what it takes to **make** disciples" (see 1 Cor. 9:6). Paul's example is a powerful challenge to me. His way of embodying the gospel challenges me to examine my core attitudes about sharing the gospel. Embodying the gospel doesn't happen by accident; it cannot be an afterthought. And it's not without cost. Embodying the gospel requires cultivating the type of deep humility that Paul had; it requires being so enamored with Jesus that we genuinely desire to know Christ in a comprehensive way - both the power of His resurrection AND the fellowship of His sufferings.

8. How might humility prepare you to take risks and to embody the gospel? And what are some very practical ways that you can embody the gospel these days?

Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted



Daily Devotion: Consider spending time in the Psalms. The Psalms help us be reminded of God's greatness; they help us give voice to our concerns; they help us worship.