

THE GOSPEL SHAPED CHURCH

Proclaiming Christ for God's Glory - 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

Warm-Up

1. What's something you've been so excited about that you couldn't help telling other people about it? What made you want to share it?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-15

2. In verses 13–14, Paul explains why he continues to speak about Jesus despite hardship. What gives him the confidence to keep going?
3. Paul quotes Psalm 116:10: "I believed, and so I spoke." What is the connection between believing something and speaking about it? How does this challenge us as Christians?
4. According to verses 13–14, what has God already done for us through Jesus, and what does he promise to do in the future? How should the hope of resurrection shape the way we live now?
5. Why do we often find it easier to talk enthusiastically about the things that we genuinely like and love (ie. products) than about Jesus?
6. What are some of the things that make you hesitant to speak about Jesus with friends, family or colleagues? How might the hope of the gospel help you face those fears?
7. Read verse 15. What are Paul's two purposes in continuing to proclaim the gospel?
8. Wanting people to be saved from judgement is a good motivation for evangelism but not the only reason. What motivation does Paul highlight in verse 15? Why does the glory of God matter so much?
9. How does the gospel demonstrate God's goodness, love, mercy and power? Why should we want other people to discover these things about him?
10. What might it look like to pursue church growth, evangelism or ministry for the wrong reasons? How can we keep God's glory at the centre?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

11. Read verses 16–18. Paul says, "So we do not lose heart." What reasons does he give for continuing in ministry despite hardship?
12. How does looking to eternity change our perspective on hardship?
13. What is the difference between focusing on the things that are seen and focusing on the things that are unseen? What are some practical ways we can keep eternity in view when life is difficult?
14. What kinds of difficulties might discourage us in our Christian lives or as a church? How do God's past rescue and future promises help us persevere?
15. What could one step be for you in sharing Jesus with someone before the end of the year?
16. How can St John's Wishart remain a gospel-shaped church for generations to come? How has God gifted you to enable this to happen as a member of St John's in this season?

PRAY: *Heavenly Father, thank you for the great rescue that we have in Jesus Christ. Thank you for the hope of the gospel. Give us the courage and boldness to continue to speak about Christ wherever we are and as a church. Help us to not lose heart and to do all that we do for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

TITLE: The Gospel shaped church - For the Glory of God

PASSAGE: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: We are to be a church that speaks the truth of the Gospel for the good of the world and the glory of God.

STRUCTURE:

- Speaking in the Midst of Hardship [13-14]
- Speaking for the Glory of God [15]
- Looking to the things to Come [16-18]
- Do not Lose Heart

- What does it look like to be a church that is shaped by the Gospel?
- Two weeks ago, we saw that the Gospel shaped church proclaims Christ with Integrity, Patience, and Humility.
- Last week, we saw that the gospel shaped church does this through weakness! Remembering that God has entrusted the hope of the Gospel to mortal, frail, weak, vessels - to show that all the power belongs to him.
- This week, we'll see that this type of church speaks the truth of the Gospel for the good of the world and for the glory of God.

- In some sense, it would be really easy right now in the life of our church to just drop tools a bit.
- We have a healthy congregation, we are financially blessed, our grounds and buildings look amazing - it would be tempting just to get cosy and comfortable right now.
- We've got one service that's easy to maintain, we are still small enough to know most people's names, the rosters are full, youth group and Sunday school and creche are happening - it's all good! Praise God! Eat, Drink and be Merry!
- So then, why mess it up by still going for more growth? Why mess it all up by reaching out into the community?
 - Why grow more if it might mean planting a second service, why grow more if it means more roles to fill - why do the hard thing!?
 - We do it for the good of the world and for the Glory of God.
- We must continue to speak, so that many more may hear of the Gospel of God and come and praise and glorify God.

- **Speaking in the Midst of Hardship [13-14]**
- Now it's important to remember the context that Paul was writing from.
- Paul was in the 1st Century where he was being actively pursued and persecuted because he was proclaiming the name of Jesus.
- In this section, he is defending the fact that he was a persecuted Apostle - and he's trying to convince the Corinthians that his persecution doesn't nullify his message or Authority as an Apostle. On the contrary, persecution and hardships for proclaiming Christ are actually the norm for the messenger of Christ!
- Now in comparison, here in Australia, we aren't being persecuted for following Jesus or proclaiming him. We aren't being run out of town, and no one is going to come through those back doors and stop our service.
- However, that doesn't mean that what we're reading is irrelevant to us today.
- So with all this in mind, let's read from V13...

- V13-14 "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence."
- Paul quotes from Psalm 116
- And in this Psalm the writer rejoices because of God's rescue of him from a dire situation of death
- Ps 116:8-10 "For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, even when I spoke: "I am greatly afflicted"
- Now Paul quotes this slightly differently to suit his argument - but the point that he is trying to make is that we have the same Holy Spirit as the Psalmist did.
- We have the same gift of faith - of trusting in God, and we have the same Spirit that enables that faith to happen!

- So just as the Psalmist speaks or rejoices even in the face of affliction, so does Paul, and so do we!
 - Because we too have been greatly rescued.
 - Our souls have been rescued from death, our sinful record has been done away with, and our reconciliation with the God of the universe has been made complete through the death and resurrection of Jesus!
 - We have the joy and delight of being part of and recipients of the greatest rescue!
 - And so that same hope spurs Paul on to speak, and out to spur us onto speaking, and proclaiming, and growing.
 - We speak, knowing that God who raised Jesus with power, will also raise us with power!
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- Now for Paul, it was quite literally a case of potential death for speaking about Jesus. But he continues to speak, knowing that death will not be the end!
 - He speaks knowing that God will rescue him from death even if he is put to death!
 - He has that great confidence and assurance that comes from the Gospel.
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- And we have the same Spirit as Paul did in the first century, so we ought to have the same confidence and assurance.
 - Even if we are tired and we are strung out and worn out like a plastic takeaway container, our torch of life will never be snuffed out!
 - But also, the more we realise how greatly we have been rescued, the more and more we will want others to experience that great rescue!
 - *My Dad is a coffee drinker and tea drinker. And about a year or two ago, he discovered the wonders of the takeaway Yeti reusable cups.*
 - *They are double walled and stainless steel so they keep the beverage nice and hot or cold.*
 - *And so when he went on long road trips around Bathurst, he would always go on and on and on and on about how good his Yeti cups were...*
 - *He believed in the product, enjoyed the product, delighted in the product - So he spoke!*
 - *So much that Rach and I now have one each, and we too enjoy them and go on and on and on about them...okay, maybe only I do!*
 - But we do this all the time with other things in this life
 - *Have you tried this new hair product, have you tried this new health supplement, you really need to go to this restaurant, this plumber is fantastic...*
 - We believe in all sorts of things, and then we go onto sharing it with other people! It comes so naturally to us!
 - And so why then do we shy away when it comes to sharing about the good God that we believe in?
 - We have such amazing news - so much vastly better than a Yeti coffee cup - so why do we keep it hidden so often?
 - I have done in the past and I do now as well!
 - What are we so afraid of?
 - Embarrassment? Being shunned or cut off? Being labeled?
 - We have the same Spirit as Paul did, we have the hope of the Gospel, and even if the worst was to come (death) - then we will be raised to eternal life!
 - But if that leads someone else to coming to know the hope and the love of God - wouldn't that be worth the potential cost?
 - If it leads to the further unveiling and display of the love of God and the glory of God - wouldn't it be all worth it?
 - That's where Paul heads next in V15
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- **Speaking for the Glory of God [15]**
 - V15 "For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God."
 - Paul preaches even through hardship for the sake of the Corinthians. For their good!
 - The Gospel is good for people. God is good for people!
 - But that's not the end of it - as more people see God's grace and respond to it, there will be more praise of God, and more Glory will be given to God, and the more God's fame will spread.
 - The more honor will be given to the one who created us in his image, who loved us even while we were sinful, and redeemed us at the cost of his one and only son.

- There can be a bit of a trap when it comes to ministry and mission - that our motivator can sometimes only be hell avoidance.
- That is - we think "If my friend or coworker doesn't come to Jesus in repentance and faith, then they are going to hell, so I better share the gospel with them."
 - And that is true! If people don't return to the Lord, then they are destined for hell - whatever that looks like.
 - And that's a good motivator as well! Hell is bad. Being separated from God and all that is good for eternity is bad - and I don't want to go there!
- However, Paul doesn't say "I speak for your sake so that you don't go to hell", he writes "I speak so that as grace goes out it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God"
- His motivator for mission isn't just hell avoidance, it is ultimately, the glory of God!
- His motivator is for people to know just how good and glorious and majestic and powerful and loving the creator of this universe is!
 - And for them to be reconciled to him and come to praise him and then go onto share Jesus with other people!
- So then why don't we just sit on our hands at St John's and settle into our lounge chair of ease? Why get up and do the hard thing of going out and pursuing growth?
 - Not ONLY so that people avoid hell BUT ALSO
 - So that more people may know just how amazing God is - and then come and glorify and praise him!
- *Now please excuse my boasting here - but I think my boys are pretty cute. And Rach and I have decided to not post their faces on Social Media for various reasons...*
- *But I have this internal conflict - I just want to show them off! I want people to know just how amazing my boys are! And share in my joy and delight in them!*
- But how much more amazing is our God? Shouldn't we want to show off our great God? Our powerful God? Our merciful God? Don't we want his fame to be made known across the world?
- Shouldn't that be motivation enough?
- In the first week - we learned that we have a Christo-centric message or a Christ-centred mission.
- This week - we can see that we are to have a christo-centric motivation or a Christ-centred motivation as well!
- We believe and so we speak.
- And we speak so that others may believe!
- We speak for the Glory of God;
- While looking to the things to come
- **Looking to the things to Come [16-18]**
- V16 "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."
- Paul doesn't focus on the things that can be seen...he doesn't focus on the hardships.
- Yes, he admits that gospel-shaped ministry and mission is hard! The outer self is wasting away, our bodies are temporal, persecution can be debilitating, health situations can be crippling! But there's so much better to come.
- There's a great reward to come.
- And so he focuses on eternity.
- He calls those ailments a light momentary affliction! A light bundle...not a burden at all!
- Especially in light of all that is to come.
- So then - Paul does not lose heart.
- **Do not Lose Heart**

- Right back in V1 of Ch4 - Paul uses this phrase “we do not lose heart” and he repeats it here in V16 “therefore, we do not lose heart”
- And this repetition is significant!
- The Gospel shaped church may face all kinds of challenges from both internal reasons and external reasons.
- It may come up against resistance, it may come up against financial hardship, relationship difficulties, but in and amongst all that - the Gospel shaped church does not lose heart.
- Why?
- Because the same God who has redeemed us and rescued us from sin and death has given us this ministry. He has given it to us plastic takeaway containers to show the world that HE has all the power NOT US -
 - And He will bring us into eternity
- And that same God is with us by his Holy Spirit!
- We have the very best tools and resources to fulfil this ministry, to share this hope - all given by God.

- Now you might be thinking that this might be slightly all irrelevant to you...
- Maybe you think you might be too old for all this mission stuff, or not smart enough, or maybe you’ve just never considered it!
- Well can I challenge you before the end of this year, to just do one thing in your circle of non-Christian friends to share Jesus? And then keep on praying for those friends to know Jesus?
- Maybe it’s as simple as sharing that you went to church on Sunday and sharing what we talked about?
- Maybe it’s even as simple as inviting them to a church service, or youth group, or a Christmas event?
- You don’t have to be amazing, you don’t have to be powerful - we just have to be great pointers to the greatness of God!
- We believe and so we speak!

- Maybe you have been praying for someone to come to know Jesus for a long time. And drip-feeding Jesus for a long time. But with no apparent progress - brothers and sisters, don’t lose heart! Remember God’s Spirit in and with you! Keep on going!

- On a church level, I’m so thankful for the deep gospel roots here at St John’s.
- People have been faithfully proclaiming Christ through hardship for God’s Glory here for 36 years and on the old site for longer - before I was born!
- And I get to see the fruit of that here. This church has been through various seasons but all throughout it, people have not lost heart!
- And as we think about 2027 and the seasons ahead - I hope and pray that even in 5, 10, 30 years time, St John’s will still be a place where Christ is proclaimed faithfully, enduring hardship, for God’s glory.
 - Where new disciples are made, where disciples mature, where faithful ministers are raised up, where people are sent out into the world to proclaim him, where new churches are planted from, where God’s fame and glory is made known all throughout Brisbane and beyond.
 - And the way we will do this - actually looks quite boring...
 - go deep with Jesus,
 - casting our eyes on him month by month, week by week, day by day.
 - Relying on him in fervent prayer.
 - And simply telling others about him.
- For this is what a Gospel-shaped church does.