



# REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

## *Let's Go Fulfill our Ministry*

1/11/2021 - 1/17/2021

### MAIN POINT

As ambassadors, we represent the King and kingdom in a foreign land so that people truly know what life with the King is like.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What words or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word contagious?**

**Does that word have a positive or negative connotation to you? Why?**

**Can you think of someone whose positive attitude or influence made their actions extremely contagious in a good way? What qualities of theirs did you most want to “catch”?**

As Christians, we should live lives that are contagious to others. In other words, we should live in such a way to make Christianity attractive. That's part of what it means to be an ambassador for Christ. The problem is many people make Christianity unattractive in the way they live their lives. Many people find Christians to be, boring, hypocritical, joyless, angry, or negative. However, our lives should be just the opposite. As ambassadors, we represent the King and kingdom in a foreign land so that people truly know what life with the King is like.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13.

**Why do you think an enthusiastic believer is often perceived as crazy or out of his or her mind?**

**How did Paul's willingness to be perceived as out of his mind demonstrate a contagious attitude? What does it tell us about his motivation?**

**How is that kind of motivation contagious?**

When you think about Paul's story, it's easy to see why some might consider him to be crazy. Look at how dramatically his life had changed, and think about what he was willing to endure for seemingly no benefit. At the same time, that kind of life is appealing and contagious because it shows the one living it values something more than the things of the world.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21.

As the church, we are called to obey Jesus' command to go into the world and preach the gospel. But what is the motivation behind our obedience? The apostle Paul dealt with our motivation by taking us back to the reality of Christ's love. The driving force behind God's messengers is Christ's love for the world He came to save.

**Why do you think that it's the love of Christ that compels us into the world?**

**Why is that attitude key if we are to be ambassadors for Christ?**

**What happens when we are compelled by something other than love in our involvement in God's mission?**

**What does it mean to regard no one from a fleshly point of view? How does this relate to the truth that we are a new creation?**

When we look around at others, we might be filled with all kinds of viewpoints. We might have preconceived notions about others based on their race, income, or background. But we can't view anyone in a purely human way any more. Just as we were made a new creation when we became Christians, so God is willing and able to make new creations out of anyone else we come in contact with. We are His agents in this process as we actively seek to share the gospel with others.

**What does the word "ambassador" mean? What are the keys to being a quality ambassador?**

**Why do you think Paul chose this word to describe the role of the Christian in the world?**

**In what ways does your life reflect the priorities of ambassadorship for the kingdom of God?**

**Does your heart match Paul's heart in pleading with people to be saved? How can you tell?**

An ambassador is committed to representing the values of his or her home kingdom even while living in a foreign land. They are first and foremost citizens of another country, and they live displaced specifically for the purpose of representing that other country. Because we are new creations in Christ, we have a new home. While we are here on earth, we represent God and His kingdom wherever we go.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**An ambassador can be defined as an authorized representative or messenger appointed for a special task. What are some responsibilities we have as ambassadors? How can ambassadors be effective if they do not know who they represent or what they are expected to do?**

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how conscious of God's purpose of reconciliation are you from day to day? How would being more aware of God's purpose make your life as a believer more contagious?**

**How would your life change if you saw yourself (first and foremost) as one sent by God on His mission?**

**To whom is God calling you to be an ambassador this week?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for making you new in Christ. Ask Him to help you see to a greater extent His love so that you might be compelled to live contagiously for Him and His kingdom.

## COMMENTARY

| 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

Paul previously said in 1 Corinthians that we have a home in heaven and eventually God will judge each of us. But Paul did not await judgment to be an open book before the Lord. In fact,

Paul said he was completely open before God. Paul was consciously transparent before God. He made no effort to deceive or put up a front. What use would it be for us to try to conceal our motives from God? God will finally “reveal the intentions of the hearts” of His ministers (1 Cor. 4:5). Even now, “all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account” (Heb. 4:13).

Paul hoped that the Corinthians could also see plainly his calling, ministry, and motives. This is the meaning of I hope we are completely open to your consciences as well. Paul did not view himself as subject to the judgment of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:3), but the progress of the gospel in Corinth depended to a degree on their convictions regarding him.

Because the progress of the gospel was Paul’s real concern, he could say that we are not commending ourselves to you. Although Paul’s purpose was not to promote himself, it was important for the Corinthians to be convicted of the validity of his ministry. Competing visions of true ministry existed in Corinth. Some in Corinth were more impressed by outward appearance and speaking ability (2 Cor. 10:10; 12:11) than they were by the plain preaching of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” and “Jesus Christ as Lord” (1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5). Paul’s vision of ministry was shaped by the message of Christ crucified and risen. Another vision was shaped by the world’s love for appearance and flair in speaking. One of the visions highlighted the power and wisdom of God. The other highlighted the power and wisdom of men. The true gospel is about the power and wisdom of God.

For if we are out of our mind suggests that those who took pride in outward appearance criticized Paul as eccentric, imbalanced, or crazy. Others may have contended that Paul had quite a sound mind. It is not hard to imagine things that could have been behind the charge that Paul was crazy. He saw visions. He dignified his frequent sufferings as revelatory. He was deeply, emotionally invested in his ministry, even to the point of tears. He was constantly trying to persuade people of the truth of the gospel, even earthly judges who had authority over him! On trial in Caesarea, Paul tried to persuade King Agrippa to become a Christian (Acts 26:24-29). He was told then, “You’re out of your mind, Paul!” Therefore, any number of things might have been used to claim that Paul was crazy. Paul would not, however, be put off by such a claim. Jesus heard the same thing (Mark 3:21). Paul would not change his ways because some thought he was out of his mind. He did, however, insist to the Corinthians that whether he seemed out of his mind or of sound mind, all that he did was for God and for you.

As the church, we are called to obey Jesus’ command to go into the world and preach the gospel. But what is the motivation behind our obedience? The apostle Paul dealt with our motivation by taking us back to the reality of Christ’s love. The driving force behind God’s messengers is

Christ's love for the world He came to save. John 3:16 is clear that God's love was the motivation for giving Jesus. That love now fills our hearts and becomes our motivation for giving of ourselves.

The selfless love displayed by Jesus in His life and death is Paul's reference point for our love for others. The love of God compels us to live for Him and to pour ourselves out for others. This was Jesus' desire (John 12:50), and it now becomes our own. We live for a resurrected God and Savior, not for ourselves, and this should press us into action.

Paul focuses our attention upon the spiritual dilemma that is solved only through the gospel. We do not see others "in a purely human way" because we recognize the necessity of new life that comes at conversion. The new creation that we become in Christ begins in the spiritual realm, not the physical realm. We will experience new creation bodies at the resurrection, but the work of the Holy Spirit begins by making our spirits, which were dead in sin, alive to God. We must begin seeing the lost around us as people who need new life. Paul also makes clear that there is no Plan B for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. God has chosen us for the task to be His ambassadors.

We are ambassadors to the world with a message of reconciliation. God has made a way for sinful people to become His friends instead of His enemies. God has provided a pathway to peace in spite of the world's rebellion. The fact that God offers peace in spite of us, not because of us, is what makes this such good news!

So what do we do? We plead with others to be saved. All of this—reconciliation, ambassadorship, life, and new creation—comes because of what Jesus did in our place. Because Jesus took upon Himself our sin, shame, and punishment, we receive God's righteousness, friendship, and mission. And now we serve as ambassadors for King Jesus!