

This Changes Everything

Session 4: How It Will Be: A Future Hope

What We Want Students to Learn: That because of God's promise to redeem all things, we can enjoy the good times and make it through the bad times without losing hope.

Main Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Supporting Scripture: Revelation 22:1-5

Session Snapshot: When we look around at the world, there's so much to love. Everywhere you turn there is God's goodness on display. But, if we're honest, there are times when things get tough. In these times, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. It can sometimes be difficult to see God, especially when we know that He has promised to make all things new. But we can trust His word. We can actively live as children of the promise, all the while hoping in a future where everything will be made right and we are fully redeemed. It's worth the wait.

Bible Background

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

The Details

Who wrote this book?

The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.

When was it written?

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around 55 or 56 AD, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth.

What was the purpose for its writing?

According to the ESV Study Bible, the main theme of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was "the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message."

The Main Point

The main point you want to drive home to your students is that the Gospel doesn't just change our lives today, it changes the way we look toward the future. In this life there are ups and downs. Paul knew this as well as anyone. And in this passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul passes along some amazing encouragement: the trials we're going through in this life are only temporary, no matter how rough things get. And so, we shouldn't lose heart. We should be bold in living out our faith. That is Paul's message.

The Takeaway

We want students to embrace Paul's challenge to live a life of bold, encouraged commitment, taking an eternal perspective on both the good seasons and the rough seasons of life. This is especially true when it comes

to living out their faith. In this world, identifying with Christ can leave us exposed to ridicule, and more. But Paul teaches us that this is no excuse for living anything less than a life completely sold out for God.

Lesson Plan

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: an introductory activity called *Getting Started*; the Bible study section called *Digging In*; and an application-focused segment called *Wrapping Up*.

Getting Started

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 32-37 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 33.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, direct students' attention to page 33. Explain to students that you're going to do a fun group discussion. Encourage students to take a moment and think of their response to the first prompt, namely, a time when they looked forward to something really awesome. Allow them a few moments to think, then go around and allow volunteers to share as they will. Repeat in the same fashion for every question, allowing students chances to respond and share their answers.

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Some people love to wait on surprises or big events. Others can't stand the wait. Which one are you?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Why is it hard to go about your daily activities knowing there is a big event - like, a vacation, or prom, or a big game – coming up?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, begin to transition to the Bible study portion of the lesson by having a student read the session intro on page 32. When they have finished, ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to *Digging In*.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 34-35 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, direct students' attention to the passage at the top of page 34. Provide some context for the passage using the Bible Background portion of your lesson plan. Explain that in the passage they are about to read, the Apostle Paul is finishing up a section where he has talked all about the wonderful power of the Gospel, but

also the hardships we sometimes encounter as we live a Gospel-centered life. The passage you're about to read is kind of like Paul's closing statement of this line of thinking.

THEN, read or have students read the passage. Once you're finished, direct students attention to the section under the passage. Say something like:

- **Before we jump in, it's important to note that Paul makes a series of contrasts in this passage. Once we understand these, we can better understand overall what Paul is going for. What you'll see on the page is the first part of a few different concepts Paul contrasts with each other. What we're going to do is find the missing contrast in each pair.**

Work through the contrasts together. They are as follows:

- **Outer self vs. inner self**
- **Wasting away vs. renewed daily**
- **Light vs. weighty**
- **Momentary vs. eternal**
- **Affliction vs. glory (or a "weight of glory")**
- **What we can see vs. things unseen**

NEXT, lead students in a discussion. The questions are listed in their Student Books for reference. Ask:

- **Look back at that list of contrasts. From a big picture perspective, what is Paul contrasting here?**
 - *Answer:* The present (or the things of this world) and the eternal (or the things of God).
- **Look at vs. 16. When Paul says we don't lose heart, he is talking about being bold. He's talking about not shrinking back. Can you guess what Paul is encouraging us to be bold about?**
 - *Answer:* Living a life identified as a Christ-follower. Speaking and doing the Gospel. Paul is saying that no matter what happens, we have to stay bold in living as Christians.
- **What do you think Paul means when he says, "our outer self is wasting away"?**
 - *Answer:* The Greek word that is translated "wasting away" is closest in meaning to our word, "decaying." Yuk! Generally, our physical bodies are always moving in the direction of death. Not a great thought, but true. For Paul specifically, he had faced a ton of really hard trials that had caused him to suffer physically. He was feeling, and showing the effects of these trials.

Stop here and ask students if anyone of them can remember any of the hardship Paul had faced, any of the tough times he went through that would have negatively impacted him physically. Allow students to answer. Then, take a moment and read, or have a student read, 2 Corinthians 11:24-29. Explain to students that this isn't even a complete list of all that Paul suffered for the sake of sharing the Gospel with people! Take a moment and lead students through a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Most likely, you won't be stoned or shipwrecked in the course of sharing the Gospel with people who need it most. But if we were to list a few examples of what challenges or hardships 21st century teenagers experience for living out or sharing their faith, what would we come up with?**
 - Answers will vary, but allow students to list off potential challenges.

THEN, once students have had a chance to share, direct their attention back to the second part of verse 16. Ask:

- **Paul is making one of his contrasts here. He says that even though his outer self is wasting away, something is happening to his inner self. What does he say happens?**
 - *Answer:* It is being renewed.

- **Does anyone have any ideas what Paul may be talking about here?**
 - *Answer:* Paul's physical, earthly body is on a collision with death. (HINT: So is ours.) But because he has been saved by faith in Christ, he is on a spiritual journey of life and renewal. Every day he lives on this earth he is one day closer to death, and one day closer to life forever with Christ.

Explain to students that this is true for anyone who has come to saving faith in Jesus. Say something like:

- **We live each day in a world that has a lot of super-awesome blessings we get to experience. But, it's not a perfect world. There is pain and suffering. There is argument and strife. There is loss. We experience all these things in little ways and big ways. And yet, what Paul is saying here is that we are constantly on a path toward seeing ourselves, and our world being remade in the image of God. For Christians, we are on a collision course with renewal and redemption, all because of the perfect plan God has set in motion. That's how Paul can say what he says in verse 17.**

NEXT, instruct students' attention to verse 17. Ask:

- **Whoa! How does Paul describe his troubles? Knowing what you just read in 2 Corinthians 11, would you describe them as "light"? What words would you use to describe them?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Here's another contrast. "Light and momentary affliction" verses an "eternal weight of glory" so good it can't be described. What exactly is Paul saying?**
 - *Answer:* Paul is comparing the troubles we experience on this earth with what it gains for us. He saw all that he had experienced through the lens of the amazing beauty that was coming when He joined God in Heaven.
- **In verse 18, Paul helps us know how to process the hard times we experience because we're Christ-followers. He does it with another contrast. What is he contrasting, and how does this help us deal with the tough times we face?**
 - *Answer:* Help students see that what Paul is envisioning is the new order that God promises to usher in when He one day comes to redeem creation. What is Jesus doing? What is coming? How can Paul say this?

At this point, have students turn to Revelation 22 in their Bibles, or look on page 35. Give them some context for Revelation using the following bullet points:

- **John the Apostle wrote the Revelation. He was an older man at the time, exiled on the island of Patmos. He was writing decades after Jesus' death and resurrection.**
- **God allowed John to see an actual vision of Heaven. That's why Revelation is so full of amazing imagery, most of it we can barely comprehend.**
- **Imagine a 1st century man with a 1st century man's experiences, vocabulary, and worldview writing about what he saw in Heaven! No wonder it is full of such descriptive imagery.**

THEN, read or have a student read Revelation 22:1-5. Explain that much of what we read in Revelation is metaphorical imagery, as you just mentioned. There is much that we can't know 100% for sure. But, there is still much we CAN know! Lead students in a brief discussion. Ask:

- **Have students look at the passage. Take a moment and circle every place in the passage that speaks to a new future where God has redeemed the world from the consequences of sin.**
 - Answers might include: river of the water of life; the throne of God; the "city"; tree of life; names of servant's foreheads; no more night; no sun; eternal existence with God.

- **The first hint we have that we have of God redeeming a broken world is in verse 2. What were the leaves of the tree of life for?**
 - *Answer:* Healing the nations.
- **In the world around you every day, what are some examples of the kind of conflict do you see between people?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What are some examples of the conflict we see between countries and nations?**
 - Answers will vary. But explain to students how truly amazing this is! The strife we see between people, between people groups, racism and discrimination, and even between nations will no longer be an issue. There will be a day when God will usher in a new reality where there is only peace, not war or conflict.
- **Look at verse 3. When John talks about the “accursed,” he is talking about the consequences of sin. He says here that there will be no consequences of sin anymore. What are some of the consequences of sin?**
 - *Answer:* Separation from God; spiritual death; physical death; disease; war; famine, and so on. How cool it is that when God returns to make all things new, these will all be gone!
- **Look at verse 4. What will be our relationship with God?**
 - *Answer:* We will know Him personally, face-to-face.
- **What does verse 5 tell us about the future of this new reality?**
 - *Answer:* It will be eternal! It will last forever.

FINALLY, end on an encouraging note. Remind students that the powerful reality is that God is making all things new. Say something like:

- **If we have come to know Jesus as our Savior, our future will not be on this earth, but with God in a new creation where everything is perfected. No suffering. No struggling. No trials. Just eternal joy spent in relationship with God. And all of this is possible for us to experience because of the work the Gospel does in this world. It truly is a force that changes everything!**

If there are no more questions, transition into the *Wrapping Up* section of your lesson.

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 36 in the *This Changes Everything* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, explain to students that the truths you’ve just learned are awesome. But the question we have to ask is, “how does this impact our lives”? What do we do with the information we just learned? Ask students what they think the takeaways are for us. Allow them to share as they see fit.

THEN, direct their attention to page 36. Have students look at the statement at the top of the page. Encourage them that this is one of the possible takeaways from what they have just learned. Read the phrase aloud: “Knowing the future that God is planning gives us hope. And hope makes us bold.” Make the point that knowing the future affects how we live in the present. Say something like:

- **If you knew that you would pitch a no-hitter in your baseball game, or make a 100 on the test, or some sort of success in something you love doing, it would impact how you carried yourself. You'd act a certain way knowing what was coming, wouldn't you? This is true for us in how we approach our faith. Knowing what we know, it should change the way we live. Your challenge now as we wrap up is to determine, prayerfully, what this looks like for you.**

NEXT, give students a few minutes on their own to work through the remaining statements on the page. Encourage them to prayerfully consider what God is trying to show them. Then, after they have had time to process, have them come back to together. If anyone wants to share their responses, allow them to.

FINALLY, encourage students to boldly live out what God is trying to teach them. Remind them that they are God's plan to influence the world around them in His name. Ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. (Don't forget to remind students of the devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books.) Then, close in prayer.