

Ambassadors

14 Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. 15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.

And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NLT)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- If you had to write a classified ad to find an ambassador for the US to a foreign nation, what traits and skills would you look for?
- What has been your experience with "witnessing" or sharing your faith with others?
- Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. If He were born in our culture, where would He spend His time? Who would He "hang" with?
- : What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

v.14-18a

- : What are the motivating force(s) described in this passage? Now, how do these motives compare with other potential motives that sometimes drive Christians (ex. 2 Cor. 2:17, 5:12)?
- : What is the amazing promise in v.17? In what ways is this reflected in believers? How has your new life in Jesus changed you?
- l: How is the new life as described in this passage supposed to change our actions and approach to others (14-21)?
- : What does God do through Christ (v.18)? For us (v.17-18)? Through us (v.20)?

v.18b-21

- : What does "reconciliation" mean (v.18-20)? What is the opposite of reconciliation? What are other words/actions that Christians sometimes use/strive for that fall short of reconciliation (hint: ex. conversion,...)?
- : What is every believer's "job description" (v.20-21)?
- l: The message and ministry of reconciliation are described in this passage. What accusations might we endure from opponents to this message and ministry (see the context, v.11-13)? How should we answer these accusations?
- l: How does the identity as "Christ's ambassadors" (v.20) differ from the Bible simply giving "the 7 steps" to witnessing?
- A: As ambassadors, how could the ordinary aspects of your life be sacred opportunities to represent Christ? Be specific, pray over them, respond.
- A: How does busyness hurt our identity as ambassadors?

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Thanks God for Jesus and his work, recognize the new life He has given you, pray boldly and specifically for the folks God has placed in your life that you are to be an ambassador to with the message of reconciliation.
- **Respond:** Re-read this passage this week, as well as 2 Corinthians chapter 6. Take time to think about those people God has placed in your life who have not yet been reconciled to Him. In the coming days, pray for each one by name. Ask the Holy Spirit to open out doors and give you boldness as you sense opportunities to be an ambassador of Christ to these people. Consider memorizing 2 Corinthians 5:20.
- **Read:** Next week's sermon (5/2/2010) will focus on 1 Peter 2:9-10. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time.