

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

2 Corinthians 5:1-7

LEADER'S STUDY

Earthly Tent to Heavenly Dwelling

2 Corinthians 5:1-7

What is happening?

In this passage, Paul likens our mortal bodies to an earthly tent in the wilderness and expresses how much we groan and long to be in our eternal heavenly home with the Lord. He states the Holy Spirit was given to us as a guarantee of this eternal home. Paul may have had in mind the last day of the Feast of Booths, when Jesus stood up and promised that whoever believed in him would receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). The Israelites celebrated the Festival of Booths to commemorate how God had provided for them in the wilderness, and to remember how He had them live in tents and everything He did to bring them to the Promised Land. The Feast of Booths involved an enormous amount of atoning blood sacrifices, more than any other festival, and was also a time to look ahead to the promised Messianic age when all nations would flow to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

Where is the gospel?

Because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all peoples could finally be fulfilled at Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, Israelites celebrated both the first fruits of the wheat harvest and also the giving of the law to Moses. When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost after Jesus' ascension, the holiday was transformed and elevated in its significance as Jesus' disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit as the first fruits of the new law established because of Christ's sacrifice. Just as the Israelites dwelled in tents and the pillar of fire guided them in the wilderness towards the promised land, so now we dwell in the earthly tents of our mortal bodies, and the fire of the Holy Spirit inside of us guides us to our promised heavenly dwelling. We no longer celebrate the feast of booths, instead we live with the constant reminder that our mortal bodies are just a tent. The Holy Spirit inside of us reminds us that we were created for eternity with the Lord. Yes, we groan and struggle with our sin, but that awareness of sin and ability to struggle against it is itself a blessing from the Holy Spirit.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: What purpose do the feasts of the law serve? How is God calling me to depend on Him more? What is the Holy Spirit's ministry? How is God calling me to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on these truths as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to "follow Him" and make clear "I" statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 7:37-39; John 16:7-11; Acts 2; 1Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ 2 Corinthians 5:1-7
and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation. Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective.

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

Consider the historical context:

God had commanded that the Israelites celebrate the Festival of Booths to commemorate how God had provided for them in the wilderness, and to remember how He had them live in tents and everything He did in and through them during that time. They were never to forget all God had done to bring them to the Promised Land. The Feast of Booths involved an enormous amount of atoning blood sacrifices, more than any other festival, and was also a time to look ahead to the promised Messianic age when all nations would flow to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

What seems to be the main point of this passage?

What can we expect the Holy Spirit to do in our lives?

Are we more encouraged or discouraged when the Holy Spirit reveals sin in our lives?

Why did God give us the Holy Spirit on Pentecost?

What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How is the Holy Spirit working in your life today?

Will you submit to how the Holy Spirit wants to transform you into Christ's image?

Why does the Spirit give different gifts to each believer?

How is God calling you to obey, based on this passage?

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?