

Week Two: *I Will Not Waste Your Struggles*
2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-11. What do you consider the key verse in this section?
2. Paul talks about light shining out of darkness and of treasure that is hidden in jars of clay. What's he trying to say about the Christian life by using metaphors of contrast?
3. Singing competitions on TV have been popular for a long time. Have you ever been surprised to hear a person who sounds completely different than they appear? How is that similar to Paul's comments here?
4. Which phrase do you believe is mostly true: "You can't judge a book by its cover" or "You never get a second chance to make a first impression"? Explain your answer.
5. What's the advantage of people having low expectations of you? What's the disadvantage?
6. How does having Christ in you (Christian faith) alter your reality?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray that God might increase in your life and the weakness of your sinful human nature would decrease.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. Can you think of three possible reasons why God allows Christians to suffer in this life?
9. The famous hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* says, "Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The kingdom's ours forever!" What loss would test your faith to its limits?
10. According to 2 Corinthians 4:10, as we suffer personal loss in this life, what happens to our faith? Has that been true for you?
11. An old German proverb says, "The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg." What do you think that means? What kind of water does that? How is life like that?
12. The Bible describes the enemies of a Christian as the devil, the world, and our own sinful condition. Which do you

struggle against most often?

13. How does the struggle of a Christian provide opportunity for faith to be seen by others?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more transparent about your struggles so those who observe your life might see the power of Christ working in you.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Three

15. Read 2 Corinthians 4:15. How is the example of Paul and the other faithful to the benefit of the Corinthians?
(Consider the immediate context i.e. being hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned, etc.)
16. Do you think that principle still applies today?
17. Read James 2:15-17. Do you agree with the ancient statement attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words!" What do you think he meant?
18. Do you believe outsiders first hear (or read) of the Christian faith and then observe our behavior, or first observe our behavior and then check out the things we believe? Do actions speak louder than words?
19. According to 2 Corinthians 4:15, what is the result when nonbelievers observe the faithfulness of Christians facing real struggles?
20. Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-13. What is Paul saying in those verses?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more intentional about your witness of actions in public to help others understand the promises we have in Christ.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Four

22. Continue reading 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. How does Paul describe our outward condition? What does he mean by that?
23. How are we blessed by our momentary troubles? (v. 17)
24. When Paul says we should not fix our eyes on what is seen, what does he mean?

25. People often advise us to remember the phrase, "This too will pass." Do you think that kind of thinking is helpful? Why or why not?
26. When is a home in need of rehab? Should things be updated just because they are dated? What was the must-have item last year? Two years ago? What does that teach us about the temporary nature of life and this world's values?
27. What does Paul mean when he says we should fix our eyes on things that are unseen? Why is that sometimes difficult for us to do?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be more aware of the difference between temporary wants and lasting values.

Spend FIFTEEN: Day Five

29. Read Philippians 1:21-26. Paul was in prison awaiting his sentence for not honoring Roman authority. Did he have a personal preference about the verdict?
30. Are you at a crossroad in your life? Do you have a personal preference about your future? Are you okay no matter how it turns out?
31. Would you prefer to know your future, or be surprised? Why?
32. If you feel safe to share, what momentary troubles are you facing just now?
33. What has the effect of that upset been on your life? Has anything good come out of it?
34. What gives you ultimate confidence that in the end, everything will work out for the best? Or maybe you lack that confidence? Why or why not?
35. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater faith to believe that no matter what life throws your way, trusting in the Lord's promises will guide your path.