

RISKING ALL FOR LOVE**Focusing on the Unseen****2 Corinthians 4:1–18**

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:18

Day 1: Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–6.

1. Why do you think that, in the midst of having accusations leveled against him, Paul can say in verse 1 “we do not lose heart”? (2 Cor. 3:18) What is the substance of this ministry that propels Paul and other Christians through the ages? (2 Cor. 5:18)
2. Paul includes a grouping of strong and disturbing words: “secret and shameful ways”, “deception”, and “distort” in verse 2. What do you think is going on here?
3. What is it that prevents some from hearing and understanding the truth of the gospel? (vs. 4) How might this encourage you as you share the gospel with others? (vs. 6)
4. What is the simple yet profound content of Paul’s preaching that needs to be acknowledged by anyone to whom the gospel has been revealed? (vs. 5; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3) How would you explain what this means?

Day 2: Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–6.

5. Is Satan left unfettered to do as he pleases in preventing people from seeing and understanding Christ’s work? (Eph. 1:18–23)
6. What is conversion to Christ likened to? (vss. 3, 6; Gen. 1:1–3; Isa. 9:2, Jn. 12:44–46) Jot down as many similarities as you can between our conversion and the image(s) in these verses.
7. Can you think of an example in the last few months when God made his light shine in you by revealing a specific dark area in your heart?

Day 3: Read 2 Corinthians 4:6–12.

8. What is the “treasure” that is mentioned in verse 7? (vs. 6) Why is something of such great value being housed in such a fragile and inglorious vessel? (vs. 7; 12:9)
9. How do the four clauses in verses 8 and 9 illustrate God’s power in Paul’s life? What does Paul do when the Christian life becomes too much for him? (2 Cor. 1:9)
10. Why do you think that Paul interprets the experiences of verses 8 and 9 in terms of the death and resurrection of Jesus (vss. 10–11)? (See Phil. 3:7–11.)
11. Paul goes to great length to stress that the pain, pressure, frustration and affliction (the daily deaths) in a believers’ life is not pointless. Where in your own life have you found suffering to be part of the redemptive process? (vss. 11–12; 2 Cor. 2:14–15)

Day 4: Read 2 Corinthians 4:13–18.

12. Read Psalm 116:1–10 and list a few phrases that illustrate the ‘spirit of faith’ (vs. 13) that all believers have in common.
13. If the cross explains why Paul suffers, what is it that gives him the hope to persevere in his suffering? (vs. 14) How has this truth encouraged you to persist in a difficult period of your life?
14. Paul’s eye of faith enables him to look beyond his present trials and understand a little bit of God’s perspective of what is going on. What of eternal value is going on? (vs. 15)

Day 5: Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–18.

15. What is happening to you spiritually as you are breaking down physically? (vs. 16) How have you seen glimpses of that in your own experience?
16. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 and then muse on how Paul can possibly call these afflictions “light” in verse 17. (See also Rom. 8:18, 28; 1 Cor. 2:9) What is it that is so “heavy” that makes these (our) afflictions so “light”?
17. If you want to keep going and not faint, what should you keep your eye on? (vs. 18) How can we grow in seeing the unseen more clearly? How can we help each other in this process?