

FLOURISHING IN GRAD SCHOOL  
WEEK 12: CALLED TO A COMPELLING TASK

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no 'ordinary' people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner — no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment."

C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11 - 6:2

<sup>11</sup> Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade people. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. <sup>12</sup> We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. <sup>13</sup> If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. <sup>6:1</sup> As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of my salvation, I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Read the passage out loud together. Give everyone five or so minutes on their own to review it. Invite study members to note things that stand out and add a comment or question about it on their sheet.

### Discussion Questions

“What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.” What do you think Paul has in mind here? What exactly are they that he hopes is so plain? Does the same apply to you? Is it plain to those in your department?

What are the internal and external qualities upon which you place your pride? Do these seem crazy to others? Can you think of a time when your Christian convictions inclined others to think you were “out of your mind”? If so, tell the story.

Paul’s whole life is directed by the gospel. Christ’s love compels him to make the decisions he does — to say the things he says, to do the things he does. Is this true for you? How would your life look different if the gospel had a greater influence on you? (Read the C.S. Lewis quote for a different spin on this same idea.)

Paul understands that Christ has changed everything. Humanity, designed for so much, was estranged from God and unable to fulfill his intentions for us because of sin. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus paved the way for a return to God’s way. This is truly good news, and we have been called to share it with others. We are Christ’s ambassadors. What does it mean to be an ambassador?

To what extent do you feel called to talk about the gospel with others — to “persuade people” (v. 11)? What comes to mind (positive or negative) when you think of evangelists?

According to this text, there are three components that influence Paul’s way of sharing the gospel. He is motivated by the fear of God, compelled by the love of Christ, and committed to being perceived as one in his “right mind.” How do you understand these three separate concepts? What do they mean? How might the implementation of this model make it easier for you to talk about your faith with others?

What hinders you from being more open about your faith? What compels you?

Are there other things from the passage you want to comment on or ask about?

Spend a few minutes filling in the table below. When you are finished, discuss these final questions together and then pray for one another and for this group. All of us have people in our spheres of influence who do not know Jesus and for whom we can serve as ambassadors. Who is in your sphere? How might God be inviting you to see them and to pray for them?

<i>Who has God placed in your sphere of influence?</i>	<i>How is God inviting you to see them and pray for them?</i>