

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: May 13, 2018

Lesson Title: "Becoming New"

Lesson Passage: 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; 6:1-2

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In this lesson, Paul speaks of his compelling sense of mission as an "ambassador of Christ," calling upon men to be reconciled to God. Another key idea in this passage is the doctrine of the "new creation."

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain Paul's doctrine of the "new creation." (2) Explain what it means to be an "ambassador for Christ" in light of the historical meaning of the term "ambassador."

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Start with this: The boys' missions organization, Royal Ambassadors, once began its meetings with a ritual based on 2 Cor. 5:20. It went like this: LEADER: "Who is an ambassador?" BOYS: "An ambassador is one who represents the person of a king in the court of another." LEADER: "As ambassadors, whom do you represent?" BOYS: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." *Suggest that this would be an appropriate pledge for all Christians.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Invite class members to read 2 Cor. 5:14-15 silently. Then ask them to comment on what these verses say about the death of Christ. Ask these questions:* (1) In verse 14, the King James Version says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us," while the New International Version (NIV) says, "For Christ's love compels us." Which is correct? (Is Paul speaking of our "love of Christ" or "Christ's love for us"?) *Pause for responses, then call attention to v. 15:* The reference to Christ's death for all suggests that Paul was referring to Christ's great love for us in v. 14. (2) What does "one died for all" mean? (*Refer to 1 Tim. 2:5-6 and Mk. 10:45.*) (3) What does Paul mean when he says "if one died for all, then were all dead" (v. 14b). INTERPRETATION: Christ's death was a physical death; but "the death of all" (v. 14) is not the death of the body, but the death of the old self. QUOTE: "He died for us that we might die to ourselves" (John Calvin). (*Refer to Galatians 2:19-20 for a further explanation of this concept.*)

2. *Ask each class member to write a paraphrase of 2 Cor. 5:17, expressing the meaning in his or her own words.* SAMPLE: "When someone comes to know Christ, God will turn his life inside out; everything will be different." *Let individuals read their paraphrases. Share these ideas:* (1) Interpreters relate this verse to the doctrine of the "new heaven and new earth" in Isa. 65:17 and Rev. 21:1. Though those who are in Christ are still in this world, their citizenship has been transferred to the "new heaven and earth." (2) The radical transformation spoken of as the "new creation" is close in meaning to the idea of the "new birth" in John 3:3-7. (3) When one is created anew in Christ, his or her character and behavior also will be made new. (4) "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16) suggests that, when we become new creations, we see other

people differently--through God's eyes, rather than through the world's eyes. *FOR DISCUSSION:* When you became a Christian, in what ways did your life become new?

3. Present these thoughts on the meaning of "we are ambassadors for Christ" (v. 20): (1) The word translated "ambassador" is the Greek *presbeutes*, which was an exact equivalent of the Latin term *legatus* (our English word "legate"). (2) Some provinces in the Roman Empire were under the direct rule of the emperor. Since the emperor could not be everywhere, he commissioned legates (ambassadors) to govern these provinces. Just as these legates were acting on direct orders from the emperor, Paul had a direct commission from his Lord. (3) When these ambassadors gave an order, it was to be taken as though it had come from the mouth of the emperor himself. *Refer to 5:20:* "as though God were making his appeal through us." (4) An ambassador lived away from home in a foreign land, working among people whose customs, speech and way of life were different from his own. *QUESTION:* How does this apply to "Christ's ambassadors" today (citizens of heaven, living in this world)? (5) The honor of the emperor and his country was in the ambassador's hands. The people watched his life and formed impressions of his sovereign and his native country from the way he lived. *APPLICA-TION:* The honor of Christ is at stake in the way we live day to day.

4. *Highlight two ideas in 2 Cor. 6:1-2:* (1) "Workers together with him" (v. 1). *ILLUSTRATION:* Two boys, 10 and 12 years old, were very resistant to yard work like mowing grass and raking leaves. But when their dad went out to cut down a dead tree one Saturday, they volunteered their help and worked tirelessly under a hot July sun, chopping at roots and shoveling dirt. "Working together" with their father made all the difference. (2) With reference to 6:2, share this account: When Dr. C. Oscar Johnson was pastor of 3rd Ave. Baptist Church in St. Louis, he preached a sermon entitled "Forever Amber" (this was the title of a scandalous novel at the time). He referred to the three colors on a traffic light: Red--Stop! Green--Go! Amber--Get ready.) "Many people," he said, "are forever getting ready to make decisions or take action. They are forever stuck on amber. For them, the 'acceptable time' never arrives."

CLOSING THE LESSON

Encourage class members to memorize 2 Cor. 5:17 and 5:20.

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