



Treasure in Jars of Clay

Icebreaker

What was something you treasured as a kid that would be completely worthless to you today?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 : Read It

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–18.

Get It

- 1. What specific reasons does Paul give in verse 1 for why he does not “lose heart”?**
- 2. According to verses 2–4, what deceptive actions does Paul reject, and how does he describe the problem of those who do not receive the gospel?**
- 3. Who is responsible for keeping unbelievers blinded from the truth?**
- 4. What are the “jars of clay” meant to represent in verse 7?**
- 5. How does Paul describe the length of his present suffering compared to the future glory he expects?**

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Twisting the Truth

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1–6.

Imagine you're scrolling on your phone late at night—I know I've done this—and you start seeing conspiracy theory videos. One creator says they've “uncovered the truth” everyone else is hiding. Another claims they've connected dots no one else wants you to see. The story is compelling, emotional, and just believable enough that you start thinking, *What if they're right?*

That's how deception works. It's not always loud lies, but it's well-crafted narratives that twist reality just enough to pull you in. For example, when the final season of *Stranger Things* aired, it was poorly received by many. Fans convinced themselves there had to be a secret final episode because they couldn't accept the terrible ending. Influencers on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram spread countless theories, calling it “Conspiracy Gate.” People were so desperate for a different conclusion that they fell into the trap of believing a secret episode was coming, despite there being no evidence for it.

Powerful influencers can twist a story to make people believe anything. This is exactly what false teachers (and ultimately the devil) want to do with the church and the gospel. Satan uses confusion, pride, and half-truths to keep people from seeing Jesus clearly.

That's why the Christian faith doesn't rely on manipulation or hype. We don't need to “sell” Jesus with tricks. Real ministry (and real faith) points to Jesus as Lord and who Scripture says He is, not to ourselves or our opinions. Just as God spoke light into darkness at creation, He is the one who turns on the light in our hearts. Our job isn't to craft the most convincing story; it's to speak the truth of God plainly and trust God to open eyes.

6. When was a time someone was able to convince you of something that, when you look back, feels completely absurd?

7. What is one lie about God or His Word that you once believed or a truth you struggle to accept?

8. Paul says the gospel reveals the glory of Christ. When you live out your faith, how can you make sure the focus stays on Jesus and not on making yourself look good?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Treasure in Jars of Clay

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Pottery was a huge part of everyday life in the ancient world. (It still exists today, just not in the same way.) Most jars were made out of clay, which meant they were **easy to break**. They were fragile. Jars were chipped, cracked, and were often misshapen. Paul says that **we** are like those jars of clay.

In Paul's time, clay jars were common, inexpensive, and easily broken. That image matters. God does not choose strong, flashy, or impressive containers to show off how great **we** are. Instead, He intentionally places His greatest treasure (the Good News of Jesus) into ordinary, fragile people so that it's clear where the power comes from.

God uses jars of clay, so that everyone can see that the **real power belongs to God and not to us**. When God works through people who don't have it all together, it becomes obvious that what's happening can't be explained by talent, confidence, or effort alone, it has to be God.

That means your weaknesses don't disqualify you, but they also aren't something to hide or fix before God can use you. They are the very place where dependence on Him begins. When you stop trying to be impressive and start trusting God, His power becomes visible through your life.

9. How does Paul's "jars of clay" example make you feel about your own weaknesses?

10. Why do you think we usually try to hide our weaknesses instead of embracing them?

11. If the "treasure" is the gospel and the "jar" is you, how does focusing on the treasure change the way you see your own flaws?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8–15.

Have you ever had a day where everything goes wrong? You bomb a test you studied hard for. A friend leaves you unread ... and then posts with other people. You miss an easy shot during a game. A problem you thought was far in the past resurfaces in your life. Your life is still going, but it feels like everything is piling up on you. You're still showing up to school. Still going to youth group. Still breathing.

Paul knows that feeling and much more. He describes being pressed, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. While these hardships were real and painful, they were not final.

When we go through hard times, the “life of Jesus” becomes visible in us through our perseverance. Paul realized that the rejection he faced was spiritual, not personal. That perspective protected him from despair. Instead of seeing suffering as a sign that God had abandoned him, he saw it as a way for God’s grace to spread to more people.

12. Which of Paul’s phrases do you relate to most right now: pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down?

13. Paul lists several hardships but says they do not destroy him. What do you think makes the difference between a struggle that breaks you and one that shapes you?

14. In what ways can your current struggles actually be an opportunity to show others how real Jesus is to you?

Day 5 Today's Theme: An Eternal Perspective

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16–18.

At the end of the day, what really matters?

So much of life—especially as a student—is spent dreaming about the future. Where you'll go after high school. What career you'll choose. Who you might marry. Where you'll live. What you want your life to look like. Those aren't bad dreams at all...they're good and very important things to know. But in the final verses of 2 Corinthians 4, Paul gives us a sobering dose of reality and a much bigger perspective.

Paul says we often focus on the **outer self**—how we look, how we’re perceived, how our bodies feel, or how successful we appear. But he reminds us that the outer self is “wasting away.” Instead, Paul shifts our attention to the **inner self**, which is being renewed **day by day**. How we live for Jesus is the most important choice we’ll make.

Remember Paul's life was hard, like really hard. He was beaten, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, starved, exhausted, and even left for dead. He lived under constant pressure, confusion, persecution, and opposition. If that happened to us, we'd probably post about it nonstop. "Woe is me." Yet Paul refers to all of that suffering as "**light and momentary affliction.**" Not because it didn't hurt—but because he compared it to what was coming next.

Paul tells the Corinthians, “*Do not lose heart.*” Why? Because our pain is not pointless. Every hardship, every struggle, every moment of endurance is doing something we can’t always see. God is using it to prepare an **eternal weight of glory** that far outweighs the suffering.

15. Paul went through a lot of really hard things, but he still calls his suffering “light and momentary.” Why do you think he says that? How does thinking about forever (eternity) change the way we look at hard moments in our lives?
16. Paul says God is preparing us for an “eternal weight of glory.” What do you think that means in your own words? What kind of good things do you think God is getting us ready for?
17. Paul tells us to focus on things that are unseen, not just what we can see. What are some things we can’t see that still matter? How might God be working in ways we don’t notice right away?
18. If we remember that this life isn’t the end of the story, how should that change the way we treat others or handle problems this week at school or at home?

This study was written by Ethan Wentzlaff, based on the adult study written by the VBC Pastoral Team.