

# GOOD NEWS FOR EXHAUSTED PARENTS

2 Corinthians 4:7-12.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. May 10, 2026.

## Dismiss the Middle School

### FRAIL AND FALTERING

**Every Christian I know is frail and faltering.** Not just physically - we all get sick and die - but also in many other ways.

We are unlikely servants of God.

**Which makes me question God's plans.** How does he expect us to make disciples of all nations when we're not exactly the A team?

The answer is in **2 Corinthians 4**. We'll focus on a few verses, but we'll read the entire chapter to get some context.

**Let's read 2 Corinthians 4 now.**

## 2 CORINTHIANS 4 (CSB)

Therefore, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, **we do not give up**. 2 Instead, we have renounced secret and shameful things, not acting deceitfully or distorting the word of God, but commending ourselves before God to everyone's conscience by an open display of the truth. 3 But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake. 6 For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. 8 We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; 9 we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. 10 We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be displayed in our body. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus's sake, so that Jesus's life may also be displayed in our mortal flesh. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith in keeping with what is written, I believed, therefore I spoke, we also believe, and therefore speak. 14 For we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you. 15 Indeed, everything is for your benefit so that, as grace extends through more and more people, it may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God.

16 Therefore **we do not give up**. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

# THE MESSAGE AND THE MESSENGER

Corinth was steeped in a culture of power and status. New Christians came into the church believing that church leaders should be rich, successful, and eloquent.

Then along came Paul, and he didn't fit the stereotype.

So, the congregation began to question Paul's credentials, and Paul felt the need to defend his apostolic calling. And his main idea is this: Don't confuse the messenger with the message.

## **The message about Jesus Christ is glorious:**

**The gospel is a treasure** contained in clay pots like us. Paul describes the treasure in a couple of ways:

- *2 Corinthians 4:4 (CSB) the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*
- *2 Corinthians 4:6 (CSB) ... the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**The gospel is light** (spiritual understanding and life) that radiates with the glory of Christ. Christ is glorious.

And the gospel is the light (spiritual understanding and life) that comes from knowing God's glory from hearing about Jesus; so to speak, seeing Jesus with the eyes of faith. God's glory radiates from Jesus through the message about Jesus.

**The message is glorious.**

But the messenger is not glorious ...

## **But the messenger is not glorious:**

**The messenger is like a *clay jar* (verse 7).** Every Corinthian home had a bunch of clay jars. They were cheap, unfinished, rough, nothing to look at, easily broken, and disposable.

They were used for everyday jobs, like storing grain and oil, **AND** remarkably, people would hide important documents in them - who wants to steal a pot?

**That's Paul's defense.** The Corinthians were looking in the wrong place for Paul's apostolic authority. **They LOOKED** at his worn-out clothes, his diminutive stature, his stuttering eloquence, his arrests, his lack of "charisma," his seeming weakness, and concluded that he was not an apostle.

But they should have **LISTENED to** his message about the glory of Jesus revealed in his crucifixion and resurrection. They should have seen its life-changing impact on those who heard it. They should have concluded that Paul's message was the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

**Why does God use cracked pots like us?** Because it's not about the messenger; it's about the message. The message is a revelation of the glory of Christ and the power of God. Paul explains:

*2 Corinthians 4:7 (CSB) 7 Now we have this treasure in clay jars, **so that this extraordinary power (to save) may be from God and not from us.***

We're frail and fragile. So, when someone hears the message, turns in faith to Jesus, and honors him as the Savior God, that is a revelation of God's glory and power despite our weakness. It's all God. It's his power. He gets the honor.

**The gospel message is the treasure. It's contained in clay jars like us.**

## PARENTING IS EXHAUSTING

**Now, let's take that distinction between the message and the messenger** and apply it to parenting. It's Mother's Day, so it seems fitting.

**Kim and I recently became grandparents.** We visited our granddaughter in November, and it was wonderful. BUT her parents were worn out.

Every mom or dad knows what this is like. It's the constant attention, late-night feedings, early-morning feedings, crying, rocking, and sleep deprivation. It's totally draining.

And that's just the newborn stage. The worst is yet to come.

**Parenting is exhausting.** And exhausted parents fit exactly into Paul's argument about the message and the messenger. Parents are clay pots that are on the verge of cracking. Right?

**And what is job one for a Christian parent?** Isn't it to teach and model the Christian faith to our children?

We're aiming to raise more than good, smart, athletic kids. We want more for them than just to become successful adults by the world's standards.

No, we are called to ***“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4, CSB). We want to tell them all about Jesus, and lead them to repentance and faith. Right?

That's a heavy weight for exhausted moms and dads already at their limits.

**But, here's the good news .... It's the message, not the messenger.**

# POSITIVE PRINCIPLES FOR EXHAUSTED PARENTS

Here are two positive principles for exhausted parents, and for that matter, everyone else. We can share the good news about Jesus even when we're less than our best.

## PRINCIPLE #1: WE MAY BE DOWN, BUT WE'RE NOT OUT

In verses 8-9, Paul gets real about his life and ministry. He describes being:

- **Afflicted**, or squeezed by the pressures on him
- **Perplexed**, or confused about the problems he faced
- **Persecuted**, or chased by enemies of Christ
- **Struck down**, or knocked down by circumstances

**His life was hard:** opposition, health, prison, threats (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). BUT he kept on sharing Jesus and the gospel with great results because his hardships failed to **crush, depress, or destroy** him. God didn't **abandon** him.

**The question is not,** "Do Christ-followers get knocked down?" Of course we do. But the message will never lose its power.

**So, parents ... yes, you're tired to the bone,** and maybe feeling *perplexed* or *afflicted*. Your life feels messy and chaotic, but God's **extraordinary power (verse 7)** is working through you to reveal the glory of Christ to your children.

**Some of the best parenting advice I ever heard is:** Keep faithfully sharing Christ with your children, and leave the results to God.

## PRINCIPLE #2: WE MAY FEEL DEAD, BUT JESUS IS ALIVE

**Verses 10-12 use dramatic images of death to describe us.** Similar to the jars of clay imagery, Paul's point is that we don't look impressive. In a sense, we look like the beaten and crucified Jesus.

We carry ***“the death of Jesus in our body”*** (verse 10), so we don't look perfect or competent. We don't look victorious or organized. We're unimpressive.

And that is God's plan ***“in order that the life of Jesus may also be displayed in us”*** (verse 10), and ***“so that Jesus's life may also be displayed in our mortal flesh”*** (Verse 11).

His resurrection life empowers us to share Christ and the gospel.

**Exhausted parents, when your tank is empty,** when you're sleepwalking through your days, remember this: The resurrection life of Jesus is working through your weakness. When we can't, but he can.

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- So the glory of the risen Christ is on ***display*** to your kids as you share Jesus with them and their hearts open to believe - verses 4, 11.
  - Resurrection ***life*** rises in them, and ***thanksgiving*** to God - verses 12, 15.
  - An ***absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory*** waits for you and your children who believe - verse 17.

## DON'T WASTE TIME ON "IF ONLY"

**Some of us will respond to today's teaching with regret and shame.**

Maybe our kids are older, and we didn't do a good job of sharing Jesus with them when they were young. Today reminded us we could have done better.

Or maybe we don't have the energy to share Jesus. And the kids aren't listening anyway. We're not in the running for parent of the year.

All of that may be true. Most parents feel that way. But don't waste time on **"if only."** It's a waste of time and energy. It doesn't produce anything positive.

**Here's a healthier way to respond** (and this applies to everyone, not just parents). Ask yourself: "What can I do better moving forward?"

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your next step so it better represents Jesus. Pray something like this: *"God, I want my kids (or friend) to see your glory on display in Jesus. I'm only a cracked pot (nothing impressive), but you have extraordinary power, and your message is light and life. Lead me to take the next step."*

**Remember:** The key isn't the messenger, it's the message and God's surpassing power.

Did you notice a repeated phrase in chapter 4? Twice, we read: **"We do not give up"** (verses 1, 16). That's a good word to us: Don't give up.

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

## Review

- Review Peter's May 10<sup>th</sup> teaching and study guide.
- What were the main insights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What were the main applications or takeaways for your life?

## Discuss

1. What feels most draining right now in your life—physical exhaustion, emotional weight, or spiritual pressure? In what ways do you feel like a cracked pot? How does this impact your attitude?
2. How might confusing the “messenger” (clay jar) with the “message” (which reveals the glory of Christ) show up in parenting, or in how we evaluate ourselves spiritually?
3. Can you think of a time when God worked despite your weakness or exhaustion to reveal the glory of Christ in the gospel to someone else?
4. How would you explain the principle that states, share Jesus, and leave the results up to God, to a discouraged parent? How does 2 Corinthians 4 offer encouragement to them?

## Prayer Focus

- 247: “Lord, please add daily to the Cornerstone those who are being saved.”
- Lord, work through our weakness to show the glory of Christ to our family and friends.