

Life Group Leaders Guide: Pono Church 2 - 2 Corinthians 5

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin your time together with prayer, asking God to reveal areas where you may be relying on your own strength rather than His power.

Worship Song Suggestions (10 minutes)

“Living Hope” – Phil Wickham

“Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)” – Passion / Kristian Stanfill

“Christ Our Hope in Life and Death” – Keith & Kristyn Getty / Matt Papa

“Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)” – Chris Tomlin

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share a funny or memorable camping experience you've had. What made it memorable? (This connects to Pastor Rick's tent story and sets a light tone before diving into the heavier topic.)

Key Scripture Passages

Have someone read aloud 2 Corinthians 4:14–5:10.

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

1. Our Bodies Are Temporary "Tents"

- Frail, weak, and deteriorating
- Key idea: Paul compares our bodies to tents—useful but flimsy, not meant to be permanent. We will deteriorate if Jesus doesn't return first.

2. There Is Good News for “Bus Up” Bodies

- Eternal, indestructible, glorious, and powerful
- Key idea: Because Jesus was raised, we know (not just wish) that we will be raised too. Our resurrection is tied directly to his.

3. The Resurrection Body: Way Better Than We Imagine

- Guaranteeing what's to come
- Key idea: Our future body will be:
 - ❖ Eternal (not running out of time)
 - ❖ Indestructible (no sickness, no decline)
 - ❖ Glorious (like butterfly vs. caterpillar)
 - ❖ Powerful (no normal limitations)
 - ❖ Personal (it's you: recognizable, but perfected)

4. The Holy Spirit Is Our “Down Payment”

- Focusing on eternal realities
- Key idea: God gives us the Holy Spirit now as a guarantee that the full promise (resurrection body, eternal life) is coming.

5. How We Live in Weak Bodies That Are Headed for Glory

a) Live with gratitude

- ❖ For present freedoms (not persecuted as Paul was).
- ❖ For whatever measure of health you do have.

b) Groan with hope, not despair

- ❖ We “groan” and feel burdened, but those groans can become reminders: “This pain is temporary. Something better is coming.”

c) Desire to be with Jesus more than to cling to this life

- ❖ We’re not suicidal, but we do recognize that “to be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord.” Being with Jesus is “more bettah.”

d) Live by faith, not by sight

- ❖ We don’t yet see the resurrection body; we trust God’s promise and Jesus’ resurrection.

e) Make it your goal to please Jesus

- ❖ Motivation: not fear of condemnation (that’s gone at the cross), but love; “the love of Christ compels us.”

6. Communion: Past, Present, Future

- Key idea:
 - ❖ Past: Jesus’ physical body broken for us, proof of His love.
 - ❖ Present: The risen Christ reigning now, giving us His Spirit.
 - ❖ Future: We take communion “until he comes”, pointing to our resurrection and His return.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15 minutes)

1. **The Tent vs. The Building:** Paul compares our physical bodies to tents and our resurrection bodies to eternal buildings. What specific contrasts does he make in this passage? Why is this imagery so powerful?
2. **"Light and momentary troubles":** Paul calls his severe suffering "light and momentary." Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 together. How could he possibly call these experiences "light"? What perspective allowed him to say this?
3. **The Holy Spirit as guarantee:** What does Paul mean when he says God has given us the Spirit as a "deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (5:5)? How does this work as assurance?

Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

4. Physical limitations: Where are you currently experiencing physical weakness, pain, or limitation? How does the promise of a resurrection body speak to your situation? (Create a safe space - no one should feel pressured to share medical details they're uncomfortable with.)
5. Gratitude check: Pastor Rick emphasized living with gratitude for:
 - Religious freedom (not being persecuted for our faith)
 - Whatever level of health and strength we currently have

What aspects of your physical health have you been taking for granted? How can you cultivate more gratitude?

6. **Living by faith:** Paul says, "We live by faith, not by sight" (5:7). What does this look like practically when you're dealing with physical pain, chronic illness, or watching a loved one's body deteriorate?

Going Deeper (15 minutes)

7. The friend's testimony: Pastor Rick shared about his friend who was struck with two autoimmune diseases at age 36, yet radiates joy. What do you think is the source of joy in the midst of such suffering? How is this different from denial or "positive thinking"?
 8. Groaning and longing: Paul says "we groan" while in these bodies (5:2-4). How can our physical groans become prayers? How can pain prompt us to focus on eternal realities rather than cause us to lose hope?
 9. "To be away from the body and at home with the Lord": Paul expresses a desire to be with Christ (5:8), yet he continued serving faithfully on earth. How do we balance longing for heaven with faithful engagement in this life? When does this become unhealthy?
-

Practical Applications (15 minutes)

10. **Pleasing Christ in our bodies:** Paul says, "We make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it" (5:9). What specific ways can you please Christ in your physical body this week, whatever condition it's in?
11. **Ministry to the suffering:** Who in your life is currently dealing with significant physical affliction or watching a loved one deteriorate? How can this passage shape the way you minister to them? What should you say? What should you avoid saying?
12. **The judgment seat of Christ:** Paul mentions we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (5:10). How should this reality (not judgment for sins, but evaluation of faithfulness) affect how we live in our bodies now?

Practical Applications for This Week

Choose 1-2 to focus on personally:

Personal Practices:

- **Gratitude Journal:** Each day this week, write down three aspects of your physical health you're grateful for (even if it's just "my eyelids work" or "I can walk")
- **Turn groans into praise:** When you experience physical pain or limitation this week, intentionally turn that groan into a prayer thanking Jesus for your future resurrection body
- **Meditation on eternity:** Spend 10 minutes each day this week imagining your resurrection body - eternal, indestructible, glorious, powerful, personal. Let this fuel hope and joy.

Relational Practices:

- **Encourage someone suffering:** Reach out to someone dealing with physical affliction and share something from this passage that encourages them (be sensitive - listen more than you talk)
- **Express love sacrificially:** Identify one way you can please Christ this week by loving someone through your physical actions (serving your spouse, helping a neighbor, visiting someone in the hospital)

Spiritual Disciplines:

- **Live by faith exercise:** Identify one area where you're living "by sight" (focused on physical circumstances) rather than "by faith" (focused on eternal realities). What would it look like to shift your perspective?
 - **Communion reflection:** Take time for personal communion this week, reflecting on Jesus' physical body broken for you and His resurrection body that guarantees yours
-

Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

The hymn Pastor Rick quoted:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small. Love, so amazing, so divine, Demands my heart, my life, my all."

Reflection Question: In light of Jesus' sacrifice and the promise of resurrection, what is He asking you to give Him this week - your heart, your life, your all?

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Suggested prayer focus:

- Thank God for the promise of resurrection bodies
- Pray for group members dealing with physical afflictions
- Ask for grace to live by faith, not by sight
- Pray for strength to please Christ in our bodies this week
- Thank Jesus for His physical sacrifice and resurrection victory

Consider: Have each person share one physical struggle (their own or a loved one's) and pray specifically for that person, asking God to give them hope in the resurrection and joy in the present.

Additional Resources

- **For further study:** Read 1 Corinthians 15 (Paul's full teaching on resurrection)
- **For encouragement:** Revelation 21:1-4 (no more tears, pain, or death)
- **For perspective:** Romans 8:18-25 (present suffering vs. future glory)

Leader Notes

- **Be sensitive:** Some group members may be dealing with serious health issues, chronic pain, or watching loved ones die. Create space for honest emotions while pointing to hope.
- **Avoid toxic positivity:** Don't minimize real suffering with platitudes. Paul didn't deny his afflictions; he viewed them through the lens of eternity.
- **Balance:** Help the group balance longing for heaven with faithful earthly living. We don't seek death, but we do anticipate resurrection.
- **Gospel clarity:** Make sure the group understands that resurrection bodies are guaranteed by Christ's work, not earned by our faithfulness. The judgment seat of Christ evaluates our service, not our salvation.
- **Practical love:** Challenge the group to move beyond discussion to action - actually ministering to those who are suffering physically.

Additional Discussion Questions to Choose From

How does viewing our physical bodies as temporary tents rather than permanent dwellings change the way we approach aging, illness, and physical limitations?

Paul describes his severe sufferings as light and momentary troubles compared to eternal glory. What shift in perspective is required to genuinely view our hardships this way?

In what ways does the indwelling Holy Spirit serve as a deposit or guarantee of our future resurrection body, and how have you experienced this in your own life?

How can physical pain and bodily deterioration actually become prompts for worship and reminders of our eternal hope rather than sources of despair?

What does it mean to live by faith rather than by sight when our physical circumstances are difficult, and our resurrection body remains unseen?

How does the certainty of receiving an eternal, indestructible, glorious body affect the decisions we make about how to use our current bodies?

Paul says the love of Christ compels him to live to please Jesus. How does understanding Christ's love for us motivate us differently than fear of judgment or desire for reward?

Why is gratitude for our current level of health and freedom from persecution an important spiritual discipline, even when we are suffering?

How does the personal nature of our resurrection bodies, where we remain recognizably ourselves yet glorified, speak to God's design and purpose for human identity?

In what practical ways can we live today to please Jesus in our physical bodies, knowing that we will give an account for what we did while in these temporary tents?

5-Day Devotional: Living with Eternal Hope in Temporary Bodies

Day 1: The Treasure Within

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:1–5

Devotional:

Paul compares our physical bodies to temporary tents, fragile, weak, and deteriorating. Yet we have a promise: God is preparing an eternal house for us, not made by human hands. This is not wishful thinking but guaranteed hope anchored in Christ's resurrection.

As you experience physical limitations today, such as aches, fatigue, or illness, let them become reminders that this is not your final home. Your body may be breaking down, but you are being built up for eternity. The Holy Spirit within you is God's down payment, His guarantee that what He has begun He will complete. Do not lose heart in your temporary tent. Your eternal mansion awaits

Day 2: Wasting Away, Yet Renewed

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

Devotional:

There is a profound paradox in the Christian life. Outwardly we waste away, yet inwardly we are renewed day by day. Paul experienced brutal persecution, including beatings, shipwrecks, and stoning, yet he called these light and momentary troubles. How? He fixed his eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen and eternal.

Today, whatever physical or circumstantial challenges you face, remember they are achieving an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. The key is perspective. Will you focus on your declining body or your flourishing spirit? The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you right now, renewing you from the inside out. Live by faith, not by sight.

Day 3: The Guarantee of Resurrection

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20–23, 42–44

Devotional:

Jesus' resurrection was not just a miracle for Him. It was the first fruits of a harvest that includes you. What is sown perishable is raised imperishable. What is sown in weakness is raised in power. Your resurrection body will be eternal, indestructible, glorious, and powerful beyond imagination. This is not science fiction. It is Scripture's promise.

The same God who spoke galaxies into existence has fashioned you for this very purpose. The Holy Spirit living in you is your guarantee. When you feel weak, remember that this weakness is temporary. Your strength is coming. When you groan under physical limitations, let that groan become worship and anticipation of the day when mortality will be swallowed up by life.

Day 4: Motivated by Love

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:9–15

Devotional:

Why do we live to please Christ? Not primarily from fear of judgment, but because His love compels us. Christ's love for you came first, demonstrated at the cross where He gave His body and shed His blood for your forgiveness. That love awakens love in return. When you love someone, you naturally want to please them.

Today, in whatever body you inhabit, whether healthy or suffering, young or aging, you can please Jesus. Love your spouse well. Raise your children faithfully. Treat others with dignity. Conduct business with integrity. Share the gospel. These are not burdensome obligations but joyful responses to amazing love. Let Christ's love be the fuel that powers your life today.

Day 5: Gratitude in the Journey

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Philippians 4:4–7

Devotional:

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” Even in the book of Lamentations, written amid profound suffering, hope breaks through. Every sunrise represents God’s renewed mercies and his fresh commitment to you.

Yesterday’s failures do not define today’s possibilities. Yesterday’s pain does not cancel today’s hope. The same God who brings physical dawn brings spiritual awakening. What feels like an ending may be the darkness before a breakthrough. Today, as you face whatever struggles lie ahead, receive this truth: God is making all things new, including you. His light is dawning in your life. Stand on this solid foundation: not your performance, not your understanding, but his unchanging presence and unfailing love.