

Small Group Guide

"More Than a Chair, Part 2" | 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Before You Begin

Welcome your group and open with a brief prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to what He wants each person to take away from this time together.

Icebreaker

Think about a time you were welcomed into an unfamiliar place, whether a new job, a neighborhood gathering, or someone's home for the first time. What made you feel at ease? What made you feel out of place?

Overview

This week Pastor Mike walked us through 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, exploring what it means to move from being a recipient of God's grace to being a carrier of that grace to others. Using the imagery of a family dinner table, he challenged us to consider the difference between being a guest and being a host, and what it looks like when reconciled people become messengers of reconciliation.

Key Takeaways

- **Every chair represents a name.** Every name has a story, and every story matters to God. There are no attendance numbers in God's economy, only people He knows and loves.
- **Reconciliation moves toward us.** The gospel does not begin with us finding our way back to God. It begins with God coming after us through Jesus Christ. He took the initiative.

- **Reconciled people reconcile people.** God has chosen to make His appeal to a lost world through the very people His grace has already changed. We are His ambassadors.
 - **Jesus transforms stories, and every new story carries a message, and every message needs a messenger.** The good news does not stop with us. We are entrusted to carry it forward.
 - **Familiarity has a blind spot.** The longer we are part of a church family, the easier it becomes to forget what it felt like to not know, and to unknowingly stop making room for those who are not yet here.
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Discussion Questions

Getting Into the Text

1. Pastor Mike read from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, where Paul describes believers as having been given a "ministry of reconciliation" and as being "ambassadors for Christ." Before this sermon, how did you understand those two phrases? Did anything shift in how you think about them?
2. Paul says in verse 18 that everything begins with God, that He is the one who reconciled us to Himself. Why does it matter that reconciliation moves in that direction, from God toward us, rather than the other way around? How does that shape the way we talk about the Christian life?
3. In verse 21, Paul describes what God did through Jesus so that we could become the righteousness of God. Summarize in your own words what that exchange means. How does that truth affect the way you see yourself when you come to God?

Connecting to the Sermon

4. Pastor Mike used the image of a family dinner table to describe the shift from being a guest to becoming a host. Where would you honestly place yourself on that spectrum right now? Are you still getting comfortable, or have you started looking around for who needs a host?
5. Pastor Mike described a natural gravitational pull in churches toward focusing on those already inside. Have you ever noticed that pull, either in a church setting or in your own personal faith? What does it look like in everyday life?
6. He shared stories of people like Sammy, Eric, Rachel, Heidi, and Matt, each of whom found that God's grace in their life eventually turned outward. Which of those stories resonated most with you, and why?

7. Pastor Mike listed four practical ways to be a messenger: invite, serve, give, and share. Which of those four comes most naturally to you? Which one feels like the biggest stretch? Why?

Going Deeper

8. The folk tale about the water pump illustrated the idea that someone before us thought about a traveler they would never meet. Who in your life carried the message of Jesus so that you could hear it? Take a moment to name that person. What did their faithfulness cost them?
 9. Pastor Mike said that the shift from asking "What's in it for me?" to asking, "What does love require of me?" is a mark of spiritual growth. What do you think produces that shift in a person? Is it something you pursue, or something that happens to you?
 10. He referenced 1 Peter 3:15, where Peter urges believers to always be prepared to give a reason for the hope they have. How prepared do you feel to do that right now? What would it look like to become more prepared?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to act on before your group meets again.

- **Invite.** Identify one person in your life who does not have a church community. Pray for them by name this week, and consider whether now is the right time to extend an invitation.
 - **Serve.** If you are not currently serving in any capacity at your church, take one concrete step this week to explore where you might fit. Sign up, make a call, or simply show up and ask how you can help.
 - **Give.** If you have never intentionally decided what percentage of your income to give toward your local church, set aside time this week to pray about it and make a decision. Start somewhere, even if it feels small.
 - **Share.** Write out in two or three sentences what Jesus has done in your life. Not a theological argument, just your story. Practice saying it out loud. Be ready for the moment someone asks why you seem different.
 - **Reflect.** Think back to the person who first welcomed you into a church environment or into a relationship with Jesus. Write them a note, send a message, or simply thank God for their faithfulness.
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Closing Prayer

Close your time by praying specifically for the people your group members named during discussion, those who are not yet in the room, those who have not yet heard, and those who carried the message to you before you ever knew to ask for it. Ask God to show each person in your group their next faithful step.

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