



I CONFESS...



Stuff Christians struggle with,
but are afraid to admit

Small Group Teaching Guide
MAY 14, 2017



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying 2 Corinthians 3:4-5. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation..

DETERMINE

Many questions have been included in this guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

PRAY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study and your group's openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

When we're confident in our identity in Christ we can let go of any fear that we're not good enough.



GROUP DISCUSSION

■ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

■ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

■ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

■ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

This week you will look at confession as an acknowledgement of our inadequacy. When we admit that we do not have what it takes, that we are not competent to achieve anything spiritually on our own, confession leads us to lean on God more completely and find everything we need in His power and adequacy rather than our own.

Q: *When you think about people who are adequate or competent, who comes to mind?*

Q: *How does our culture define adequacy? What does it take to be “good enough”?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

CHALLENGES TO PAUL'S ADEQUACY

Despite all that Paul accomplished in building up the early church, he still faced challenges to his credibility. As Paul preached and planted churches throughout the Roman empire, other teachers brought different gospels to these churches, and some even suggested Paul and his gospel were inadequate. In Corinth, such teachers had become a serious problem.

But in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul responds to the problem in an interesting way. Whereas the other teachers who challenged Paul boasted of their own abilities or brought letters of recommendation to prove their credibility to the Corinthians, Paul refuses to commend himself. He instead suggests in verses 1-3 that the work done in the hearts of the Corinthians by the Spirit of God is the only letter of recommendation he needs. He then shares in verses 4-5 where his confidence and competence comes from.

READ: *Read 2 Corinthians 3:4-5. What is the difference between the two types of competence Paul contrasts?*

Q: *What does it mean to have confidence toward God? Can you recall a time when you had this sort of confidence?*

PAUL'S QUALIFICATIONS

Paul's greatest qualification was that he had no qualifications of his own. Paul is not putting himself down or bemoaning his lack of ability. Rather, he is acknowledging his own limitations in a healthy way and relying on the One who has no limitations. Paul knows what true adequacy is and he gives us a model of how to find it.

First, we have to confess what we lack. Until we admit that we are not good enough, we will always rely on our own abilities, which pulls us away from God and dooms our efforts to failure. Second, we have to redirect our confidence away from ourselves and toward God. We turn to God in prayer, recognizing that He and no one else can make us adequate.

Q: *Have you ever felt you lacked competence? If so, how did that feeling affect your actions?*

Q: *In what part of your life do you need to admit you are not competent enough to handle it on your own?*



LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

Finding our adequacy in God can be difficult to do when we are so used to finding our adequacy in ourselves. Let's look at three key ways of finding our adequacy in God.

TURN TO SCRIPTURE

The Bible is not just a compilation of stories and facts about God. It is a book that tells us the truth about ourselves, our world, and our future, and in doing so, it reshapes the way we think. We need scripture to reshape our thinking because many other forces in the world around us are teaching us to think in unhealthy ways about our adequacy and inadequacy. To be good enough, the media tells us we must be attractive, the workplace tells us we must be successful, advertisements tell us we must buy nice things, etc. Countless voices tell us we must prove our worth. But scripture reminds us we do not have to be good enough in the eyes of our culture.

In scripture, we see that none of us is good enough by our own efforts, yet God loves us and does great things through those the world might call inadequate. While the world tries to tell us we must prove our worth, God's word teaches us the truth about our identity and our capacity in Him. In this way, scripture empowers us to receive our adequacy from God.

Q: What are the biggest barriers for you to finding your adequacy in God?

Q: Which parts of scripture have most encouraged you to rely on God's adequacy rather than your own?

TURN TO THE GOSPEL

The heart of the Christian faith is that we are saved by what Jesus did, not by what we do. No volume of good works could ever overcome our sin, but while we were still sinners, Christ died for us so that we could be saved. What a humbling message! If we marinate in the truth of the gospel, we will begin to see our inadequacy not as a cause for despair, but as a reminder of the depth of God's love for us. We are so loved and valued by God that He became human, suffered and died for us to have eternal life with Him before we ever did anything to deserve it.

Q: What daily practices might help you remind yourself of God's undeserved love for you?

TURN TO PRAYER

Finding adequacy in God takes more than contemplation. It takes practice, and it takes help from God. Both of these things we find in prayer. Through prayers of confession, we practice admitting our own shortcomings, repent and ask God for forgiveness. Through prayers of thanksgiving, we recall the ways God has provided for us when we could not provide for ourselves. And through prayers of petition (prayers in which we ask God for something), we recognize that we are not adequate to solve the problems before us and rely on God's adequacy for help.

Q: *In what ways has prayer shown you God's adequacy?*



LEAD

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

BEYOND SELF-WORTH

Paul's statement that our competence is from God is not about finding self-worth; it is about finding God's worth for us. Modeling this sort of worth will always mean drawing attention away from ourselves and toward God, and that requires testimony. As we learn to receive our adequacy from God, let us always share with others the ways that God has provided for us and given us our worth.

Q: *Can you recall a time you were not adequate but God was? Please share.*

Q: *Who could you share your testimony, or part of your testimony, with this week?*



PRAY

Spend time praying about your feelings of inadequacy and attempts to be adequate on your own. When is it most difficult for you to receive your adequacy from God? Where could you let go of your attempts to be “good enough” apart from God this week? Pray for the Holy Spirit to remind you that in God, and only in God, you are completely adequate.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- *Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and reflect on how scripture equips you for God’s work.*
- *Ask the group to share any stories or lessons they have learned about finding adequacy in God.*



COMMENTARY

OTHER TEACHERS IN CORINTH: Other teachers at Corinth: Paul refers to others who have tried to teach the gospel in several places in 2 Corinthians, including 2:17, 11:5, and 12:11. Though we do not have a direct description of them, we can pick up from Paul’s references that some teachers came to the Corinthian church claiming that Paul was unreliable and their message was superior.