

Warm-up Question or Activity

Choose one and pursue it as a group.

1. **Question.** While the Apollo 11 moon landing remains the most-watched television event of all time (150m viewers), last year's Super Bowl (123m viewers) clocks in as second. Eighteen of the top 25 most-watched events in U.S. history are Super Bowls.
 - On a scale of 1-to-10, how big of an event is watching the Super Bowl at your house?
 - If you're a fan, what do you like most about it; if you're not a fan, what turns you off?
2. **Activity.** No googling for answers on this one! How many of you can name:
 - The MVP of the 2016 Super Bowl (played Feb 8, 2016)?
 - MVP of the 2016 World Series?
 - The winner of the 2016 U.S. Open golf tournament?
 - The winner of the 2016 U.S. Open tennis championship (men's or women's singles)?
 - The President of the United States in 1922?
 - Your first-grade teacher?

Discuss the value of relationships and investing in the lives of others.

Can You Relate?

This week's Scripture points our hearts toward things eternal in the midst of our suffering and struggles here in this life.

1. Two times in this chapter Paul proclaims "**we never give up**" (NLT) (verses 4:1 and 4:16).
 - a. Someone read aloud 2nd Cor. 3:16-4:1. Paul and his co-laborers are so moved by the reality of the unveiling of **the glory of God** in Jesus Christ, that giving up is not going to happen.
 - If you were explaining that to an interested neighbor, how would articulate it?
 - Let a few volunteers take turns practicing that kind of heart-level sharing.
 - Just take turns putting it in your own words.
 - b. Someone read aloud 4:15-16a. Paul is fueled to never give up by **the glory that new believers give to God** as more and more come to and grow in their faith by grace. C.S. Lewis wrote: "*There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal. ...it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry....*"
 - Take a full minute of silence and jot down someone you would like to treat better going forward; more lovingly; more in a way that brings glory to God.
 - Go around the group describing your relationship with that "immortal" and discuss how you hope to treat that person better going forward.
 - Would you like to invite the group to check-in with you on how that's going next time?
2. Read 4:8-9. Has your life felt like a pressure cooker at times? Wondering what God is doing? Struggles coming at you like you were Job? Flattened by adversity? Paul assures us that God is with us – and working through our weakness to reveal His strength through our lives. Corrie Ten Boom often described such struggles as "dark threads" that seemed to have no place in the tapestry of her life that God was weaving – until she saw what God was doing from God's eternal perspective.

Backside of a tapestry



Front side of that tapestry



Let's take two full minutes of silence and make note of **an episode when your life seemed to be a confusing mess, but God wove it all together in a positive way.**

- Tell us about that. How has it impacted your faith?
- How could you use that true story to encourage others and strengthen their faith?

3. Speaking of viewing things from an eternal perspective, let's read verses 17-18. The only things that are eternal are the Word of God and the souls of men, women, and children. Take two full minutes and write down names of ten of the people living today whom you love the most. Then reflect on which of them you confidently believe have come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

- As a group, discuss what we are willing to do with the "other" names on those lists?
 - When we gather, can we pray that God will draw them to Himself in faith?
 - Can we view these beloveds as a mission field and seek ways to reach out to them?

Live It Out

Let's take a moment and go around the group to identify what we want to take away from this discussion. Any quiet-time reflection required?

- In #2, we each identified **one** example of God weaving together our tangled mess that we could readily "pay forward" by sharing with others. Quiet-time journaling would be a great setting for building out your list to include all of your compelling examples of God working behind the scenes that you could "pay forward" to others. Consider pledging with someone in the group to do quiet time this week in pursuit of additional examples from your life and texting one another for support as we go through it.
- Try resolving to start each day pouring your heart out to God in transparent prayer.
 - **How?** This week, **before you get out of bed** (making God your first priority), pick up your phone or tablet and play *My God Can* by Katy Nichole & Naomi Raine. Absorb the lyrics. Play them back in your head thru the day. Report next time on how that went. That song is on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/zQATwkAkIYw>

Encourage members of the group to commit time to praying for one another, encouraging and meeting one another's needs, fellowshiping together, and interceding for the other members. Contact absent group members and encourage them to continue to meet and to return together at the next scheduled gathering.

Activity answers: Von Miller, outside linebacker, Denver Broncos; Ben Zobrist, outfielder, Chicago Cubs; Dustin Johnson, at Oakmont, Pittsburg; Novak Djokovic, Serbia, men's singles; Angelique Kerber, Germany, women's singles; Warren G. Harding, Marion, Ohio