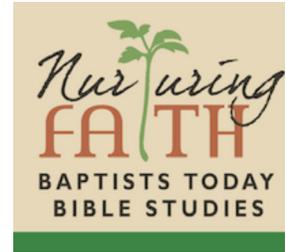


# Adult Teaching Resources

March 6, 2016



## Season of Lent (February 10-March 26)

**When Old Becomes New — 2 Corinthians 5:11-21**

God's New Thing — Isaiah 43:16-21

The Dark Night Before the Dawn — Luke 23:1-49

Ladies First — Luke 24:1-12

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# When Old Becomes New

## 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

### FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Before the Lesson:** Make copies of the handout, “Nadia’s Story.”

### Fellowship Question

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Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

How often do you balance your check book?

Do you serve on a committee? What is it and how many people are on it?

### Information

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[Write the word “Reconciliation” on the board.]

Reconciliation is the word we use in our accounting to mean to put numbers together and make things right (like reconciling a bank account). It comes from the Latin root word *conciliare* (to bring together). With the prefix *re-*, the word means “to bring back together.”

[Circle or underline the letters Reconciliation.]

What word do you think we get from this root word? Council. A council or committee is made of different parties with different ideas and beliefs and behaviors, but with a common goal of getting something done.

Our lesson today lifts that idea to a spiritual plane. Paul urges us to be reconciled to one another and to God.

As a matter of fact, the Corinthians were not in sync with Paul. Some disputed his authority as an apostle, others mocked his weaknesses. Other preachers had come on the scene who apparently even challenged Paul’s sanity. But Paul truly loved these people. He wanted them to experience faith, hope, and love in Christ and he wanted them to be united with him in sharing the gospel. He longed for reconciliation between himself and this church.

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 3:1-5.]

Have you ever known someone who was so obsessed with their work, or hobby, or grandchild that someone might say, “That person is crazy about \_\_\_\_\_”? Paul was crazy about Jesus.

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 5:11-15.]

## Information *continued*

Paul believed that Jesus' death and resurrection changed everything about our relationships with God and with one another. If Jesus died on our behalf — something we could never earn or dare ask for — how should we then live on his behalf?

If we truly believe that, out of love for all persons, Christ died for all persons, we will see persons differently. How might this attitude change our perspective toward persons who live in a different economic status than we? How might this attitude change our perspective toward those of a different ethnicity? A different nationality?

[Have a class member read Matthew 5:43-48.]

By perfect, Jesus does not mean “without sin” or “without mistakes.” This perfection means whole, complete, consistent. God's love is consistent. God loves those who love God, those who ignore God, and those who fight against God. This is our model, to love others as Jesus loved them.

This really is a revolutionary way of behaving.

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.]

Paul goes so far as to say that if we can see others as God sees them, we are new creatures.

What are some differences between seeing people “from a human point of view” and seeing people from a divine point of view? (We normally see others through our fears or prejudices; we see others as objects for my needs or wants; we are unduly impressed by a person's power, attractiveness, or wealth; we see others as means to an end, etc. Instead, God loves people as they are; God loves them enough to sacrifice for them; God sees potential that we are blind to, etc.)

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.]

We have a ministry of reconciliation. What do you think that means?

The ministry I work with has a “Racial Reconciliation Committee” that has recently been struggling with its name. “We've never been together, so how can we be reconciled?” they ask. So, they are looking into other names, such as Racial Justice or Racial Equity. If you were on such a committee, how would you respond to the name change idea?

Note that God started this whole reconciliation work. We did not initiate it. We're often not even sure we want it. If we are reconciled to God and reconciled to our neighbors, we are going to have to change the way we see others and the way we behave toward others. On the other hand, when we do truly do have an attitude of reconciliation, we find strangers turning into friends, we find satisfaction in attempts to restore broken relationships, and we find power to address broken systems. How have you experienced reconciliation in your life?

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 5:20.]

Interestingly, Paul uses a political office — ambassador — here. THE BIBLE LESSON writer notes: This word “was used to describe Roman legates who provided leadership in bringing

## Information *continued*

newly conquered territories from the transitional status of ‘Imperial Provinces’ to the full integration of ‘Senatorial Provinces.’ As political ambassadors functioned in the emperor’s behalf to incorporate new territories in the Roman Empire, so Paul saw himself as an ambassador for Christ, laboring to bring more and more persons into the Kingdom of God.”

This is different from our nation’s ambassadors. They are not trying to transition other nations into our nation. They represent the presence and policies of our country, but they do not have any authority over the country they live in as ambassador.

Compare these two ideas of being an ambassador for Christ when it comes to evangelism. How might these models affect our methods and motivations?

[Have a class member read 2 Corinthians 5:21.]

How comfortable are you being called “the righteousness of God”? Why?

“Your life may be the only sermon some people ever hear” may be getting at this idea. We are bearers of truth and good news. Yes, we are earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7) but God has chosen to demonstrate grace and reconciliation through our lives.

[Have a class member read Matthew 5:14-16.]

## Transformational Exercise

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What might it mean to be an ambassador of Christ? Here is one story.

[Hand out “Nadia’s Story.”]

Read or summarize “Nadia’s Story” by the Quaker college chaplain, Max Carter. If you choose to summarize the story, note what the team did as ambassadors for Christ: 1. They listened. 2. They made symbolic restitution with real cash. 3. They shared a meal together. 4. They had insightful conversations. 5. They accepted a gift. 6. They worked to create a new period of peace.]

Being an ambassador for Christ is more than a title or a good idea. It is very practical. In the next few moments of silence, consider the brokenness around you — in persons and in systems. In silent prayer, ask God to lead you to one practical thing you can do in this new week to promote reconciliation. What is one thing God is prompting you to do?

[After a few moments for reflection and prayer, close in a prayer something like this: *God, the world was broken 2000 years ago when Paul wrote this letter and it remains broken today. But we believe that you are always at work, reconciling the world back to yourself. We offer ourselves to you as partners in the reconciliation work, as ambassadors on Christ’s behalf. Amen.* ]

**Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan?** You may send comments to the lesson plan author at [rjordan@cbfnc.org](mailto:rjordan@cbfnc.org). Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**The King’s Business** — “The King’s Business” was written by Elijah T. Cassell in 1902. The first verse, which I used to sing at the top of my lungs while riding my bicycle down an old dirt road, has these lyrics:

I am a stranger here, within a foreign land;  
My home is far away, upon a golden strand;  
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,  
I’m here on business for my King.

*Refrain:*  
This is the message that I bring,  
A message angels fain would sing:  
“Oh, be ye reconciled,”  
Thus saith my Lord and King,  
“Oh, be ye reconciled to God.”

**Motivation** — Paul expresses similar sentiments in other letters. For example, to the Philippians he wrote: “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil.3:7-11).

Paul loved Christ because Christ loved him, and was willing to give his life for Christ because Christ had done the same for him. Do those same things motivate you? If someone asked why you choose to follow Christ, how would you answer?

**New creation** — Paul writes, not only of the Corinthians’ situation in life, but in the belief that God’s work in Christ has brought about a new cosmic order, reversing the effects of humanity’s fall that accompanied the old creation, and instituting the new order in which the door has been opened for sinful humans to be redeemed and enter the eternal kingdom of God.

**Changes** — Can you identify with Paul’s description of a life of reconciliation with God in which all things have become new? Especially if you came to know Christ as an adult, can you name specific ways in which life is different for you as a Christian? How can *our* experiences be a witness to others, knowing that God has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us?

**Be reconciled** — With Paul’s use of the word translated as “ambassadors” and his appeal to “be reconciled to God” in v. 20, we recall again the “Royal Ambassadors” organization, which challenges boys to be good representatives of Christ. The chorus of the Royal Ambassador hymn that I learned as a boy, cited above, concludes with the plea, “Oh, be ye reconciled to God.”

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### What did Paul mean when he spoke of being “beside ourselves”?

When Paul said, in v. 13, “If we are beside ourselves, it is for God,” he used a form of the verb *’eksistasthai*, which literally means “to be out of one’s mind,” and is the root of English words like “ecstatic” and “ecstasy.” We might assume Paul was using the term as a metaphor for insanity, but a different verb, *mainomei*, was typically used to describe mental illness — as when Festus accused Paul of being insane (Acts 26:24).

Ralph P. Martin suggests that Paul may have been referring to ecstatic experiences of communication or fellowship with God when he spoke of being beside himself. “More likely,” Martin writes, “Paul describes here ecstatic experiences when he speaks of ‘being out of his mind toward God’” (*2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 126-127). Paul might “leave his mind” when communing with God, but when speaking with the Corinthians, he was perfectly rational.

Another text may inform this: in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul spoke to the issue of speaking in tongues, emphasizing that ecstatic speech may benefit one’s devotional life, but would not edify others. “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you,” Paul wrote, “nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:18-19).

Some of Paul’s opponents prided themselves on their ability to speak in tongues and lorded it over others. It appears that in this verse Paul was clearly separating himself from those who saw ecstatic behavior as a source of pride or who used it to foster division. While his intimate communion with God might venture beyond mental comprehension to realms of mystery, his conversations with others — including the Corinthians — were rooted solidly on ground level, and motivated by a desire to bring others closer to God.

## Nadia's Story

By Max Carter, Director of Friends' Center, Campus Ministry Coordinator,  
Guilford College, Greensboro, NC

Nadia came screaming out of her bullet-riddled home, "And you call us terrorists; you call US terrorists! I hope all Americans burn in hell!"

We were unsure how to respond. A group of American Quakers visiting Ramallah, Palestine to volunteer at the Friends Schools, we had walked over to a section of the town to see the after-effects of a military strike the night before. A grocery store displayed a gaping hole caused by an artillery shell; a house was a burned out hulk; two homes had been strafed by machine gun fire — the pockmarks in the walls and gaping windows showing the intensity of the attack. There wasn't a military target in sight. There had been no firing from the area. The neighborhood was "collateral damage" in the power politics of the region.

Nadia dramatically called us into the reality of her life and away from our being disengaged onlookers. Angrily, she described the early morning hours onslaught as she, her husband, and three little children huddled on their bedroom floor, bullets ricocheting around the room for half an hour. They assumed they would die in the hail of gunfire. But surviving the experience, the family began cleaning up their devastated home and quickly recognized the telltale imprint of American military hardware: spent shells that they knew came from American-made equipment.

And there we were, American Christians incurring the wrath of a young Muslim woman only hours after her near-death encounter. What were we "ambassadors for Christ" to do?

Perhaps it was our pacifist upbringing; perhaps it was the default setting of those stymied for an adequate response; but we simply listened. We took in the rage of this terrorized young

mother, sharing our sorrow and empathy, grasping for meaningful words. The question actually did occur to me — "What would Jesus do?"

Whether Jesus would have calculated the average military expenditure of United States taxpayers or not, we did. We expressed our condolences to Nadia and hurried off to an appointment, shaken and earnestly conversing about what to do. Having heard earlier in our visit from Israeli and Palestinian peace workers that each American gives an average of \$25 annually for the weaponry that almost killed Nadia, we knew what we had to do. We each contributed that amount and more to a fund to help Nadia's family rebuild.

A Palestinian teacher at the Friends Schools delivered the money to her, but we heard no response for several days. We worried that she may have looked on our donation as blood money. Maybe she was offended by the thought that we were buying her forgiveness. Perhaps she wanted nothing to do with Americans or Christians.

Finally, on our last day in Ramallah, we got a phone call from Nadia asking if she and her family could come thank us in person. Relieved, we invited them to our closing supper. Apologizing to us for "venting" during our earlier visit, she laughed with us and



her family, as we exchanged mundane stories of daily life and the challenges of parenting. Then she paused, asking “Are Quakers Christians?” We answered “Yes, just not always very good ones!”

“I thought so,” Nadia responded, “but I didn’t want to offend you.” She then reached into a bag and handed each one in our group a little Christian token: a Crusader’s Cross, a crucifix made of olive wood from Bethlehem.

A Muslim woman, nearly killed by weaponry supplied by the country of a group of visiting Christians, chose to express her gratitude with Christian souvenirs. We Quakers remained silent about our symbol-impairment, simply breathing a prayer of gratitude and amazement.

What might it mean truly to be ambassadors for Christ, carrying Christ’s reconciling love into the world? What might it really mean to act as envoys for the Kingdom of God? It certainly should mean no less than acting out the basic constitution of that Realm, the “Magna Carta” of the Kingdom — the Sermon on the Mount. Living authentically. Loving even our enemies. Seeking to bring peace. Focusing on eternal truths.

It might mean no more than responding to that light and life which John’s Gospel says is in all people. We could do worse than seek to act as

Christ did with the marginalized and excluded. In her hysterical fear and anger, Nadia merely wished for us to burn in hell. Many in the world live in a hell of alienation, oppression, and helplessness. As Christ’s emissaries, we can model the gift of God’s love by seeking to remove the occasions of war, violence, and hatred.

During our visits in Israel and Palestine, we have witnessed this possibility many times, not only in the transformation of our relationship with Nadia and her family but also in the transformation of broader interactions. Palestinian Muslims and Christians have warmly welcomed Jewish members of our group into their homes; Israeli rabbis have joined with Palestinians to rebuild homes and replant uprooted orchards. Each time, a little seed is sown that may eventually blossom into the fullness of the reign of God on earth.

Perhaps, if we seek truly to be representatives of Christ’s ways, we may overcome evil with good; and if we are lucky, there may even be some Christian tokens in it for us!

[Source: <http://www.ncchurches.org/lectionary-archive/year-c/abrahamic-faiths-lent-4/>]