

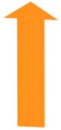
SEVEN ARROWS



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18



Faithfulness to God's mission is not always easy, and it can be a real challenge to reflect His image while living in bodies broken by sin. We get tired, grow old, and wear down-this is a result of sin's curse. Our bodies are like jars of clay which are easily broken and shattered. Paul's life was a picture of this reality. He experienced the joy of planting churches and seeing many come to faith. He also felt the agony of persecution. He knew the pain of following God in a broken world, but he looked beyond the immediate pain, comparing his temporary suffering to the future joy that awaits all God's people. In the big picture, suffering in this life is insignificant compared to our eternal blessings. Paul said that the future is so great, so full of glory, that no amount of human sadness and suffering even compares.

GALATIANS 5:16-6:10















God's people live by the power of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills believers and gives us grace to live distinctly from those who don't know Jesus. The fruit of the sinful life is seen in all sorts of rebellious behavior, but the fruit of God's Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control. These attitudes and behaviors are like fruit on a tree- we can look at people's actions, either bad or good, and know whether they are filled by God's Spirit or not. Godly fruit allows a person to live in loving relationships with other people, reflecting the love God demonstrates to us. This type of love is the defining mark of God's church, as diverse people show love for one another because we are united by a common love for God.

EPHESIANS 2:11-22



Unity is a defining mark of the church that stands out in this passage. Paul reminded Gentile believers that they were, at one time, not only cut off from God because of their sin, they were cut off from God's people as well. They were outsiders to God's law, the sacrificial system and the temple, but Jesus' death brought them into right relationship with God, allowing them to join the family of God. Together, Jews and Gentiles alike are united as the people of God as members of the church. Paul then used an image familiar to the nation of Israel when he described their unity as a new temple—one not made with human hands but built by the hand of God. Each person who comes to faith in Jesus is like a new stone added to God's temple. In this way, Gentiles, who were once outsiders, are now participants in the life of the temple as they worship Him in the church.

EPHESIANS 4:1-16



The church gathers in unity because all those who make up the church are adopted into the same family—because there is one God, there is one family of God. This doesn't mean that everyone who comes to a church building each week is a part of God's family. Many who participate in weekly gatherings do not truly know Jesus, and there are many reasons why these people attend. The ones who truly belong to the church are those who have trusted Jesus and have committed their lives to reflecting His image in the world. God appoints leaders who are given the task of equipping the church for this work, so that each individual Christian can grow in the way God intends. Christians who commit themselves to the church join with other believers in the work of becoming more and more like Jesus.

1 PETER 5:1-11



The leaders of the church are meant to be a reflection of the way God leads His people. We've already seen how Jesus used the image of a shepherd to communicate the way He loves and leads His sheep. In the same way, pastors are to act like shepherds for the church. They work to lead sheep to spiritual food, care for them when they are hurt, and protect them from harm. These leaders are not meant to lead in their own human strength, but they are to be exemplary in the ways they live, constantly submitting to God's guidance. Throughout His story, God has always used human leaders to care for His people. Some led well and others were terrible failures. What separates a great leader from a bad one is his love for God and obedience to God's leadership. A church blessed by godly pastors should give thanks to God for leaders who love them and point them to God's shepherding care.