



March 1 Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

This week, Jeremy helped us to focus our gaze on what lies ahead. His bottom line was “Your gaze will direct your way. This sounds really simple. “Just keep your head up and move forward.” But the problem is life just keeps throwing things in our way. Circumstances change. People come and go. Sickness, financial problems, relationships, etc. All these things work to distract us from our purpose of living a life in relationship with Jesus and helping others to have a relationship with Him.

What are some of the hardships and sufferings that people in your church are experiencing right now? Make a list.

When did you last ask, “Why me, God?”

What messages have you received from Christian television, books, and radio about how to view or deal with suffering and hardship?

Share how you’ve seen Christ’s power displayed in hard times.

Into the Word:

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–12.

Paul begins verse 7 by claiming that “we have this treasure in jars of clay.” “We” includes not only Paul and his friends, but also, everyone who bears the name of Christ. The treasure he’s talking about is the gospel; not just the *message* of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, but also the *power* behind the message—the very life of God available through faith in Christ.

But how are we Christians like jars of clay? First of all, clay pots were quite ordinary. They were everywhere, especially in the homes of peasants and common people. Wealthy people used materials, such as ivory, marble, glass, or fine wood, but regular people used clay pots. It would be like saying today, “We have this treasure in plastic bags.”

Second, jars of clay were fragile. Compared to marble, ivory, or even wood, clay didn’t last; since it was so cheap, no one really expected it to. People used a pot for a while, and when it got too chipped or cracked to use, or when it fell and shattered, they simply got another one.

Paul creates this great contrast: God has taken this great treasure, the life of Christ, and placed it in people like you and me, who are as common and fragile as clay pots.

How have you observed God’s “all-surpassing power” displayed in “jars of clay”? What do these observations tell you about God?

What adjustments do you have to make as you're reminded that "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (v. 7)? What causes us to sometimes get off track and think that it's more about us than it is about God?

How do verses 8–9 encourage you at this moment in your life?

React to this statement: "God's not looking for sterling silver tea sets. He's looking for rough and tumble clay pots" Do you think most Christians believe this? Why or why not?

How did the trials of others pave the way for you to experience life in Christ?

How have your trials lead to opportunities for ministering to others? How could it this week?

Apply The Word

Change and trials will always be a part of life on this side of Heaven. As Jeremy reminded us, the pastor may change but the mission does not. As we, as Meadowdale, go through this transition you may feel stressed out, mixed up, beaten up or even knocked down. If the pastoral change isn't doing that, something else may be.

This world is a pretty tough place for a clay pot. Maybe you're feeling pretty banged up—like a cracked, chipped jar of clay. Don't be alarmed; you're not alone. What's happening to you is quite normal for followers of Christ. In fact, it's practically part of the job description!

Pray this week that God will help you to keep your attention and gaze on the mission of knowing Jesus and growing in Him.