

# bible<sup>+</sup>study: april 2021

**Belton Joyner, Jr.**

*Based on the scripture lessons of Cokesbury's Adult Bible Study Series*

## **April 4, 2021 Text: Luke 24:13-35, 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Encounter on the Road to Emmaus”**

It's Easter Sunday. If you were asked to put the Easter event into one sentence, what would you say?

He is risen!  
Death got beat!  
Jesus is alive among us!  
We knew Him when He broke bread with us.  
The tomb is still empty.

I like the way Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation.” Hooray and wow! That includes the likes of me!

The way the apostle says it, Easter is not just about something “back then.” Easter is also now. That's what the two disciples on the road to Emmaus came to realize (Luke 24:13-35). The Lord broke bread with them and they recognized Him. It was no longer a story of what *had* happened; it became a story of what *was* happening.

I notice that after the two who met the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus realized who He was, they went back into Jerusalem to tell others (Luke 24:33). That is part of the Easter experience, isn't it?

Telling others continues the story of the emptied tomb.

I may tell others with words and I may tell others with my actions. Do I live and make my decisions as if I believe that Christ is alive? Do I seek justice and relate to others as if I know that the risen Lord is with me? Do I rejoice in meeting the Savior at the Table of Holy Communion, acknowledging what theologians call “a Real Presence”?

Various translations use different words for 2 Corinthians 5:17. Some say “new creation.” Some say “new person.” Some say “new world.” Some say “new being.” Regardless of the translation, the message is clear: Because of Easter, it is no longer business as usual.

### **What Someone Else Has Said:**

In *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers* (Westminster John Knox), Donald McKim has written: “(Easter) means among much else that Jesus is alive forevermore and that we can have fellowship with him....God's final victory at the end of history is secured.”

### **Prayer:**

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Alleluia! Come, Risen Lord...”

## **April 11, 2021 Text: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 “Living by New Standards”**

Do you wear glasses? If so, have you ever tried to find out how well you could see with someone else's glasses? It doesn't work very well, does it? Different folks have different eyes.

On my desk is a baseball. You might look at it and think “Belton must be a baseball fan.” No, that is not what that baseball means to me. In September 2018, my son and daughter-in-law and I went to see the St. Louis Cardinals (my favorite) play the Detroit Tigers. At the end of one inning, the player who caught the final out of that inning tossed the ball into the stands. My son caught it. He had it mounted and a plaque made, telling all about it. “That's a good memory,” you say. Yes, it is, but it's more than that. About a year after that ball game, my son died of a massive heart attack. When I look at that ball, I don't see a baseball. I see my son's love for me. Different eyes see things differently.

My middle-grandson works for the National Weather Service. We were together the other day and I commented that the clouds were lovely. He replied, “No! That is a skdfhn absdn pgtr cloud (Well, that's not what he said but I don't know the technical term he used) and it means that this pleasant weather is about to change into a mess.” Different experiences and training made us see things differently.

This is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. If we are in Christ, we no longer see others through our own eyes; we see them through

the eyes of God. “We won't recognize people by human standards” (2 Corinthians 5:16, CEB). If we are in Christ, we are, as the title of this study says, living by new standards. Those new standards are the standards of God.

One way God sees things is always to be looking for a way for reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5:19, the apostle reminds us that looking at others with the eyes of God means we now have a ministry of reconciliation. The word translated “reconciliation” is *katallagē*. One meaning of that word is “adjustment” or “change.” Yes! Reconciliation means seeing things with a different pair of glasses; we wear God's glasses of seeking love.

### **What Someone Else Has Said:**

Karl Barth wrote (*Church Dogmatics, Volume IV*, T & T Clark): “There, then, in Christ, the weakness and godlessness and sin and enmity of the world are shown to be a lie and objectively removed once and for all. And, there, too, in Christ, the peace of the world with God, the turning of (humankind) to Him, our friendship with Him, is shown to be the truth and objectively confirmed once and for all.”

### **Prayer:**

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “You have loved me, O Lord; let that love now shine through me...”

## **April 18, 2021 Text: Ephesians 4:21-32 “Clothed with the New Person”**

Read Ephesians 4:21-32. If you are like me, you will end up thinking, “Wow! I didn't know that Paul would be able to see into the twenty-first century and describe me so well! I'm glad this text does not identify me by name!”

Starting a few verses earlier, we can make a list of the old life that has not put on Christ fully: pointless thinking (v. 17), ignorance (v. 18), closed hearts (v. 18), lack sense of right and wrong (v. 19), doing whatever feels good (v. 19), corruption and greed (v. 19), deceitful desires (v. 22), lying (v. 25), angry sin (v. 26), stealing (v. 28), foul words (v. 4:29), bitterness (v. 31), losing temper (v. 31), shouting (v. 31), slander (v. 31). Mercy! I need to find a translation other than the Common English Bible! Surely I won't look so bad if all that gets translated into, uh, nicer terms. No, that won't work. Paul has nailed me.

I may be on the journey to holiness, but these verses from Paul remind me that I have a ways to go. It does take a change in my life (Ephesians

4:22). God created me to be in God's image: justice and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). I am called to live in the same forgiving, kind, compassionate way that Christ lived (Ephesians 4:32). Timothy G. Gombis has written: “Because God has transformed believers into children, they are to imitate God's love.”

It might be a good thing if, when someone asks “Why did you do that?” we could sincerely answer, “Because I am trying to do what Jesus would do.” Maybe we can kick that up a notch: What would Jesus have me do?

Whichever way we say it, our newness in Christ should express itself in the way we relate to others, and, truth be told, the way we relate to ourselves. When Jesus says to love our neighbor as ourselves, He helps us understand that an acceptance of ourselves as a beloved child of God is

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part of seeing our neighbor as a beloved child of God.

Paul uses the image of new clothes (Ephesians 4:24) to describe the newness we have in Christ Jesus. Caution: we can put on new clothes, but we also take them off and put on again the old clothes. These verses invite us to be alert about the clothes, the person, we are.

What Someone Else Has Said:

Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric (*Wesley, Aquinas, & Christian Perfection*,

Baylor) writes: “ For now, let me simply say that for Wesley grace is a gift that can be turned down; it is resistible.”

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Lord Jesus, I repent of how I have broken Your love...”



April 25, 2021 Text: 2 Corinthians 4:7-20 “Vessels for the Lord”

Question: What do the following cities have in common? Boonville, New York; Campbell, California; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Chesapeake, Virginia; Dover, Pennsylvania; Durham, North Carolina; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; San Antonio, Texas.

Answer: Each of these cities has a congregation named “New Creation United Methodist Church.”

There may be more; I just did a little research work on “Google” as I wrote this. The point is that this theme of “new creation” is coming alive across the country. For the month of April, we have been exploring this teaching. It comes alive most frequently in the writings of the apostle Paul.

Even though the treasure of God’s gifts comes in clay pots (2 Corinthians 4:7), “new things have arrived” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God has worked a new creation. It is as if those clay pots are being molded and shaped by God (Jeremiah 18:1-6). We are those earthen vessels, but because we have entrusted ourselves to God in Christ Jesus, we express the new creation.

What is that new creation like? Paul says “that Jesus’ life can also be seen in our bodies” (2 Corinthians 4:10). What is that new creation

like? Paul says, “We also have faith, and so we also speak.” (2 Corinthians 4:13). What is that new creation like? Paul says “that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus” (2 Corinthians 4:14).

New creation: a life that has the same values as Jesus. New creation: a life that with words and action speaks of faith. New creation: a life lived with the promise of an eternal relationship with God.

Corinth was a very cosmopolitan city and Paul was having a tough time there with the congregation he once founded; but even in the midst of the harassment (v. 9), the confusion (v. 8), and the other problems (v. 17), God was still at work making new creations. Praise God!

What Someone Else Has Said:

John Chrysostom (fourth century) wrote (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Volume VII*, Inter-varsity Press): “Both the greatness of the things given and the weakness of them that receive show the power of God, who not only gave great things, but also gave them to those who are little.”

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Create in me, O Lord, the grace to love as You do...”

