



“Overwhelmed”

2 Corinthians 3

Small Group Plan

Frederick Buechner describes the astonishing beauty of creation ...

Late one winter afternoon as I was walking to a class that I had to teach, I noticed the beginnings of what promised to be one of the great local sunsets. There was just the right kind of clouds and the sky was starting to burn and the bare trees were black as soot against it. When I got to the classroom, the lights were all on, of course, and the students were chattering, and I was just about to start things off when I thought of the sunset going on out there in the winter dusk, and on impulse, without warning, I snapped off the classroom lights. I am not sure that I ever had a happier impulse. The room faced west so as soon as it went dark, everything disappeared except what we could see through the windows, and there it was — the entire sky on fire by then, like the end of the world or the beginning of the world. You might think that somebody would have said something. Teachers do not usually plunge their students into that kind of darkness, and you might have expected a wisecrack or two or at least the creaking of chairs as people turned around to see if the old bird had finally lost his mind. But the astonishing thing was that the silence was as complete as you can get it in a room full of people, and we all sat there unmoving for as long as it took the extraordinary spectacle to fade slowly away. For over twenty minutes nobody spoke a word. Nobody did anything. We just sat there in the near-dark and watched one day of our lives come to an end.

— from ***The Hungering Dark*** by Frederick Buechner

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Can you think of an experience you have had that is similar to the one Frederick Buechner describes?
- Think of a time when you finally understood something that had confused or puzzled you. What was it? How did it feel?
- How does I feel to be overwhelmed by a powerful, wonderful feeling?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— BARRIERS ARE REMOVED —

2 Corinthians 3:12-14

¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

- What is the difference between the old and new covenant?
- What does it mean for God “radiance” to fade away (v. 13)?
- Why is Paul feeling/acting so “very bold” (v. 12)?
- Why is Jesus alone able to remove all barriers between humanity and God (v. 14)? How did he change the relationship?

— FREEDOM IS EXPERIENCED —

2 Corinthians 3:15-17

¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

- Why did Paul say, “the Lord is the Spirit” (v.17)?
- How does He bring freedom?
- What does it mean to “turn to the Lord” (v. 16)? How do we do it?

— TRANSFORMATION BEGINS —

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- Reflect on this quote: “Faith is not an evacuation plan, but a transformation plan.”
- Why does transformation occur slowly?
- What does it look like for someone to “reflect the Lord’s glory”?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What does spiritual mean in your life? How is it played out?
- How can we protect boldness (v. 12) from arrogance and pride?
- Where, in your life, do you see God’s gradual transformation occurring?
- With a clear view of God — “unveiled faces” (v. 18) — how is our worship changed?
- Close by asking God to cleanse our lips with the coal of His presence and forgiveness.