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The God of All Comfort - 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Topics: Compassion, Despair, Endurance, Hope, Prayer, Rest, Sacrifice, Suffering, Testing

Open It

- * 1. How do you normally react to hardship or suffering?
- 2. Why do people sometimes blame God for difficult circumstances?

Explore It

- 3. How did Paul describe God? (1:3)
- 4. Why do you think Paul began his letter by praising God? (1:3)
- 5. What does God do when we are troubled? (1:4)
- * 6. How does God involve Himself in our troubles? (1:4-5)
- 7. What did Paul's distress produce for the Corinthians? (1:6)
- 8. In what way is patient endurance produced in Christians? (1:6)
- 9. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians about the hardships he had endured? (1:8)
- * 10. Why did Paul despair? (1:8)
- 11. How did Paul's confidence in God enable him to rise above his despair? (1:8-10)
- 12. For what reason did Paul endure suffering? (1:9)
- * 13. How did the Corinthians help Paul through his hardships? (1:11)
- 14. What was the gracious favor Paul anticipated? (1:11)

Get It

- 15. How does God want us to help one another in difficult circumstances?
- 16. Who do you know who is experiencing hardship?
- * 17. How can you help other Christians who are suffering?
- 18. When have you ever suffered for the gospel?
- * 19. How have other Christians helped you through difficult circumstances?
- 20. How can you rely more on God instead of yourself in times of hardship?
- 21. What can we do to learn patience and endurance from our hardships?

Apply It

- * 22. How could you remind yourself to pray this week for Christians who are suffering hardship for their faith?
- 23. What can you do this week to show love and concern for a Christian brother or sister who is suffering?

Paul's Change of Plans - 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

Topics: Change, Confidence, Criticism, Faith, Love, Plans, Promises, Sincerity

Open It

1. How do you feel when someone postpones or cancels a social engagement that you were looking forward to?
- * 2. How do you go about letting friends know that you cannot keep your appointment with them?

Explore It

- * 3. How did Paul support his claim that he had been sincere with the Corinthians? (1:12)
4. What accusation from the Corinthians was Paul most likely responding to? (1:12-14)
5. Why did Paul say that the Corinthians could boast of him just as he would boast of them? (1:14)
6. Why had Paul planned to visit the Corinthian church? (1:15)
- * 7. Why did Paul change his travel plans? (1:15-16)
8. How did Paul's opponents at Corinth use his change of plans against him? (1:17)
9. What is the chief feature of God's promises? (1:18-22)
10. How did Paul explain how reliable his words were? (1:18-23)
11. What did Paul emphasize to strengthen his self-defense? (1:22)
12. How does God's Spirit act as a deposit? (1:22)
13. What is guaranteed to come? (1:22)
- * 14. Why did Paul decide not to return to Corinth? (1:23)
15. What was Paul's main purpose in working with the Corinthian church? (1:24)
16. What were Paul's visits to Corinth like? (2:1)
17. Why did Paul write about his distress and anguish? (2:4)

Get It

- * 18. In light of Paul's experience, how should you seek to discern God's will for your daily plans?
19. When might it be necessary to question the actions of a Christian leader?
20. When is it wrong to accuse another believer?
21. When have you ever made plans without consulting God?
22. How can we ensure that our lives send out a sincere and consistent message of commitment to Christ?
23. What difference does it make that God puts His Spirit in every Christian's heart?
24. Why do you think Paul's visits to Corinth were painful?
25. In what circumstances might it be necessary to make a "painful visit" to another believer?
- * 26. How can we demonstrate love for other Christians?

Apply It

- * 27. How can you remind yourself to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction in your daily life?
28. What is one interpersonal conflict that you need to try to work out this week?

Forgiveness for the Sinner - 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Topics: Forgiveness, Grief, Love, Punishment, Restoration, Satan, Sin, Sorrow

Open It

- * 1. When is it most difficult to forgive someone?
- 2. How could a friendship be ruined by an unforgiving spirit?
- 3. What is it like to experience God's forgiveness?

Explore It

- 4. What situation is Paul responding to in this passage? (2:5)
- 5. What did Paul mean when he said that the sinner in the Corinthian church had hurt all of the Corinthians? (2:5)
- * 6. How did the Corinthians finally respond to the person who hurt Paul? (2:6)
- 7. What was the man's reaction to the Corinthian's discipline? (2:7)
- * 8. What advice did Paul give the Corinthians regarding the man who had sinned? (2:7-8)
- 9. How were the Corinthians to reaffirm their love for the man they disciplined? (2:8)
- 10. Why did Paul write to the Corinthians? (2:9)
- * 11. Why was it important that the Corinthians forgive the man whom they disciplined? (2:10-11)
- 12. In what way can Satan outwit us? (2:10-11)
- 13. What danger did Paul want to avoid? (2:11)
- 14. What were the Corinthian Christians not naive about? (2:11)

Get It

- 15. When was a time you learned of a church disciplining a member?
- 16. What results ideally follow from church discipline?
- 17. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
- * 18. Why do you think many churches neglect to discipline wayward members?
- 19. In what ways are Christians aware of Satan's schemes?
- * 20. How does Satan take advantage of our refusal to forgive each other?
- 21. For whose benefit should we forgive others?
- 22. What does Paul's example tell us about the role older Christians should play in the lives of younger believers?
- 23. When have you ever grieved a fellow Christian?
- 24. What should you do if you feel wronged by another person?

Apply It

- * 25. What is the first step you should take this week to forgive and reaffirm your love for someone who has sinned against you?
- 26. How do you plan to seek forgiveness the next time you wrong someone?

Ministers of the New Covenant - 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

Topics: Example, Gospel, Holy Spirit, Knowledge, Ministry, New Covenant, Sincerity, Witnessing

Open It

1. What does the phrase “the letter of the law” mean to you?
- * 2. What mentor or friend of yours lives by the “spirit of the law”?

Explore It

3. Why was Paul willing to leave Troas, despite the opportunities there? (2:12-13)
- * 4. Why was Paul thankful to the Lord? (2:14)
5. How can knowledge of Christ be a fragrance? (2:14)
6. By what method did Paul expect the gospel to be spread? (2:14)
7. In what way are Christians the aroma of Christ? (2:15)
8. Which two groups of people are affected by how Christians live? (2:15)
9. In what way are Christians the smell of death to some and the fragrance of life to others? (2:16)
10. How did some people of Paul’s day misuse the Word of God? (2:17)
11. Who might have needed letters of recommendation? Why? (3:1)
- * 12. In what sense were the Corinthians a record of Paul’s values and concerns? (3:2-3)
13. In what sense were the Corinthians a record of God’s values and concerns? (3:2-3)
- * 14. Where did Paul get his competence? (3:5-6)
15. What’s the difference between the letter and the Spirit? (3:6)

Get It

16. What causes Christians to be legalistic about their faith?
17. What can we learn from Paul’s pastoral concern for the Corinthians?
- * 18. What qualities do you think are essential to a good pastor?
19. When has the Lord opened a door of ministry for you? How did you respond?
20. In what ways are you an aroma of Christ among others?
- * 21. How could you better represent Christ to the unbelievers you know?
22. How do some Christians peddle the Word of God for profit?
23. In what ways has God made you competent?

Apply It

- * 24. When could you talk with your pastor to learn of your church’s concerns and thus be able to pray for these needs more effectively?
25. What about Christ do you want people to “read” in you this week?

The Glory of the New Covenant - 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Topics: Covenant, Freedom, Glory, Holy Spirit, Hope, Ministry, New Covenant

Open It

- * 1. What glorious sights have you seen in nature?
- 2. In what circumstances do people in our society wear veils or coverings?

Explore It

- 3. What ministry brought death? (3:7)
- * 4. Why could the Israelites not look at Moses' face? (3:7)
- 5. What faded away? (3:7, 11)
- * 6. What is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant? (3:11)
- 7. What hope did Paul have? (3:12)
- 8. Why was Paul bold? (3:12)
- 9. Why did Moses cover his face with a veil? (3:13)
- 10. Why do people fail to understand their need for salvation? (3:14)
- 11. What must people do to have the veil that covers their hearts taken away? (3:16)
- 12. What does the Spirit of the Lord offer believers? (3:17)
- 13. How is it possible for us to reflect the Lord's glory? (3:18)
- * 14. How does the glory of the new covenant differ from that of the old covenant? (3:18)

Get It

- 15. How has this passage added to your understanding of God and salvation?
- * 16. How can the knowledge of the hope you have in Jesus Christ increase your boldness?
- 17. What are some common misconceptions people have about the Holy Spirit's role in the Christian's life?
- 18. How have you experienced the Spirit's freedom in your personal life?
- * 19. In what ways do you see the Lord's glory reflected in your life?
- 20. In what ways do you struggle to allow the Holy Spirit to control your life?
- 21. With whom could you share the message of the new covenant?

Apply It

- * 22. For what people do you want to pray this week, that the veil over their understanding will be removed?
- 23. How can you turn to the Lord each day?

Treasures in Jars of Clay - 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Topics: Death, Deceit, Endurance, Gospel, Knowledge, Ministry, Power, Renewal, Satan

Open It

1. What are some things or people in which you have a lot of faith?
- * 2. For what reasons do you most often get discouraged?
3. What areas of life are difficult to entrust completely to God?

Explore It

- * 4. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians not to lose heart? (4:1)
5. What did Paul believe would result from telling the plain truth? (4:2)
6. How did Paul respond to his opponents' accusations? (4:2)
7. Why did Paul's opponents not understand his ministry? (4:3-4)
8. Who is the god of this age? (4:4)
9. What has the god of this age done? (4:4)
10. Whom did Paul preach? Why? (4:5-6)
11. What kind of jars contained Paul's treasure? (4:7)
- * 12. How did Paul contrast his own weakness with God's power? (4:8-9)
13. What did Paul call his sufferings? (4:10)
14. What value did Paul see in his sufferings? (4:10-12)
15. What motivated Paul to preach the gospel in spite of hardship? (4:13-14)
- * 16. How did Paul encourage the Corinthians to carry on despite difficulty? (4:16-18)

Get It

17. How would you define faith?
18. What elements of the Christian faith that we cannot see are central to our life with Christ?
19. What does it mean for us to renew our faith?
20. In what ways do some religious people distort the Word of God?
21. When have you been discouraged or perplexed in your Christian life?
- * 22. What makes it difficult for us to fix our attention and hope on God?
- * 23. How can God help us through difficult times?
24. When have you felt inner peace in spite of trying circumstances?

Apply It

- * 25. What do you want to remember the next time you feel discouraged?
26. How could you encourage another Christian who is confused or bogged down by the cares of life?

Our Heavenly Dwelling - 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Topics: Confidence, Death, Earth, Eternal Life, Faith, Heaven, Holy Spirit, Judgment

Open It

1. What do you imagine heaven will be like?
- * 2. What common cliches do you frequently hear when people talk about heaven?

Explore It

3. To what kind of tent did Paul refer? Why? (5:1)
4. To what can Christians look forward? (5:1)
5. How could Paul feel confident in the face of ill health and death? (5:1-10)
- * 6. Why did Paul long for heaven? (5:2-3)
7. For what purpose has God made us? (5:4-5)
8. How does the Spirit guarantee what is to come? (5:5)
- * 9. What is true as long as we are alive on this earth? (5:6)
10. How is the Christian life lived? (5:7)
11. What future realities motivated Paul to please the Lord in all he said and did? (5:8-10)
- * 12. What should be the believer's goal? (5:9)
13. Who will be judged by Christ? (5:10)
14. Why must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ? (5:10)
15. What will people receive at the judgment seat of Christ? (5:10)

Get It

16. What's wrong with highly valuing beauty and youth?
17. How can Christ be glorified through the weaknesses of men and women?
18. What does it mean to live by faith and not by sight?
- * 19. How often do you long for the heavenly body promised to believers at the resurrection?
20. What comfort or satisfaction can we derive from knowing that the Holy Spirit guarantees our future in heaven?
21. How does this passage give us hope for believers who have passed away?
- * 22. How should we regard death?

Apply It

- * 23. In what small way can you detach yourself from worldly things?
24. How can you prepare yourself today to face the judgment seat of Christ?

The Ministry of Reconciliation - 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

Topics: Ambassadors, Forgiveness, Grace, Love, Ministry, New Life, Reconciliation

Open It

- * 1. When have you seen someone change in a significant way?
- 2. What about you is most difficult for your acquaintances to understand or accept?

Explore It

- 3. Why did Paul try to persuade others to follow Christ? (5:11)
- 4. Why was Paul concerned about justifying his ministry to the Christians at Corinth? (5:12)
- 5. How were Paul's opponents building themselves up at his expense? (5:12)
- 6. What motivated Paul? (5:14)
- * 7. Why did Christ die for everyone? (5:15)
- 8. How did Paul change the way he looked at people? (5:16)
- 9. What is true about every person in Christ? (5:17)
- 10. What happened when God sent His Son to earth? (5:18)
- 11. What does God do with our sins when we are reconciled to Him? (5:19)
- * 12. How is a Christian an ambassador? (5:20)
- 13. Why did Paul try to persuade the Corinthians to respond to God's Word? (6:1)
- * 14. Why should we listen carefully to the message about Christ? (6:1-2)

Get It

- 15. How do Christians sometimes take pride in ministries that give them attention and popularity?
- 16. How is it possible for us to be motivated both by the fear of the Lord and Christ's love?
- 17. Why was it necessary for Christ to die in order for us to be reconciled to God?
- 18. In what ways do people today receive the grace of God in vain?
- 19. In what ways are all Christians new creations?
- 20. For what other Christians are you concerned?
- 21. How can you encourage your Christian friends to listen to God's Word?
- 22. How did God make His reconciliation with you?
- 23. How can you personally be involved in the ministry of reconciliation?
- * 24. What difference does it make that Christians are counted as Christ's ambassadors?
- * 25. Where is your ministry of reconciliation?
- 26. To whom are you an ambassador?

Apply It

- * 27. What is one way you can represent Christ to your friends and coworkers this week?
- 28. What Christian friend can you encourage to listen to God's Word? How?

Paul's Hardships - 2 Corinthians 6:3-13

Topics: Affections, Ministry, Patience, Persecution, Perseverance, Serving, Witnessing

Open It

1. What do you consider to be distinctive about members of your family?
- * 2. What images does the word "hardships" bring to mind?

Explore It

3. What is the connection between the credibility of Christianity and the people who call themselves Christians? (6:3)
4. Whose authority did Paul claim? (6:4)
5. What does this passage say about Paul's attitude toward the ministry of sharing the gospel? (6:4)
6. What does this passage say about the cost of being Christ's disciple? (6:4-10)
- * 7. What price did Paul pay for following Christ? (6:4-10)
- * 8. What kind of weapons did Paul use? (6:7)
9. How did the accusations against Paul differ from the reality Paul experienced as an ambassador for Christ? (6:9-10)
- * 10. In what way was Paul poor yet rich? (6:10)
11. To what lengths did Paul go to show his love for the Corinthians? (6:11-13)

Get It

12. How do you think Paul was able to keep an attitude of sincere love for people when so many opposed him?
13. What do you think caused the Corinthians to withhold their full loyalty from Paul?
14. What can we learn from Paul's relationship with the Corinthians that can help us deal with friends who frustrate us?
15. How can you guard against causing other Christians to stumble in their faith?
- * 16. When have you ever suffered for the sake of the gospel?
17. How does God use hardships to strengthen our relationship with Him?
18. What can you learn from Paul's example that will help you endure suffering for the sake of the gospel?
- * 19. How can you rely on the spiritual weapons of the Holy Spirit more in your everyday life?
20. How do Paul's words put a new perspective on wealth and poverty?

Apply It

21. Of the virtues purity, understanding, patience, and kindness, which do you want to ask God to help you practice this week?
- * 22. What can you do this week to help another Christian persevere through hard times?

Do Not Be Yoked with Unbelievers - 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Topics: Fellowship, Friendship, Holiness, Marriage, Partnerships, Purity, Relationships, Separation, Unbelievers, Unity

Open It

1. How do you choose your friends?
- * 2. What sort of partnerships have you been involved in over the years?
3. How would you describe the perfect companion?

Explore It

4. Who were the “unbelievers” Paul described? (6:14)
- * 5. Why is it wrong and dangerous for Christians to be bound together with unbelievers? (6:14-16)
6. How did Paul balance encouragement with warnings in this passage? (6:14-7:1)
7. In what way are Christians unique? (6:16)
- * 8. Why is it important for Christians to be separate from non-Christian influences? (6:16-18)
9. What did Paul warn Christians not to do? (6:16-18)
10. On what condition does the Lord receive people? (6:17)
11. What does God call His people? (6:18)
12. How did Paul sum up his quotation of Isaiah 52:11? (7:1)
- * 13. From what did the Corinthians need to purify themselves? (7:1)
14. Why should we strive to perfect holiness in our lives? (7:1)

Get It

15. Why do you think this passage is so often applied to marriage?
16. In what other areas of life besides marriage do Christians need to be separate from non-Christians?
17. How seriously does your church take God’s command about the relationship Christians should have with unbelievers?
18. What difference does it make that each believer is a temple of the living God?
19. How do you need to purify yourself from things that have contaminated your life?
20. How should Christians balance their involvement with non-Christians?
- * 21. In what kinds of relationships can a Christian become bound too tightly to unbelievers?
22. When have you witnessed the consequences produced when a believer was obliged to an unbeliever?
- * 23. What can a Christian do if he or she is beholden to an unbeliever too much?
24. How can you keep your relationships with non-Christians without tightly binding yourself to them?

Apply It

- * 25. In what relationships do you need to maintain your freedom to follow Christian convictions?
26. What can you do this week to show your reverence for God?

Paul's Joy - 2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Topics: Confidence, Conflict, Devotion, Encouragement, Joy, Obedience, Repentance, Salvation, Sorrow

Open It

1. When has a friend ever disappointed you?
- * 2. What is it like to have a loyal and faithful friend?
3. When was a time you had to confront a friend?

Explore It

4. Why did Paul not condemn the Corinthians? (7:2-3)
5. Why did Paul have to defend himself again to the Corinthians? (7:2-4)
- * 6. Why did Paul have such great confidence in the Corinthian Christians? (7:4)
7. How could Paul be joyful in such difficult circumstances? (7:4)
8. What was Paul's experience in Macedonia? (7:5)
9. What was the nature of the trouble Paul was facing? (7:5)
- * 10. How did God comfort Paul? (7:6-7)
11. What was the cause of the sorrow felt by the Corinthians? (7:8)
12. Why did Paul change his feelings about sending his "tearful letter"? (7:8-9)
13. What qualities were produced by the Corinthians' godly sorrow? (7:11)
14. How did the Corinthians prove themselves to be innocent? (7:11)
15. For what reason did Paul write this letter to the church at Corinth? (7:12)
- * 16. What did Titus do to encourage Paul? (7:13-16)
17. Why did Paul have confidence in the Corinthian Christians? (7:16)

Get It

- * 18. What can we learn from the relationship between Paul and Titus?
19. What could your church learn from the relationship between Titus and the Corinthian church?
20. What relationship is there between adversity and spiritual growth?
- * 21. When have you ever been confronted by a friend regarding a spiritual matter?
22. How should we respond when someone points out a wrong in our lives?
23. How do Paul's warnings and encouraging words in this passage motivate you to behave in a godly manner?
24. What can we learn from this passage about dealing with Christians who have fallen away from the faith?
25. What should we do when a Christian friend turns away from Christ?
26. Why is it not enough just to feel sorry for your sins?

Apply It

27. What do you need to do this week to turn sorrow for sin into godly living?
- * 28. What specific step can you take this week to build up another believer who is discouraged?

Generosity Encouraged - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Topics: Desires, Encouragement, Equality, Generosity, Giving Up, Money, Poor, Sacrifice, Serving

Open It

1. How do you feel when your pastor preaches about tithing?
- * 2. What is your idea of generosity?
3. What example of generosity have you seen recently?

Explore It

4. What had God given to the Macedonian Christians? (8:1)
- * 5. Out of what circumstances did the Macedonian Christians give? (8:2)
6. What attitude did the Macedonians have in their giving? (8:3-4)
- * 7. What three things did the Macedonian Christians do that impressed Paul? (8:3-5)
8. What surprised Paul about the Macedonians' giving? (8:5)
9. What was it that Titus had begun to do? (8:6)
10. In what area did Paul want the Corinthians to excel? (8:7)
11. Why did Paul avoid commanding the Corinthians to give? (8:8)
12. What example did Christ set for us? (8:9)
13. Why did Paul use the actions of the Macedonian Christians to motivate the Corinthians to give? (8:11)
- * 14. What is it about a gift to the Lord that makes it acceptable? (8:12)
15. What end does God want our charitable giving to achieve? (8:13)
16. What Old Testament example guides our giving? How? (8:15)

Get It

17. What can we learn from Titus' example?
18. How do you feel about the methods Paul used to motivate the Corinthians to participate in the collection?
19. How have your views on giving changed over the years?
- * 20. How can joy lead to generosity, even when a person lives in poverty?
21. How does Christ's example motivate you to give?
22. How can the fact that Christ became poor on your behalf, and was later exalted by God, motivate you to follow His example?
23. How can the example of the Macedonian church challenge those who have little money to give?
24. What prevents people from giving a fair portion of their money to the Lord for His work?
25. How crucial do you think it is for Christians to give their money to the church?
- * 26. How are you challenged by Paul's discussion of generosity?
27. How can you find out how much God wants you to give and what ministries He wants you to support?

Apply It

- * 28. What step can you take this week to review and improve your financial support of the Lord's work?
29. In what ways besides giving money can you be generous to others in the name of Christ this week?

Titus Sent to Corinth - 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

Topics: Criticism, Example, Generosity, Gifts, Giving Up, Money, Preparation, Sacrifice, Tithing

Open It

- * 1. When is it most difficult to try to please everybody?
- 2. What good qualities do you see in the lives of your own church leaders?

Explore It

- 3. Why did Paul and Titus share the same concern for the Christians at Corinth? (8:16)
- 4. Why was Titus traveling to Corinth? (8:17)
- * 5. Why did Paul send two other Christians along with Titus to Corinth? (8:18-23; 9:3-5)
- * 6. How did Paul instruct the Corinthian church to treat Titus and his fellow worker? (8:23-24)
- 7. Why did Paul explain there was no need for him to write the Corinthians? (9:1)
- 8. How did Paul motivate the Macedonians to join in the collection for the Christians of Jerusalem? (9:2-3)
- 9. How would Paul's boasting have been hollow? (9:3)
- * 10. Why did Paul send Titus to collect the gift from the Corinthian church? (9:3-5)
- 11. What attitude did Paul want the Corinthians to have regarding their gift? (9:5)

Get It

- 12. What motivates you to give to your church or Christian ministries?
- * 13. What should be a Christian's attitude regarding sacrificial giving to the church?
- 14. Why did Paul take pains to do what was right in the eyes of others?
- 15. Why did Paul want to avoid criticism in how the gift was administered?
- 16. In what ways should we try to avoid criticism with the way we carry out our Christian responsibilities?
- 17. When is it appropriate to increase your giving?
- * 18. What can you do to guard against a grudging attitude when you offer your resources to the Lord?
- 19. What was exemplary about the people who worked with Paul (Titus and the others)?
- 20. What was exemplary about the Corinthians?
- 21. What should be our attitude toward those who are full-time Christian workers?
- 22. How can you imitate the qualities of the Christian workers?

Apply It

- * 23. What step can you take this week to foster a willing attitude in your giving?
- 24. What is one setting in which you can strive to avoid criticism for the way you live your Christian life? How?

Sowing Generously - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Topics: Generosity, Gifts, Giving Up, Grace, Praise, Serving, Thankfulness

Open It

1. What images come to your mind when you hear about a “cheerful giver”?
- * 2. Who is the most generous person you know? Why do you think so?

Explore It

3. Why did Paul begin this passage with a discussion of farming? (9:6)
- * 4. How should we give? Why? (9:7)
- * 5. What promise does God give to believers who do give generously? (9:8)
6. For what reason did Paul quote Scripture here? (9:9)
7. What does God provide? (9:10)
- * 8. What results from the generosity of Christians? (9:11)
9. What was the most important benefit that would arise from the collection for the Jerusalem church? (9:12-14)
10. What did God give the Corinthians? (9:14)
11. For what kind of gift did Paul praise God in his letter? (9:15)

Get It

12. Why does God love a cheerful giver over someone who grudgingly gives large sums of money?
13. What does this passage tell us about motivating people?
14. What does this passage tell us about accountability?
- * 15. What does this passage tell us about the relationship between Christian faith and giving?
- * 16. What could a reluctant giver do to become a more cheerful giver?
17. Why does giving in a grudging manner make any difference if the need is met?
18. How should you react when other Christians give generously to you or your family?
19. What principles of accountability should govern Christian giving?

Apply It

- * 20. What could you do this week to encourage a Christian friend to be a cheerful giver?
21. What is one way you can set an example of giving?
22. How can you remind yourself of God’s generosity the next time you are tempted to hold back from giving cheerfully?

Paul's Defense of His Ministry - 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

Topics: Armor, Confidence, Gentleness, Obedience, Power, Pride, War, Work, World

Open It

1. What is it like to have people talk about you behind your back?
- * 2. When have you ever had to defend your actions to another person?

Explore It

3. What was the source of Paul's authority and influence over others? (10:1)
- * 4. Of what did Paul's opponents accuse him? (10:2)
5. How did the spiritual warfare that Paul fought, and the spiritual weapons that he used, differ from ordinary warfare and weapons? (10:3-4)
6. What did Paul want to demolish? How? (10:4-6)
7. What did Paul take captive? (10:5)
- * 8. How were Paul's opponents generating their misguided ideas? (10:7)
9. Why was Paul not ashamed of boasting about the Corinthians? (10:8)
10. Why would Paul's opponents try to convince the Corinthians that Paul was unimpressive in person? (10:10)
11. How did Paul respond to the accusations against him? (10:11)
- * 12. Why was Paul justified in boasting, whereas his opponents were not? (10:13-16)
13. What would enable Paul to expand the area in which he could preach the gospel? (10:16)
14. In what did Paul's opponents pride themselves? (10:16)
15. Why did Paul endorse boasting in the Lord, but condemn all other forms of boasting? (10:18)

Get It

16. In what way did Jesus exemplify meekness and gentleness?
17. How do Paul's actions and attitudes influence your ideas about ministry?
- * 18. Why do people often look only on the surface of things?
19. How can looking only on the surface mislead us?
20. What surface judgments do you tend to make?
21. How does it feel when a person boasts or tries to take credit for work that someone else did?
22. Why does God want us to boast about Him and not about ourselves?
23. In what circumstances do you think it would be proper for a Christian to boast?
24. What spiritual weapons are available to you?
25. How can you better utilize the spiritual weapons that are available to you?
- * 26. Why did Paul defend the truth?
27. What can we learn from Paul's concerns?

Apply It

28. What is one specific way you can show the meekness and gentleness of Christ in one of your important relationships?
- * 29. In what area of life do you need to defend the truth? How?

Paul and the False Apostles - 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Topics: Deceit, Devotion, Gospel, Jealousy, Money, Purity, Satan, Toleration, Witnessing

Open It

1. When is it difficult to hold to your convictions?
2. When was the first time you remember being jealous?
- * 3. What widely followed practices might a person be criticized for not doing?

Explore It

4. Why did Paul ask the Corinthians to put up with him? (11:1)
5. Of whom was Paul jealous? Why? (11:2)
6. Why was Paul jealous? (11:2)
7. To what biblical event did Paul compare the Corinthians' risk of deception? (11:3)
8. Why did Paul ask the Corinthians to put up with his boasting? (11:4)
- * 9. Why was Paul sarcastic about the "super-apostles"? (11:5)
10. What criticism did Paul's opponents voice against him? (11:6)
11. How did Paul respond to his opponents' criticism? (11:6)
12. Why did Paul "lower himself"? (11:7)
- * 13. How did Paul make sure he was not a burden on the Corinthians? (11:7-9)
14. Why did Paul accept support from the Macedonian Christians while in Corinth, yet refuse to accept money from the Corinthians themselves? (11:8-12)
- * 15. How did Paul's behavior contrast with that of his opponents? (11:12)
16. How did Paul's opponents try to deceive the Corinthians? (11:13-15)

Get It

17. What qualities do you think should characterize a minister of Christ?
18. How does godly jealousy differ from worldly jealousy?
19. Who is one person you are concerned may abandon Christ?
20. Who are false prophets in our society?
- * 21. How do modern-day false prophets try to deceive Christians?
22. How should we respond to those people who claim a spiritual authority that they do not have?
- * 23. What can you do to avoid being deceived in spiritual matters by the world?
24. In what way should we follow Paul's example in matters of financial support and accountability?

Apply It

25. What is one thing you can do this week to help your Christian friends stay loyal to Christ?
- * 26. What is one step you can take this week to guard against the deceit of false prophets and evil pressures?

Paul Boasts About His Sufferings - 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Topics: Confidence, Foolishness, Persecution, Pressure, Sin, Status, Suffering, Weaknesses, Wisdom, World

Open It

1. What kind of boasting do you dislike hearing?
- * 2. What are some of the playground boasts you remember hearing in grade school?
3. What is the most dramatic testimony you have ever heard?

Explore It

4. Why did Paul write, "Let no one take me for a fool"? (11:16)
5. What sort of boasting characterizes a fool? (11:17)
6. What kind of language did Paul use in this passage? (11:16-21)
7. What did the Corinthians put up with too easily? (11:19-20)
8. In what way did Paul act like a fool? (11:21)
- * 9. What qualifications did Paul have to justify his boasting? (11:22-28)
10. Why did Paul give so many examples of how he endured hardship for Christ? (11:22-28)
11. How did Paul's boasting change after his insistence that he had worked much harder than his opponents? (11:23)
- * 12. Why did Paul boast about his hardships? (11:24-26)
13. What kind of pressure did Paul experience? (11:28)
14. What was Paul's attitude toward Christians who were weak in their faith and led into sin? (11:29)
- * 15. How did Paul qualify his boasting? (11:30)

Get It

16. How do you think Christian pastors today should handle rivalry and competition in the church?
17. How do you feel when a fellow believer sins against you or a friend?
- * 18. What does it mean to boast in the Lord?
19. What should we boast about?
20. What should we avoid boasting about?
- * 21. What are the dangers of boasting?
22. How can our boasting be glorifying to the Lord?
23. Why did Paul criticize the practice of striving for status?
24. What do you think are some of the pressures your pastor feels in leading your congregation?
25. In what specific ways can you be supportive of your church leaders?
26. How should you respond to suffering or hardship that you experience for the sake of Christ?
27. How could you help Christians who are harassed for their faith?
28. How can you guard against leading another believer into sin?

Apply It

29. How could you encourage the leaders in your church who may be enduring hardship?
30. In what ways could you work this week to reduce rivalry and conflict among Christians?
- * 31. What boasts can you have handy for the next time you need to defend your credibility as a representative of Christ's message?

Paul's Vision and His Thorn - 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Topics: Body, Grace, Health, Heaven, Joy, Pain, Power, Pride, Weaknesses

Open It

1. How are powerful people treated in our society?
2. Why are we typically afraid to disclose our weaknesses to each other?

Explore It

3. Who was the man in Christ whom Paul described? (12:2)
4. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians about his vision, despite his misgivings? (12:2-4)
5. Why was Paul reluctant to speak about his vision? (12:3-6)
6. What happened during the revelation Paul described? (12:4)
- * 7. Why did Paul refrain from boasting? (12:6)
8. For what reason might Paul have become conceited? (12:7)
9. What prevented Paul from developing a proud spirit? (12:7)
10. Why did Paul have a "thorn"? (12:7)
11. Who was responsible for giving Paul a "thorn in the flesh"? (12:7)
- * 12. What was Paul's response to his "thorn"? (12:8, 10)
- * 13. What purpose can suffering serve? (12:9)

Get It

- * 14. What are some weaknesses or afflictions that you find difficult to live with?
15. What can we learn from Paul's example about dealing with physical discomfort or hardship?
16. How can you allow the Lord's power to take over where you are weak?
17. How does the Christian perspective on power and weakness differ from that of the world?
18. What weaknesses, handicaps, or problems in your life is God able to use?
19. What does this passage teach us about the problem of evil and God's sovereign will?
20. Why does God choose to heal some people of their sickness or disability and not others?
- * 21. How should you respond if God chooses not to heal you?
22. What difference should it make knowing God has promised you an all-sufficient grace?

Apply It

- * 23. What weakness can you turn over to the Lord through prayer this week?
24. In what area of your life do you want to rely more on God's strength and power, rather than your own?

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians - 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Topics: Burdens, Expectations, Fear, Humiliation, Humility, Love, Ministry, Miracles, Money, Sacrifice, Sin

Open It

1. In your experience, what issues cause the most disagreement among friends?
2. Who is the best friend you ever had?
- * 3. How can a gesture of goodwill be misunderstood or unappreciated?

Explore It

4. How did Paul maintain humility while defending himself against his opponents at Corinth? (12:11)
5. What tone did Paul use in this passage? (12:11-13)
6. Why should the Corinthians have recognized the apostles? (12:12)
7. What did Paul want from the Corinthians? (12:14)
- * 8. To what did Paul liken his relationship with the Corinthians? (12:14)
9. Why did Paul ask the Corinthians, "If I love you more, will you love me less?" (12:15)
- * 10. How do we know that Paul had a deep affection for the Corinthians? (12:15-18)
11. Why was Paul's conscience clear about the men he had sent to Corinth? (12:17-18)
- * 12. What prompted Paul to write this letter? (12:20-21)
13. In what ways did Paul fear that the Corinthians might cause him to be humbled before God? (12:21)

Get It

14. What role do you think signs, wonders, and miracles should play in Christian evangelism today?
15. What is an example of an experience that taught you a lesson, but which you would not want to go through again?
16. What misgivings might Paul have after visiting your church?
17. How can you maintain a spirit of humility if you have to defend yourself against the accusations of others?
18. What does Paul's relationship with the Corinthians reveal about the type of friendships God wants for you?
19. Why might a local congregation become divided?
20. How should we be accountable to one another? Why?

Apply It

21. What simple act of concern can you show for the people in your church this week?
- * 22. In the future, how can you follow Paul's example in healing divisions between Christians?

Final Warnings - 2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Topics: Authority, Discipline, Example, Faith, Perfect, Power, Prayer, Sin, Testing, Truth, Unity, Weaknesses

Open It

1. How would you prepare for a visit from a friend you haven't seen in a long time?
- * 2. What is one warning you're thankful you received?

Explore It

3. Why did Paul return to Corinth a third time? (13:1-2)
4. How do we know the Corinthians were doubting Paul's authority? (13:3)
5. Why did Paul plan to be firm with the chronic sinners in Corinth? (13:3-4)
- * 6. Why did Paul advise the Corinthians to examine themselves? (13:5)
7. How could the Corinthians "fail the test"? (13:5)
- * 8. What does this passage reveal about Paul's concern for the Corinthians' spiritual welfare and regard for his own reputation? (13:7)
9. How could Paul be glad despite his problems? (13:9)
- * 10. Why did Paul write to the church at Corinth? (13:10)
11. For what purpose had God given authority to Paul? (13:10)
12. What did Paul want the Corinthians to do? (13:11-14)
13. What was Paul's appeal in the conclusion to his letter? (13:11-14)

Get It

14. When should we demand proof that a person's teaching about God is true?
15. How has God demonstrated His power in your life?
16. What difference does it make that God's power lives in you?
- * 17. When is it helpful to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith?
18. How do you think a person could fail the test of faith?
- * 19. What does it mean to submit to those in authority in the church?
20. What should you do to mend the relationship whenever you are at odds with another Christian?
21. What does it mean to aim for perfection?
22. What goals should Christians set for themselves?

Apply It

- * 23. In what way would it be helpful for you to test your faith? How could you?
24. Who could help you test yourself this week to see whether you are in the faith?
25. What realistic, measurable goal could you set for your own growth toward godliness this week?