
2Corinthians

Author

The book of [2Corinthians](#) is Paul's letter to the church at Corinth after they had addressed the major problems he pointed out in an earlier letter. In this letter, he challenges them to not forget their purpose. They were in danger of making it all about themselves instead of all about Christ.

Good News, Bad News

The good news is that they had dealt with the major issues in their church. The bad news is that they were beginning to listen to false teachers and were questioning Paul's authority.

Key Verses

2Cor 1:4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (NKJV)

2Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (NKJV)

2Cor 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (NKJV)

High-Level Outline

1-5	Paul told how his ministry was of God and that he was a true apostle
6-9	Paul encouraged and exhorted them to fulfill their purpose as a church
10-13	Paul enforced his authority

Themes

Suffering

Paul pointed out that the Corinthians were currently experiencing a life of ease. He was concerned that they would be taken by surprise when they experienced trials ([2Cor 1:4-9](#)). They needed to know that suffering is a normal part of Christian living. They needed to know that unless God breaks you, He cannot use you greatly ([2Cor 4:8-10](#)).

God's Encouragement

The book of [2Corinthians](#) reveals that the major problems identified in [1Corinthians](#) have been addressed. This gives hope to every church that any problem can be overcome.

Personal Reflection and Application

Paul said God comforts us in our tribulation for a purpose ([2Cor 1:3-5](#)). What is that purpose? Think about those around you who are suffering or struggling. Think about similar struggles you have experienced and how God comforted you. Where are some opportunities for you to fulfill the purpose of God's comfort?

Paul could have taken great pride in his accomplishments. Instead, he threw away his accomplishments ([Php 3:4-7](#)). Paul knew his abilities came from God ([2Cor 3:4-6](#)). Do you know your accomplishments come from God? Do you tell others about your abilities or do you let them see how Christ works through you? Consider this as an exercise in humility.

When those around you look, do they see you becoming more Christ-like ([2Cor 3:18](#))? What hinders your progress in becoming more Christ-like?

If you have accepted Christ as Savior, you are a new creature. Your status is equal to other believers regardless of your ethnicity, your social status, your wealth, your gender, your intelligence, or your appearance ([2Cor 5:14-17](#)). In what ways does this encourage you and challenge you?

Read [Ezekiel 37:26-27](#) and [2Corinthians 6:16](#). If you have accepted Christ as Savior, your body is the dwelling place of God's Spirit. That means that although you are living in the world, you are not a citizen "of" the world. Remember, you are a new creature ([2Cor 5:17](#)) and you have a role as an ambassador for Christ ([2Cor 5:20](#)). Through prayer and regular time in His Word, seek His direction on how best to fulfill that role.

In [2Corinthians 7:10](#) Paul contrasted godly sorrow with the sorrow of the world. What

does godly sorrow mean to you? What is the outcome of godly sorrow compared to the sorrow of the world? What can you do to be sure you experience godly sorrow rather than the sorrow of the world?

Consider your heart toward giving ([2Cor 9:6-7](#)). Are you a cheerful giver? Rather than relying on your own power to grow in this area, turn to God ([2Cor 9:8-9](#), [2Cor 9:15](#)). Through prayer, have an open conversation with God expressing any concerns you have and asking for His help.

List four things God empowers us to do in spiritual warfare ([2Cor 10:4-6](#)). What are the strongholds in your life that cause problems? What lines of reasoning tempt you into views that are contrary to God's Word? Claim the weapons of warfare that Paul described. Ask God to guide you in using them to overcome the strongholds and faulty thinking in your life.

Tellers who work in banks first study the appearance of real currency. They learn every nuance of the real thing. When a counterfeit comes across their eyes, they can immediately spot it. That's the idea Paul conveyed in [2Corinthians 11:1-4](#), [13-15](#). Paul discussed the importance of knowing the **truth** and being able to immediately spot the counterfeit. How well do YOU know the truth? What are you doing to learn more about the truth?

Paul noted that although he did not have an eloquent speaking voice, he did have knowledge ([2Cor 11:6](#)). Think about how you respond to speakers. Are you captive to their stage presence or pleasing voice? How hard do you have to work to get past the wrapping to objectively hear the words? One thing that will make it easier for you is to regularly read God's Word. If you do read the Bible regularly, when a speaker's words

are contrary to the Bible, they will sound like finger nails scratching a chalkboard. When they line up with God's Word, they will sound sweet.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Suffering. Trials. Pain. Although these are not fun, **times of difficulty usually bring about the most growth in our lives (Heb 12:5-7)**. Read **1Corinthians 1:3-7** and place yourself into the story. Discuss times when you were able to comfort others because of the pain you experienced. You might have been on the receiving end of someone's comfort because they had a story of comfort from their experiences. Understanding this perspective in the midst of our trials is key to developing perseverance!

Discuss the differences between the old covenant (Law) and the new testament (Grace) (**2Cor 3:6-18**). List them side-by-side.

Law	Grace

Paul said Moses' veil served to hide the fading of God's glory (**2Cor 3:13-18, Exo 34:35**). It was unsettling to see that it did not last. Through Christ, the faces of believers are unveiled. With the veil gone, God shines in and we shine out. We serve to reflect Christ. **Receivers become reflectors.** Discuss ways to be the best reflector possible.

Have you ever thought it would be fun to be a **super hero**? Encourage members in your group to tell what super powers they would most like to have. Then read **2Corinthians 4:7**. Discuss why it is better that we do not

have super powers. What is the purpose of our weaknesses?

2Corinthians 5:17 is one of the most amazing verses in all of Scripture. As a group read this verse slowly, **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."** Take note of what each portion of the text means and what it means to you...

- "If" -
- "anyone" -
- "is" -
- "in Christ" -
- "new creation" -
- "old things have passed away" -
- "all things have become new" -

Paul pointed out that, since the Old Testament prophets, God has called us to separate ourselves from the world (**2Cor 6:14-16**). How does this underline Paul's point about the issue of being unequally yoked? **Holy** living means living **wholly** unto God. In what ways does this become more difficult for those who are unequally yoked?

What impressed Paul about the giving of the churches in Macedonia (2Cor 8:1-15)?

According to verse 12 what is the key characteristic of a giving person? Compare this to verse 8. Rather than commanding the Corinthians to give a certain amount, Paul encouraged them to give generously. Why?

Paul cautions against comparing ourselves with one another (2Cor 10:12-13, 16-17).

Doing so can skew our view so that we either think too highly or too harshly of

ourselves. What are some practical ways to keep a realistic view of ourselves?

It says in [2Corinthians 11:14](#) that Satan, our enemy, transforms himself into an “angel of light.” He masquerades as a pretender and fools many people in the process. In what ways does he present lies as truth and truth as lies? In [Genesis 3](#) notice the ways in which Satan became an “angel of light” by over-promising and under-delivering!

God gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh” ([2Cor 12:7-10](#)). Although we don’t know exactly what this was, many scholars believe it was a problem with his eyes. Paul prayed three times for Jesus to remove this. God denied his prayers. Notice what God told Paul. It’s a

great reminder that God answers in three ways.

- When the answer is NO, God wants us to KNOW.
- When the answer is YES, God wants us to GO.
- When the answer is WAIT, God wants us to GROW.

Discuss times when God has given you a “thorn in the flesh” and how you handled His answers to your prayers of deliverance.

Discuss how your small group can become complete, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and live in peace ([2Cor 13:11](#)).

Leadership Principles from 2Corinthians

Living Letter

Your life is an open letter ([2Cor 3:1-3](#)). Think about the influence you have as a leader. In what ways are your relationships building your **letter of recommendation**? When you nurture and grow others, they become a visible part of your letter of recommendation.

Cost of Victory

Godly leaders act in love and truth regardless of the cost ([2Cor 4:5](#)). **Victory costs!** Paul knew this from the very beginning of his life as a believer. The Lord said about Paul, “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” ([Acts 9:16](#)). This realization did not discourage Paul. He knew that present afflictions would increase his glory beyond ([2Cor 4:17-18](#)). Have you begun to see things from Paul’s optimistic perspective? Pray for yourself and other leaders to focus on that future glory and willingly pay the cost of victory.

Give an Account

Leadership is stewardship. It’s temporary and you’re accountable. Spiritual leaders know they must give an account of their leadership to God ([2Cor 5:10-11](#)). They do not settle for moving people **toward** the destination God has for them. They want to see God **achieve** His purposes through those people.

You As Leader

Compare Paul’s view of his ministry to your view of your ministry ([2Cor 6:3-10](#)). **How do you think others would describe your leadership?** What you do reflects not only on you, but also on your ministry. Consider Paul’s humility as a leader, seeking to do right without expecting any glory. What difference does this make for a leader? What differentiates you as a leader in God’s eyes?

Tough on Issues, Easy on People

People make mistakes. How do you respond when someone who follows you makes a mistake? Sometimes you have to call out bad behavior (like Paul did with the Corinthians). With what spirit do you “call out” your followers? Can you be like Paul, tough on issues and easy on people ([2Cor 7:8-11](#))? What difference will this make in the growth of followers?

Example in Giving

What responsibility do leaders have to give back their time, talents, and treasures?

Do you create an environment of “giving” among your followers? As a leader, do you set an example in your giving? How true are the following for you?

- I give my whole self first ([2Cor 8:5](#)).
- I give proportionately ([2Cor 8:12-14](#)).
- I give generously ([2Cor 9:6](#)).
- I give cheerfully ([2Cor 9:7](#)).

Protect Them

When someone endangers those under your care, what is your response? Notice Paul’s concern for the Corinthians and how

he reacted to the damage the false apostles were doing ([2Cor 11](#)). He began with a direct attack then pointed out how he was different from the false apostles. What can you take from Paul’s example to use for the next time you need to protect yourself or others?

Examine Your Spiritual State

Paul told the Corinthians to examine themselves ([2Cor 13:5](#)). It is easy to get preoccupied with day-to-day responsibilities. Then, one day you wake up and wonder who you are and how you got where you are now. As a leader, how often do you examine your spiritual state? Before you begin your daily Bible reading, ask God to help you examine your spiritual state as you read His Word.

Litmus Test

A good litmus test for great leadership is how a person uses authority and power. In [2Corinthians 13:10](#), Paul gave an example of how he leveraged his authority, using it for edification rather than destruction. As a leader, are you using your authority to build up or tear down people?

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter. Try these:

01. How we can use our trials to help others in suffering	02. Why it is important to forgive people
03. Why Paul did not need a recommendation letter	04. How God can use all our human sufferings for good
05. What God gave us to help reconcile others to Him	06. When we can partner spiritually with unbelievers
07. What seven characteristics indicate godly sorrow	08. How financial giving reveals your maturity and love
09. The type of giver God loves	10. What God says about comparing yourself to others
11. What Paul said Satan can appear to be	12. How Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a benefit to him
13. Why people are to examine themselves spiritually	