

ORDINARY

2 CORINTHIANS 1-7



2 CORINTHIANS

Term 1	Passage	Title	Preaching Date
Week 1	1:1-11	God of Comfort	May 1st 2022
Week 2	1:12-22	Faithful God, Faithful Servants	May 8th 2022
Week 3	1:23-2:11	Loving the Fallen	May 15th 2022
Week 4	2:12-3:6	God-Given Competence	May 22nd 2022
Week 5	3:7-18	Glory - Faded or Permanent	May 29th 2022
Week 6	4:1-15	Outwardly and Inwardly	June 5th 2022
Week 7	4:16-5:10	A Transforming Hope	June 12th 2022
Week 8	5:11-21	Knowing the Lord- Fear and Love	June 19th 2022
Week 9	6:1-7:1	Dangerous Liaisons	June 26th 2022
Week 10	7:2-16	A Plea to Wayward Children	July 3rd 2022

The Bible in Two Years

Week	Passage 1	Passage 2	Passage 3
1	2 Cor 1:1-11	Acts 18 & 19	Psalms 22-26
2	2 Cor 1:12-24	Acts 20-21	Psalms 27-31
3	2 Cor 2:1-11	Acts 22-23	Psalms 32-36
4	2 Cor 2:12-3:6	Acts 24-26	Exodus 19,20, 24
5	2 Cor 3:7-18	Acts 27-28	Exodus 32-34
6	2 Cor 4:1-15	Romans 6-8	Psalms 115-118
7	2 Cor 4:16-5:10	Romans 9-11	Psalms 119
8	2 Cor 5:11-21	Romans 12-13	Psalms 120-124
9	2 Cor 6:1-7:1	Romans 14-15	Psalms 125-129
10	2 Cor 7:2-16	Romans 16	Psalms 130-134

TERM 2 2022

What is the goal of these notes?

The goal is to grow your ability to read the bible. Bible reading is essential to Christian growth and survival but it's a skill that only develops with practice. Indeed because of the spiritual apathy that's part of our fallen nature the desire to read only grows with practice! The bible is an extraordinary book. It has changed people, nations and the flow of history. That's unsurprising since it's God's book and contains His wisdom for life. Yet, bible reading in some ways is no different to reading any other book. These notes will assist you in developing skills which will increasingly enable you to feed yourself from the bible and help others do the same.

Three ways to use these notes

1. Personal reading

Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day. Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray asking God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

Use the section at the end of each week to prepare for your Growth Group. Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group. Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

JOHN 5-10

An Introduction to 2 Corinthians

This is the second letter from Paul to the Corinthians in the Bible. From the text of the two letters, it seems that these were possibly letters 2 and 4 or 1 and 3 in a series of letters from the apostle to the troubled church in Corinth.

It's apparent that Paul's relationship with the church at Corinth is complex. They were a young church but immature and unhappy that Paul had not visited them. It seems that there are other 'teachers' in Corinth vying for their affections by running Paul's ministry down, saying something like, "How could someone as weak and hopeless as Paul be the authentic apostle?". The result is that a big part of this letter is a defence of Paul's apostolic ministry and an associated defence of the gospel.

It is also clear that some in the church have been strikingly ungodly, which was the occasion for Paul's "Severe Letter".

The first half of 2 Corinthians, which we are considering this term, is a majestic statement of the Christian worldview and the relation of this view to spreading the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians has a wealth of passages that are classic memory verses some of these will be pointed out along the way – if you don't know them already, pick a few and try to memorise them.

3-1-1 Prayer

We all care for friends and family who don't know Jesus and this should be reflected in our prayers. List below the names of 3 such people you can be praying for once a week for one minute.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

NOTES

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

Day 1

READ 2 COR 1:1-11

Repeated words or ideas are an obvious clue to the author's main point.

1. There are a few prominent words in this passage. Circle the most frequent key word, underline a second if you can find one and if there is a third put a box around it.

2. What can you find out about Paul and his troubles?

3. What are 3 helpful conclusions we could draw from Paul's experience of trouble?

PRAY: We are quick to lose heart in times of trouble. Ask God to deepen your conviction now so you are well prepared for any future troubles.

GOD OF COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Praise to the God of All Comfort

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

Day 2

READ 2 COR 1:5-10 & ACTS 19:23-41

We have no idea what Paul experienced in “Asia” ie the Roman Province of Asia Minor. The events in Acts 19 almost certainly occurred before 1 Corinthians was written but Acts is always an important source of information about Paul’s ministry experience.

1. Look closely, and list all you find out about Paul’s suffering in the province of Asia.

2. The attack of the silversmiths flagged that the gospel would always bring persecution from those whose livelihood was threatened by it.

Are there sources from which you personally expect gospel persecution? Are you satisfied that you deal with persecution in a God honouring way?

3. Consider 2 Cor 12:7-10. If this “thorn in the flesh” was part of Paul’s suffering in Asia, what encouragement can you find in it?

PRAY: Pray that God will grant you the conviction to stand firm amidst persecution.

GOD OF COMFORT

Day 3

READ 2 COR 1:1-2

An important interpretative clue in reading any letter is the information about the recipients and the sender. This introduction follows the convention of typical letters in this era but Paul has added his own distinctively Christian content. As we'll see the relationship between Paul and the church at Corinth was tense.

1. What do you find out about Paul and why might he remind them of this?

2. What does Paul emphasise about the recipients and why might this matter?

3. What do you find out about God and how might this letter enable you to experience the blessings Paul mentions?

PRAY: Ask God to deepen your appreciation of His grace as you continue to read this letter.

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

Day 4

READ 2 COR 1:3-7

The life of the Christian is a constant experience of relating to a God whose purposes are greater than ours and need to be understood. Hence it is good to ask of every passage "What do we learn of God and how should that shape our lives?"

1. What do you learn of God and His purposes in these verses?
2. According to these verses, why is there a need for all Christians to persevere amid suffering?
3. "We share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ." (1:5) and in the "comfort" received by His people. (1:8) What are some of the implications of this? (see also Col 1:24; 1 Pet 4:13)

PRAY: We have a solidarity with Christ and with our brothers and sisters which will affect us spiritually, emotionally and even physically. Ask God to fit you better for this responsibility.

GOD OF COMFORT

Day 5

READ 2 COR 1:8-11

One important skill in bible reading is to be able to summarise the key point of a passage.

1. In the space below write a brief summary of verses 8 & 9.

2. In the passage this week you have seen several purposes given for our experience of suffering. (v's 4, 6, 9) List these below.

3. Consider the promise in v 10. Is this specifically for Paul's apostolic band or also for us? If the second, in what sense can we always be sure that God will "deliver us"?

PRAY: Noting Paul's certainty about our prayers in v's 10 & 11 consider those brothers or sisters who are suffering and pray for them now.

WEEK 1: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What do you find out about Paul and his sufferings in this passage?

2. Why do you learn about God's purposes in suffering?

3. Why is there a need for all Christians to persevere amidst suffering?

BACKGROUND

The following background is very helpful in understanding this letter.

Paul's relationship with the Corinthians began in 50-52 AD when he spent 18 turbulent months establishing the church there. (Acts 18) A letter from them to him resulted in Paul sending the the letter we call 1 Corinthians which revealed serious disciplinary issues. Paul made a second "painful" visit (2:1) in 55 or 56 AD (2 Cor 13:2) to deal with just such an issue and it didn't go well! As a result he considered making another visit to sort things out (1:16) but decided that it may make things worse. (2:1) Instead he sent Titus with yet another letter and anxiously awaited his return. (2:12,13) This letter is Paul's response having finally heard from Titus (7:5-7)

It is apparent that the new believers in Corinth did not warm to Paul, being ready to believe a whole range of criticisms against him: that he was worldly and fickle with his plans (1:17); that he lacked courage (1:23) and strength (4:16); that he was weak in speech (10:10, 11:6); a mad, fool (11:1,16); who breached convention in declining their financial support (11:6; 12:13-16) and lacked the miraculous credentials of a true minister (12:1, 11, 12). All these allegations were fuelled through the recent visit of a band of Jewish 'false-apostles' (11:5,12,23) whose gospel contradicted Paul's and emphasised their own mystical credentials.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24

Day 1

READ 2 COR 1:12-24

The “tone” of a passage is an important clue to the relationships between sender and recipient. There is a change in tone between this passage and the one we read last week.

1. How would you describe the tone of this passage?
2. Which statements suggest this to you?
3. The issue at stake seems to be Paul’s reliability in visiting them as planned. What reasons can you find in the passage for Paul’s change of plans? What warning might this have for us about the way we relate to others? (1 Cor 13:4-7)

PRAY: Relationships take great care and effort. Ask that God will grow you in wisdom and love to bring blessing to others in all your relationships.

FAITHFUL GOD, FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Day 2

READ 2 COR 1:12-17

Reading a NT epistle is like listening to one side of a phone conversation. We can try to reconstruct from the response what the other party is saying. That's one of the skills to practise today.

1. What implied criticisms of Paul can you infer from what he writes here?
2. Consider v 12. Paul cites two ways of conducting our relationships- one based on worldly wisdom and the other based on God's grace. What might it look like to conduct relationships based on God's grace?
3. In what ways has God's grace shaped your character? In what ways would you like it to do so?

PRAY: God's graciousness in dealing with others is a powerful impetus to living the new life. Pray that this letter will deepen your appreciation of it so that it continues to make you more like Christ.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24

Day 3

READ 2 COR 1:17-20

To summarise the flow of the author's logic is an important bible reading skill. Let's try it today.

1. Summarise v's 17-20

2. Reliability is a crucial mark of godliness in our relationships. What drives the apostle Paul to seek to be reliable?

3. What important interpretative principle is conveyed by v 20? How should it shape our bible reading?

Spurgeon says of v 20: *"We might never have had this precious verse if Paul had not been so ill-treated by these men of Corinth. They did him great wrong, and caused him much sorrow of heart ... yet you see how the evil was overruled by God for good, and through their unsavoury gossip and slander this sweet sentence was pressed out of Paul."*

PRAY: Thank God for His faithfulness and goodness. Every promise He has made finds it's "yes" in Jesus therefore we never fear!

FAITHFUL GOD, FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Day 4

READ 2 COR 1:21-22 & GAL 5:19-26

While the first step in bible reading is to follow the author's flow of logic, an important next step is to enquire about his doctrine. In our day a lack of doctrinal understanding means that many Christians remain shallow, unstable and lacking in discernment.

1. The Holy Spirit is a seal of God's ownership. (see also Eph 1:13,14) How does Rev 7:1-4 picture the significance of the Spirit's sealing work?
2. The Holy Spirit is also a "deposit guaranteeing what is to come". How does this encourage you for your heavenly future?
3. In v 20 God makes "both us and you stand firm in Christ". How might God, the Holy Spirit accomplish this in us? (see Phil 2:12,13; Gal 5:19-26)

"God places the "seal" of the Holy Spirit on those who believe...He protects and works to bring about eternal life in them...He does not guard us apart from our faith, but only by working through our faith..."

Wayne Grudem

PRAY: Give thanks to God for the priceless gift to us in Christ of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to strengthen your faith so that you will never fall.

WEEK 2: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24

Day 5

READ 2 COR 1:12-24

1. It was out of concern for the Corinthians that Paul did not visit them as originally planned even though they were highly critical of him. What can we learn from this?

2. What do you appreciate most in Paul's attitude as a leader in v's 23 & 24? What kind of convictions are necessary to this attitude?

3. All of us lead in different spheres. What is one attribute that you need to develop as a leader?

PRAY: Who has God used to keep you steadfast and growing in the Christian life?

FAITHFUL GOD, FAITHFUL SERVANTS

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. There's a cool change in the tone of this passage. Which statements suggest this to you?

2. Reliability is a crucial mark of godliness in our relationships. What drives the apostle Paul to seek to be reliable?

3. What might it look like to conduct relationships based on God's grace?

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-11

Relationships in the Christian life are one of the great blessings God gives us yet because we are fallen creatures they require great wisdom, gentleness and sensitivity. God is the origin and author of these attributes but they are seen beautifully in Paul and ironically are missed by many of the brothers in Corinth who are the needy objects of his sensitive love!

2 Corinthians 2:1-11

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. **2:**¹ So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. ² For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? ³ I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. ⁴ For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

⁵ If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. ⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰ Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

LOVING THE FALLEN

Day 1

READ 2 COR 1:23-2:11

1. Broken relationships always cause pain. In the printed version of the passage above, underline all the words which give a hint of this pain.

2. The pain of relationships presents everyone with choices. What do you think these choices are? What is the only Christian choice?

Consider the following: *"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."*

C.S. Lewis "The Four Loves"

PRAY: Relationships present the offer of great pain and unsurpassable earthly joy. Pray that God will deepen your capacity to relate with wisdom, sensitivity, vulnerability and God-given strength.

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-11

Day 2

READ 2 COR 1:23-2:11

1. We have considered the value of summarising before. At Corinth there had been serious sin requiring pastoral discipline. Try to summarise why this matter had caused Paul NOT to come as he had planned.

2. Identify the attributes of Paul in dealing with this man and with the Corinthian church as a whole?

3. When serious sin in a church is not dealt with, what are the possible results?

PRAY: How well do you cope with conflict? Pray that God will help you come to the right mind in this. Pray also for those leaders whose role it is to help the church in such matters.

LOVING THE FALLEN

Day 3

READ 2 COR 2:1-4 & 2 COR 7:5-16

Remember how the reading of a NT letter is like listening to one side of a phone conversation? The passage today helps us see something of what has happened in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. Having said he'd come to them he took another course instead. Find out what it was below:

1. Instead of visiting what did Paul do and why?
2. The Holy Spirit in His sovereignty has not seen fit to preserve Paul's "painful letter" but what can you work out about it from 2 Cor 7:5-16?
3. We all fear pain; pain to ourselves and the causing of pain to others. Few of us do this lightly. If you are in a position of responsibility, when might pain be necessary?

PRAY: We need great discernment in any relationship if we are to work out when pain is necessary and how to deal with it well. Pray for yourself and for others in this.

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-11

Day 4

READ 1 COR 5:1-13

The identity of the man indicated in these verses and the nature of his sin are not definitely known. However it is just possible that this passage refers to the man in 1 Corinthians 5 who was involved in an incestuous relationship with his step-mother. Paul needed to discipline this man despite the initial lack of support from the church. Even if this is not the same case, it will supply important information for us about the reason and nature of church discipline.

1. What can you find out about this previous episode?
2. What can you learn about the general response of the Corinthian church to it?
3. To “hand this man over to Satan” (v 5) means to put him out of the fellowship as a measure that seeks to care. What reasons does the passage give as to why church discipline may sometimes be necessary?

PRAY: A sentimental age is tempted to shy away from tough love but sometimes the alternative is unloving. Pray that our love for others and especially for our church family is shaped by knowledge and depth of insight. (Phil 1:9,10)

LOVING THE FALLEN

Day 5

READ 2 COR 2:5-11

1. What action has now been taken by the Corinthian church and what does this reveal about their progress?
2. What action does Paul now urge them to take?
3. A failure to take this next step could lead to temptation (v11). Can you imagine ways in which this might come about?

PRAY: Tough love is hard to receive and hard to give. Ask God to enable you to do both should that ever be necessary.

WEEK 3: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-11

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Broken relationships always cause pain. What words in this passage give a hint of this pain?

2. What reasons does this passage give as to why church discipline may sometimes be necessary?

3. What attributes will we need if we are to help deal with serious sin in a church?

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-3:6

Day 5

READ 2 COR 2:12-17

Some information will be needed to help you with today's reading. Titus had been commissioned in Ephesus by Paul with the task of delivering to Corinth, the "painful" lost letter about how to deal with the wrong doer in last week's passage. Paul had arranged to meet Titus back in Troas afterwards for a report on the letter's reception. Today you will need cross references to help you.

1. For those who know the mind of Christ, trouble within the body of believers brings great anguish. How does Paul indicate this?
2. Find a cross reference to v 13 within this letter (use those in your bible or find one via google) to describe the news brought by Titus when he and Paul finally met. Also describe its impact on Paul.

Verse 14 reveals an odd feature in letters dictated and not written by the author. We might have expected v's 14 etc to express thanks to God for the news brought by Titus. Instead Paul begins an extended digression about the nature of true gospel ministry over against the false ministry conducted by his opponents- the "super apostles!"

3. For the apostle Paul, all life revolves around the progress of his Christian brothers and sisters. To what extent is this the case for you? Answer by rating it 1-5 with '5' being high importance.

PRAY: The progress of God's people is His own great concern. Pray that it might increasingly be yours.

GOD-GIVEN COMPETENCE

Day 2

READ 2 COR 2:14-16

Background information is important to understanding the word pictures in the bible. The “triumphal procession” was a victory march led by the commanders of the Roman army. Incense was burned and defeated foes, chained and paraded through the city as the military leaders were cheered on.

1. In this word picture of Paul’s ministry, what was God’s position in the procession and what was Paul’s? (the NIV has removed the ambiguity in this by adding words to v 14.
2. From these verses, describe the varying impact of Paul’s ministry among those to whom he went. In what sense might those who bring the gospel be to some the “aroma that brings death”?
3. The gospel always divides its hearers. What is the effect of this truth on our confidence to share it?

PRAY: Pray for your 3-1-1 contacts. Ask that you might be to them the “aroma that brings life.”

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-3:6

Day 3

READ 2 COR 2:16-3:5

Now at last Paul mentions his opponents- the “super-apostles” directly. This theme of “peddling the word of God for profit” was an obstacle to Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians. Why? Let’s see.

1. What can you infer about the “super-apostles” from v 17. Find a cross reference to v 17 (google it if you need to) to find out more about these men.

2. In contrast to his opponents, what do you learn about Paul’s convictions about Christian ministry?

Paul’s opponents played on a cultural norm, where travelling orators would charge their audience according to the proficiency of their “performance”. Paul on the other hand saw that it was important that the messenger be consistent with the message of free grace. Ironically this caused the Corinthians to undervalue both him and his ministry.

3. Consider the paragraph above. How might Paul’s conviction result in his statement in v 16? What is his answer to this question in 2 Cor 3:5?

PRAY: The character of the gospel messenger should be consistent with the message of grace we share. This is a huge ask. Thank God that our competence also comes by His grace.

GOD-GIVEN COMPETENCE

Day 4

READ 2 COR 3:1-3

Paul's ministry suffered from a God-ordained problem. He was not one of the original disciples so his authority rested on his commission from God- a reality that was unseen. His opponents brought "letters of recommendation" but he had none.

1. Paul points to the Corinthians themselves as his letter of recommendation. What might it be about them that he had in mind?

2. Remember that they were an immature and troubled church with a low opinion of Paul. What does this say about him as a pastor and God as the one at work in them?

3. Paul had an optimism that God is always at work changing His people. How would that help us in any ministry?

PRAY: Ask God to be at work in you and in others to change them so they are a "letter of commendation" from Him, visible to those who don't know Him.

WEEK 4: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-3:6

Day 5

READ 2 COR 3:1-5

One problem with breaking up a passage into small bites is that we can easily lose the thread of what has taken place before. This passage will end by introducing something of the doctrine of the “super-apostles. We’ll pick it up next week. Today we’ll practice the skill of following the “flow of logic”.

1. In v 1 you get the hint of an implied criticism of Paul by his opponents, “He is boastful and too confident.” In what instances might unbelievers say the same of the clear minded Christian?

2. How does Paul answer this implied criticism about his “self confidence” in v’s 4-6?

3. How does God make us “competent” for the work of the gospel? See the following: 2 Cor 4:7; 2 Cor 10:4,5; Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 4:16,17

PRAY: Any confidence we have to stand on the day of judgement and any competence we have to help others do so, comes from God alone. Pray that He will work through us.

GOD-GIVEN COMPETENCE

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In contrast to his opponents, what do you learn about Paul's convictions about Christian ministry?
2. The gospel always divides its hearers. What is the effect of this truth on our confidence to share it?
3. Paul had an optimism that God is always at work changing His people. How would that help us in any ministry?

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18

Day 1

READ 2 COR 3:6-11

1, In the passage below, underline all the expressions that speak of the old covenant and mark with another colour (or in brackets) all the expressions which speak of the new covenant.

⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

2. The old covenant in this passage is that which came through Moses at Mount Sinai. It was different from the covenant made with Abraham and was added later. How were people saved under the Abrahamic covenant? (See Rom 4:1-8)

3. The Mosaic covenant came from God so as Paul says, the law on which it is based "is holy, righteous and good". How then does it cause death? See Rom 7:9-13.

PRAY: Salvation by faith alone has always been God's way. Give thanks to Him for His mercy and goodness and pray that your 3-1-1 contacts see the blessing of this great gospel.

GLORY - FADED OR PERMANENT

Day 2

READ 2 COR 3:7-11

1. These verses contain a number of contrasts between the old covenant and the new. List them below:

The old kills

The new gives life

2. Some Christian sects maintain an old covenant approach with priests, ritual and law-keeping deemed to be necessary as a means of salvation. Judging by this passage is there now any place for the old covenant?

PRAY: There is in all of us a spirit of legalism which can lead us back to old covenant religion. Pray that God protects you and those you love from that.

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18

Day 3

READ EXODUS 34:29-35

When Moses brought the law down from Mount Sinai on the first occasion the Israelites had already fallen into idolatry. In anger Moses smashed the stone tablets and then sought God's forgiveness for the nations. Having secured this in Exodus 33, Moses then returns to the mountain to secure a second set.

1. In this passage, when does Moses wear the veil, when does he take it off and what is the apparent reason behind these actions?

2. When they first came to Mount Sinai, the Israelites were forbidden to see the glory of the Lord (Exodus 19:20-22) out of concern for their lives. In Exodus 34 do they see the Lord's glory at any point? How?

3. Moses removed his veil to tell the people God's word. Leaving aside clarity of communication, what might be the significance of that fact?

PRAY: The old covenant doesn't lack glory but if we had eyes to see we would immediately recognize how much greater is the glory of what we have in Jesus. Ask God to keep showing you this.

GLORY - FADED OR PERMANENT

Day 4

READ 2 COR 3:12-16

In these verses, Moses "veil" becomes a metaphor for Jewish blindness. Many people see but do not really "see". They hear but don't understand. This was and is the case with Israel says the apostle Paul

1. *"Therefore since we have such a hope we are very bold."* (v 12) What truths mentioned concerning the new covenant hope make the believer "bold"?

2. On the plains of Moab before they entered the promised land, Moses reiterated the Sinai covenant to the nation of Israel. What does he say about them in Deut 29:1- 4?

3. Google "ever seeing but never perceiving". What bible passages appear? Why would God allow this to happen to people?

Note: many versions struggle to render verse 13 into English. Suffice it to say that Moses was not so insecure that he wore a veil to prevent the Israelites from seeing the glory on his face from fading away! Rather, as you saw yesterday it was to protect them from the wrath of God.

PRAY: The "veil" that covers people's minds is not just for Jews. (2 Cor 4:4) The blindness of sin is only taken away when by the power of the Spirit, people turn to Jesus. Pray again that God would do this for your 3-1-1 contacts.

WEEK 5: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18

Day 5

READ 2 COR 3:7-18

1. Verse 18 gives a wonderful summary of how Christians who've had their "veil" removed, grow in Christlikeness. What is the key action to pursue?
2. I'm sure that you long to grow more like Jesus. If so, how could you more intentionally "contemplate the Lord's glory"? (v 18) Question 3 on day 3 will give you a hint.
3. Try to draw a flow diagram to capture the logic of this passage. Hint: break it into 3 parts (v's 7-11; 12-16; 17-18)

PRAY: Ask God to help you, as you read the bible and go about your weekly business to see his glory ever more clearly so that you might become more and more like Jesus.

GLORY - FADED OR PERMANENT

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In what various ways is the old covenant contrasted with the new?

2. Verse 18 gives a wonderful summary of how Christians who've had their "veil" removed, grow in Christlikeness. What is the key action to pursue?

3. How can we more intentionally "contemplate the Lord's glory"? (v 18)

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-15

Many in churches today despise arguments over doctrine. “Why create division when we’re all one family?” This is a frequent objection which does have an element of truth. We ought to take great care to consider the issues over which we divide. This chapter however, will begin to show how a different gospel creates different people. Paul’s opponents had sought to smear and discredit him behind his back. Nothing less was at stake in this than the salvation of the whole Roman province of Achaia and the church of Corinth specifically.

Day 1

READ 2 COR 4:1-18

In v 1 Paul speaks of “this ministry”. His was the ministry of the new covenant while his opponents preached a gospel bound up with an obsolete Sinai covenant.

1. Reading between the lines, how does Paul contrast himself with his Jewish opponents in these verses?

2. List the ways in which the gospel of grace shaped Paul’s character and ministry.

PRAY: When the gospel is well understood it creates servants who know their weakness yet persevere in ministering to the end. Pray that this will be the case in you.

OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY

Day 2

READ 2 COR 4:1-4

While there is a need for big picture bible reading which captures the main themes, there is also a need for close bible reading which traces the author's logic.

1. Why does having "this ministry" "through God's mercy" prevent Paul and his companions from losing heart? (v 1)

2. Why does having this ministry "through God's mercy" cause Paul to "renounce secret and shameful ways...deception...distorting the word of God? (V's 1,2)

3. The "god of this age" is Satan. What are some means he uses to "blind the minds of unbelievers"? (v 4) What work of God is needed to enable the gospel to be understood by those who are perishing? (V 6)

PRAY: If you've seen the glory of Christ in the gospel it is only because of the kindness of God. Give thanks to Him for this miracle and pray again for your 3-1-1 friends.

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-15

Day 3

READ 2 COR 4:5-12

“Triumphalism” is a term given to some versions of Christianity which tend to glorify the gospel minister and his confident claims. The true gospel disavows triumphalism and the true gospel minister knows it.

1. What is it about the gospel of Jesus that creates such willing servants? (v 5)

Jesus said in John 12:24: *“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it does it produces many seeds.”*

2. Jesus called all who follow Him to die to themselves as he did. With this in mind, what does Paul mean in v 10 that we “carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body?”

3. There is a sadness in v 12. Paul’s life of sacrifice meant gain for his readers but they cared little for him. Paraphrase this verse by amplifying the words “death”, “life” and “work” to capture the sense of what Paul wrote. If you find this hard, check the “Amplified Bible” version which has done the first 2 for you.

PRAY: Are there people who have laboured sacrificially over you to ensure that you enjoy the life of the gospel? Give thanks to God for them.

OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY

Day 4

READ 2 COR 4:13-15

One important clue to growing in Christian conviction is to note the convictions which drove the authors of scripture. Consider that today.

1. Identify the Psalm quoted in v 13 and read it. How might this Psalm have been a comfort to Paul who had recently been close to death? (1:8,9)

2. What motives for Paul's perseverance in ministry can you find in this paragraph?

3. In v 14, is the resurrection power of Jesus something to be experienced in the future or in the present? What about in Romans 8:9-11? What about in v 16?

PRAY: If we are to be good servants of Christ we will need firm, God-given convictions. These of course are found in the scriptures. Pray that God will deepen you as he deepened the apostle Paul.

WEEK 6: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-15

Day 5

READ 2 COR 4:16-18

Paul's opponents considered him to be weak and ready to give up on his ministry. Didn't he remain in Ephesus writing a letter rather than coming to them? But Paul was far from giving up and we need something of his conviction if we too are to serve faithfully.

1. Outwardly, inwardly, seen, unseen, momentary troubles, eternal glory, wasting away, renewed. These fall into 2 different groups. List the convictions expressed in these verses which drove Paul's Christian life?

2. The wasting away of ageing and death is deeply discouraging to the worldly man or woman. But not so the thoughtful Christian. Why?

3. Consider v 17 carefully. Troubles don't automatically achieve for us an eternal glory because we can respond to them wrongly. What conviction is needed to ensure that they do? (Hint: follow the logic of v's 17 & 18 together)

PRAY: In "The Cost of Discipleship", Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.". It takes new men and women to live the Christian life. Ask God to continue to deepen and renew you but remember that this will require constant death to self.

OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Reading between the lines, how does Paul contrast himself with his Jewish opponents in these verses?

2. The wasting away of ageing is deeply discouraging to the worldly person but not the thoughtful Christian. Why?

3. Troubles don't automatically achieve for us an eternal glory because we can respond to them wrongly. What conviction is needed to ensure that they do?

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:10

Our God gives His children hope. For the worldly man or woman there is only one age, which will continue without change until the earth is destroyed. The Old Testament revealed two ages: the old which would give way to the new at the coming of the Messiah.

The New Testament reveals more: there are indeed two ages but at the coming of the Messiah there is an overlap. The Messianic age invades the old era, bringing a foretaste of what is to come. It means that the Christian is full of hope unlike the worldly person.

Scottish theologian James Denney put it well, *"The decay of the outward man in the godless (person) is a melancholy spectacle, for it is the decay of everything."* This present life is all they have and with it they pass away. Not so the believer as Paul will explain.

A TRANSFORMING HOPE

Day 1

READ 2 COR 4:16-18

Last week we didn't define the "outward" and the "inward" self but it will help this week to do that.

1. Paul speaks on occasions of the "old self" but this is not the same as the "outward" nature. What can you find out about the old self" in Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22-24 & Col 3:9,10.

2. The outward self isn't the old sinful nature because clearly it includes the physical body. What can you infer about the outward self from these verses? (see esp v 18)

3. What does it mean for you to "fix our eyes, not on what is seen but on what is unseen"?

PRAY: Living in a secular world which is reluctant to consider anything more than our physical existence it is hard to fix our eyes on eternal realities. We need immense help. Do you sense this? Pray that God will grant it.

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:10

Day 2

READ 2 COR 5:1-10

1. Paul in these verses contrasts the PRESENT age with the FUTURE age that awaits the Christian. Use two different colours to underline those words or phrases which refer to each age.

¹For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

A TRANSFORMING HOPE

2. The Christian's present life is not described as "nakedness". To be "naked" in this passage is to be disembodied. How is this present life described? When is this dwelling "destroyed"? (v 1)

3. There's a profound need to think about death. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us (Ecc 7:2-4) that it is better to go to the house of mourning than a house of feasting. Why?

PRAY: God assures us that our future is full of hope in a world which has little. Ask God to fill your heart with a deep sense of this.

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:10

Day 3

READ 2 COR 5:1- 5

Many think that Christians look forward to a spirit existence in heaven but not so. In the beginning God created us as “embodied spirits” and this is what He intends for us ultimately. How good is God in the consistency of His revelation to us!

1. How is our heavenly body described in this passage?
2. Good bible reading will involve us in asking, ‘Why did the author make that point here?’ Why for example, having described our future hope, might Paul introduce the idea of the Spirit as a deposit on this future? (See Rom 8:16)
3. How can we know if the Spirit is at work in us?

PRAY: The Spirit is constantly at work to assure us that God is our Father and that His words are true. Pray that He will be actively at work in you as you read.

A TRANSFORMING HOPE

Day 4

READ 2 COR 5:6-9

Paul uses three images to describe the Christian's eternal existence: an eternal house (v 1) ; to be further clothed v's 2-5); to be at home with the Lord (v's 6-9). The assurance of this future means that we, like Paul can always be "confident".

1. What is Paul's preference in these verses? Is this truly the case for you or do you have some doubts?

2. What is the logic of verses 8 & 9 together? That is, why does Paul make it his goal to please the Lord?

3. Many who have little appetite for godly living or evangelism find themselves in that state because they have an undeveloped hope of heaven. How can you strengthen that hope?

PRAY: Ask God to deepen and strengthen your hope of heaven.

WEEK 7: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-5:10

Day 5

READ 2 COR 5:9-11 & 1 COR 3:10-15

Pleasing the Lord is the true goal of God's children, both this side of heaven and on the other. (v 9)

1. Paul has given three motivations for godly living in these verses. The first was in v 8, the second in v 10 & the third in v 11. List them below.

-
-
-

Some readily discount the idea of a judgement for the children of God since we are saved by faith not works. But true faith always produces the works of a new life. (Eph 2:8-10)

2. What is this judgement about? (v 10 & 1 Cor 3:10-15)

3. What attitude does the knowledge of this judgement create in you? Why?

PRAY: The fear of v 11 is not craven terror but the sober reverence that comes from knowing that we have a Father who's holiness is awesome. Ask God to give you a reverent fear.

A TRANSFORMING HOPE

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. These verses contrast the PRESENT age with the FUTURE age that awaits us. Which words or phrases belong to each age?

2. What is the logic of verses 8 & 9 together? That is, why does Paul make it his goal to please the Lord?

3. How can we strengthen our hope of heaven?

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

Remember Paul's "super-apostle" opponents? They disparaged Paul and his ministry, commending instead an old covenant message. Paul by contrast has shown how the new covenant of Christ and his gift of the Spirit is God's extraordinary gift for sinful men and women facing judgement and death. This passage is therefore deeply autobiographical. It is his most comprehensive statement of the death of Christ and what it has achieved for us and contains many allusions to Paul's own conversion experience. It is not merely doctrine for him but fuel for worship.

Day 1

READ 2 COR 5:11-6:2

As stated above, Paul's opponents and their critique of him lie in the background to this passage. Yet his goal was to set forth the truth of the gospel, its impact on him and on all who take it to heart.

1. This passage falls into three (3) major blocks plus a few sub-sections. Try to break it up writing a title beside each part.

-
-
-

2. What are Paul's principal motivations in this passage?

3. How does the beginning of the passage match the end?

PRAY: As we said last week, the "fear of the Lord" is a healthy reverential awe which motivates all who know it to persuade others of the need to respond. Pray that it has this impact on you!

KNOWING THE LORD- FEAR AND LOVE

Day 2

READ 2 COR 5:11-13

It is a tragic indictment on the Corinthians that Paul felt that he, their father in the faith (2 Cor 12:11) needed to give them reason to speak boldly on his behalf to those who were slandering him.

1. Behind these words, what critique of Paul by his opponents can you see and what critique does Paul bring of them in return?

2. "Seen and unseen" are themes we saw in 4:18. As we consider those gospel ministers worthy of our commendation, what basis does Paul point to in these verses and what basis should we reject?

3. What kind of ministers and ministries can put too much stock in what is "seen" rather than in what is in the heart?

PRAY: We need discernment if we are to encourage faithful, Christ centred gospel ministers. Give thanks for those who have served you and pray that they will be rightly motivated.

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

Day 3

READ 2 COR 5:14-21

This passage has a major break after v 15 where Paul begins to explain the impact of the gospel on himself and on all who believe it. However, within the wider passage are a number of priceless expressions of the gospel which are worth gathering together.

1. There is a need to distinguish the gospel itself from the fruit it produces. Summarise four or five key gospel truths found in this passage listing the verses in which they are found.

-
-
-
-
-

2. Pick one verse from this passage worth memorising as a summary of the gospel.

3. Scripture memory is a great asset to evangelism, not so we can quote verses at others but so that we ourselves keep the truth close at hand. Why not type this verse somewhere into your phone as an aid to memorising it.

PRAY: Note the point of v 19; left to itself the world is estranged from God and needs to be reconciled. Jesus has done all that is needed to supply this gift. Pray for your 3-1-1 contacts that they may receive it.

KNOWING THE LORD- FEAR AND LOVE

Day 4

READ 2 COR 5:16-19

When anyone comes to Christ, part of being a new creation is an entirely new way of thinking. To live the Christian life we don't merely need new hearts but new minds.

1. What might it look like to regard other people from a worldly point of view?
2. What might it have looked like for Paul to regard Christ in this way?
3. How might it change us to regard Christian brothers and sisters as new creations for whom the old is gone?

PRAY: One key area in which our new life needs to be made visible is in our relationships with our families- both church family and earthly family. Ask God to help you grow in this to the praise of His glory.

WEEK 8: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

Day 5

READ 2 COR 5:20-6:2

Paul as an apostle was Christ's ambassador in a sense that is unrepeatable. But we likewise are Christ's ambassadors in a secondary but very real sense. This is a role that needs our attention.

1. Verse 20 is poorly rendered in the NIV. It is not "as though" God were making his appeal through us. He is making his appeal through us! How does this make you feel?

2. What might it look like for a person to "receive God's grace in vain"? (6:1)

The ministry of Paul's opponents has introduced "another Jesus" and "another gospel" making the following appeal necessary. 6:1-2 are a prime example of what Paul said in 5:11. "Knowing what it is to fear the Lord we seek to persuade others."

3. Paul is urgent in his gospel proclamation. Out of ten rate your gospel urgency. What might grow this aspect of your Christian life?

PRAY: It is hard to pray for others in the gospel and not be drawn to speak of it to them. Pray that God would make you urgent, both with the unconverted and with those in your church family.

KNOWING THE LORD- FEAR AND LOVE

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. The apostle Paul was a highly motivated Christian. What are his principal motivations in this passage?

2. What are some of the key gospel truths found in this passage?

3. How might it change us if we regard Christian brothers and sisters as new creations for whom the old is gone?

Prayer Points and Notes

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-7:1

Paul's battle against his opponents, the "super-apostles" was not a popularity contest. Paul was not merely feeling supplanted. He was deeply concerned that his spiritual children (6:13) were being attracted to "another Jesus, another Spirit and another gospel" (11:4). This was a matter of the deepest urgency and so the passage which follows was directed squarely at these 'super-apostles'. They thought little of Paul. He worked with his hands making tents to support himself. He refused to charge his hearers for the gospel. He was not an eloquent speaker. He suffered constantly. They were triumphalists! What does that mean? Consider this by Gordon Fee, a writer in the Pentecostal tradition.

"Triumphalistic theology (or Triumphalism) is a theology prevalent in many denominations but generally found in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles. Such a theology focuses on the Christian life being one of glory while neglecting that it is also to be one of suffering..."

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Day 1

READ 2 COR 2 COR 6:2-13

1. Paul's plea to the Corinthians in 6:13 is to open their hearts to him. How does encourage them to do that in v's 1-12? Which of these qualities might make you embarrassed about being associated with him?

2. Consider v's 4 & 5. What is it about normal healthy Christian life which means that we should expect some or even many of these trials? (2 Tim 3:12)

3. What are the "weapons of righteousness" in v 7? (hint: your cross references may help)

We increasingly inhabit a time and place in Western history when humility is perceived as a sign of weakness; when meekness is taken for a vice; when puff is more important than substance; when leadership, even in the church, frequently has more to do with politics, pizzazz and showmanship...than with spiritual maturity and conformity to Jesus Christ..."

D.A. Carson: "From Triumphalism to Maturity"

PRAY: It is possible that our reputations may suffer among others even if we're innocent. Paul's did- even among his own spiritual children. Pray that God will give you a desire to please Him rather than simply pleasing people.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-7:1

Day 2

READ 2 COR 6:11-7:4

It is often thought that verses 6:14-7:1 are a fragment which someone other than Paul has accidentally inserted into the text at this point. This is incredibly unlikely. God the Holy Spirit is sovereign over His word, controlling the text that's come down to us. So in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, this is the text we work with and the context is our best clue as to how we should tie it together.

1. Compare 6:11-13 and 7:2-4. What response does Paul want from the Corinthians?
2. Why might people think the verses in between 6:14-18 are out of place?
3. Think back. A few things have happened in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians to cause this sense of estrangement. What are they? (If you need a hint, check 1:12-2:11; 7:8-12; 11:2-5)

PRAY: Relationships among Christian brothers and sisters are precious and often need care to restore. Pray that God will give you the love, courage and conviction to do as Paul did.

DAINGEROUS LIAISONS

Day 3

READ 2 COR 6:14-7:1

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.” Verse 14 throughout history has had many applications and many misapplications! Paul doesn’t tell us in this instance precisely what partnerships he was warning us against. Here is where good interpretative skills are needed.

1. What can you find out about this “unequal yoking” from these verses?
2. In v 16 Paul quotes from Leviticus. Find the cross reference to this passage and read the first 13 verses. What was God warning His people against back there?
3. “Come out from them and be separate.” (v 17) In what ways should Christians be separate and in what ways should we not?

PRAY: We need great wisdom in living the Christian life. We’re to be in the world but not of it and uncontaminated by it. (John 17:14-19) Ask God to give you wisdom in walking this fine line.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-7:1

Day 4

READ 2 COR 6:17-7:1 & 1 COR 5:1-13

We're still working on what it means to be "yoked together with unbelievers" (6:14) and in what ways we should be separate (6:17). These verses are commonly applied to marriage, business partnerships and financial dependence on the world. Doubtless it has an application to these things but this was not Paul's major concern!

1. The events of 1 Cor 5:1-13 were most likely still a source of pain in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians. (7:12) What lessons should they have learned from Paul's words in 1 Cor 5?
2. However, this was not the only sense in which the Corinthians needed to be separate. What clues do the following passages give as to whom they needed to separate from? 2 Cor 11:4-5; 13-15; 18-21
3. We all have an attitude to false teaching, from "it doesn't matter much" through to "I hate it with a passion!" Paul says "purify yourself from everything that contaminates. Do you feel as strongly as Paul about false teaching?

PRAY: Augustine observed that one result of our sinful nature is that our loves are disordered. We don't love things we ought to love or hate things we ought to hate. And we hate and love things to the wrong degree. Ask that God would make you wise in regard to how you respond to various kinds of false teaching.

DAINGEROUS LIAISONS

Day 5

READ 2 COR 6:3-7:1

1. Draw a diagram to illustrate the content of these verses.

2. The scriptures leave us with real responsibilities. What are some of them according to this passage? How do these relate to those who teach us?

PRAY: God regards his children as holy (set apart) and urges them to be set apart from everything that might pollute. Ask God to deepen your sense of this call.

WEEK 9: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-7:1

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Paul's plea to the Corinthians in 6:13 is to open their hearts to him. How does encourage them to do that in v's 1-12?

2. What is triumphalism and where can you find it in the Christian world today?

3. In what ways should Christians be separate and in what ways should we not?

PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16

Do you remember how this letter opened? Paul revealed his deep sense of distress at what he experienced in Asia Minor. "we felt that we had received the sentence of death..." (1:9) And then he revealed how God had comforted Him. It may have seemed back then that the distress was all about his physical suffering but deeply intertwined in that experience was anguish over his relationship with his spiritual children at Corinth! That's what we'll see this week and it will raise a question for us. Do the people of God hold such a place of affection in our hearts that they would move us as they did Paul?

Day 1

READ 2 COR 7:2-16

1. What connections does this passage have to this letter's beginning? (Hint: if you need help, check any cross references to chapters 1 and 2)

2. This chapter draws many threads together. Try to form a timeline of the events mentioned in v's 5-15 by putting them in sequence.

PRAY: The emotion and tender-hearted love expressed by Paul in this letter is profound. Pray that God would make you sensitive to it this week that He might make you more like His Son.

A PLEA TO WAYWARD CHILDREN

Day 2

READ 2 COR 7:2-7

1. In what ways does Paul express his love for the Corinthians in these verses?

2. Some people today dislike the apostle Paul. They feel that he was a misogynist and a homophobe who simply complicated the loving Christianity of Jesus. Why did it matter that the Corinthians had a “deep longing” and “ardent concern” for Paul” (v 7)

3. The Corinthians caused Paul tremendous anxiety and grief and yet in v 3 he could write: “you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you...” What do you think created such love in him for them? What can you learn from his example?

PRAY: The apostle John tells in his first epistle that love for the brothers and sisters is a key mark of conversion and of Christian maturity. Pray that God would grow us all in this.

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16

Day 3

READ 2 COR 6:3-7:1

Godly or world sorrow? These are key themes in the passage we read today. And they are key themes in the Christian life. What can we learn about why the first is so necessary and the second so dangerous? The skill to practise here is to recognise cause and effect statements.

1. What are the causes of “sorrow in this passage and what are the effects?

-

-

2. What distinguishes “godly sorrow” from “worldly sorrow”?

Godly sorrow is what God intends for us when we sin (v 9) and we sin often! But it doesn't always follow as it should. Many among the Corinthians were not at first sorrowful. They were indignant and angry with Paul, ready to believe the worst of him and to reject him as their apostle.

3. What might be the biggest obstacles to this sorrow which God intends?

PRAY: Ask God to give you such trust in His Fatherly care that you are quick to sorrow as you should and so to repent when repentance is needed.

A PLEA TO WAYWARD CHILDREN

Day 4

READ 2 COR 7:13-16

Nobody lives or dies to him or herself. This is especially true in the church family. We constantly impact one another- often for good but sometimes not. Another mark of Christian maturity is the ability in every moment, to bring to the front of mind our impact or possible impact on others.

1. Paul had written to the Corinthians to move them to repentance and Titus had delivered this letter. Try to create a flow diagram to capture the impact of this for good on all those concerned.

2. Paul had boasted about the Corinthians to Titus. (v 14) Given what you know of the Corinthians, what do you imagine Paul might have said?

3. What resolutions can we draw from this passage about how to conduct our own relationships with other Christians?

PRAY: As Christian brothers and sisters, we desperately need one another. Is there anyone in your circle of fellowship whom your initiative would help? Ask God to give you both energy and insight to manage this well.

WEEK 10: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16

Day 5

READ 2 COR 1:1-2:13 & 2 COR 7:1-16

1. How does chapter 7 bring some sense of closure to all the emotion of chapters 1 & 2?

2. Paul is God's chosen instrument and a wonderful example of the godly servant. Looking at him, what can you conclude about God from this passage?

3. Imagine your task was to create your own title for 2 Corinthians 1-7. Forget the one in these notes- what would your one be?

PRAY: In the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit took an intelligent Pharisee and made of him a man, who not only knew the mind of God like no ordinary man before modelled the godly life to generations of bible readers. Ask God to help you remember the lessons from this term and shape you by them.

A PLEA TO WAYWARD CHILDREN

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In what ways does Paul express his love for the Corinthians in these verses?

2. What distinguishes “godly sorrow” from “worldly sorrow”?

3. What resolutions can we draw from this passage about how to conduct our own relationships with other Christians?

Prayer Points and Notes

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

MAGNIFICATION

Production

The Production Team at help behind the scenes with Slides, Sound and Service Coordinating to make sure the church service runs smoothly.

Band

Various roles within the band at Grace Church including vocals, guitar, drums, and keys which aid us in singing praises to God each Sunday.

MATURITY

Bookshop

The bookshop operates regularly and is an opportunity for our church to buy books that will help them and their family grow.

Growth Group Leading

Our Growth Group Leaders lead a group of people from church in the Word. This is a real privilege, and because of its responsibility is something we usually like people to be with us for a bit before jumping officially into this role.

MEMBERSHIP

Connecting

We have two teams that serve in helping people connect into Grace Church and build relationships with others.

Food

We have two food areas, Morning Tea and BBQ, both of which help foster the community of church.

Venue

The venue team is responsible for setting up, packing up and managing the venue each week.

Care

When extra help is needed (whether meals, physical help etc), the Care team coordinates this.

MINISTRY

Recruitment

In order to help people connect into a ministry, the Recruitment team chat with people and work out a good fit for them, and for the church.

MISSION

Table Talking

At events like Life, Table Talkers chat with people investigating Jesus, and help them on their journey in starting to trust Him.

Event Management

Mission runs a lot of events that help facilitate non-Christians finding out more about Jesus. In order to put each of these on, they require an Event Management team.

Prayer

The Mission Prayer team collate and send out our prayer requests from our mission partners around the world to Growth Groups.

NEXT GENERATION MINISTRIES

Grace Kids

We have Grace Kids ministries from the age babies can sit up, right through to Year 6 which require leaders who are willing to disciple them.

Grace Youth

We have Grace Youth for high school ages, that runs on a Friday night, where we always want more leaders who are able to disciple them.

OTHER MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Communication

We are growing a Communications team who help design anything people see publicly.

Administration

As church grows, we increasingly need people who are able to effectively organise the behind-the-scenes elements of church, to help it run effectively.

