

2 Corinthians
Leader Guide
(NASB and ESV)

MINISTERS OF
RECONCILIATION

2 Corinthians Guide (NASB and ESV)
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USING LEADER GUIDES

Leader Guides are intended for you, the leader, to guide your Precept Upon Precept® and In & Out® discussions. They are designed to help you reason through the content of the lessons and to ensure you have understood what your group should have learned from their study. The guides offer effective plans for leading discussions.

The Holy Spirit is your guide as you prepare. He is the one who knows what your group needs to apply to their lives. Pray for them as they study and for yourself as you prepare to lead the discussion.

These guides can be used for either the NASB or the ESV edition of the courses. ESV words follow the NASB after a slash / or are set off with parentheses.

Leader Guides include the following:

- Lesson emphasis
- A logical order for the discussion
- Discussion questions
- Suggested visual aid(s)

Practical tips for using the Leader Guide:

- **Don't simply "do" the lesson.**
Stay with the lesson until you have a good understanding of it. This will give you a better grasp of how the Leader Guide takes you through the lesson.
- **You don't have to ask every question in the guide.**
Often one question will be covered while discussing another question so there is no reason to ask it. Your goal is not to ask every question, but to ask enough questions to make sure your group understood the lesson and to help them apply the truths to their lives.

Using the Leader Guide with In & Out


When your entire group uses In & Out

Compare an In & Out lesson with the Leader Guide. Use what relates to the In & Out lesson as a guide for the discussion. Don't teach what's not in In & Out lessons. Remember your goal in the discussion is for your group to discuss what they've learned, not for you to lecture on what you learned.

For groups studying both Precept Upon Precept and In & Out

Use the Leader Guides as designed for PUP, knowing that the In & Out assignments will be covered in the discussion. Make a note in the Leader Guide of what is not in the In & Out.

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2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 1

Lesson emphasis

2 Corinthians overview

To begin your first discussion, you might ask if there was a part of 2 Corinthians that spoke to the hearts of the people in your group. Give a little time for a few of them to share briefly.

Tell them to look at their Observation Worksheets and their notes in the lesson as you lead them in discussing what they learned from this book.

The most logical order for this discussion is chapter by chapter.

NOTE: Remember that this is just an overview, so keep your group focused on the main points and not the detail. Watch your time closely so the group can discuss the whole lesson.

2 CORINTHIANS 1

What does this chapter say about the author(s) and recipients and their relationship?

Tell your group to look at the map as a visual aid for this discussion.

Paul, an apostle
Timothy, our brother
Authors

Church, at Corinth
Saints, throughout Achaia
Recipients

Paul and Timothy were afflicted, but comforted by God.
And they extended that comfort to others being afflicted—the church, saints.

They wrote so the Corinthians would understand the confidence and pride they should have in each other. Paul intended to go to Corinth, Macedonia, back to Corinth and then on to Judea. But that didn't happen. He didn't go because he wanted to spare them.

The chapter ends with encouragement: Paul said the Corinthians were standing firm in their faith.

You might ask your group if they are standing firm in their faith and what that means.

2 CORINTHIANS 2

How does this chapter continue from chapter 1?

It is still part of Paul's explanation of why he didn't go to Corinth.
He didn't want to cause them sorrow again, another painful visit.

He had written to them before and the result was their sorrow / pain. What he wrote before was to test their obedience regarding one who needed to be forgiven.

Paul had gotten to Troas, but didn't find Titus—who had gone to Corinth. It seems Paul was waiting on Titus's report from Corinth before visiting there. He went on to Macedonia, instead of what he had planned.

For application, you can ask your group if they have problems with forgiveness or if they get upset when someone's plans change.

2 CORINTHIANS 3

What does this chapter tell about Paul, Timothy, and the Corinthians?

It begins with a couple of questions about letters of commendation.
The Corinthians were in Paul's heart, cared for.

2 CORINTHIANS 4

Ask what your group learned from this chapter.

It contains a list of things which happened to Paul and Timothy.
Then he talks about death and life in Christ.
It begins and ends with "we do not lose heart."

You might ask your group why Paul and Timothy didn't lose heart. If they had gone through what Paul and Timothy had, would they be tempted to lose heart or would they stand firm in their faith? Use this to encourage them to continue this study—they'll find out how to be those who don't lose heart.

2 CORINTHIANS 5

What does this chapter say about Paul and Timothy and the Corinthians?

Verse 12 refers to some who take pride in appearance instead of heart.
It seems that Paul addressed a problem at Corinth and Achaia.

Ask your group if anything in this chapter applies to believers, or them specifically, now?

2 CORINTHIANS 6

What is the problem in this chapter?

It seems that someone or something had caused the Corinthians to doubt Paul's sincerity or concern for them, or doubt his authority in the Lord.

This chapter lists what he had gone through for his ministry to them. Paul said his and Timothy's hearts were open wide to the Corinthians. Then he told them that they were constrained in their own affections, not by Paul and Timothy.

It ends with a caution about being bound with unbelievers.

You might ask if any of the things in this chapter are applicable for believers now. What? How?

2 CORINTHIANS 7

Ask what your group observed about Paul and Timothy and the Corinthians.

Verse 2 asks for the Corinthians to make room in their hearts for Paul and Timothy. They wronged, corrupted, took advantage of no one.

Somehow these were things threatening the Corinthian church.

Then he tells what happened when he got to Macedonia and heard Titus's report. They were comforted by what Titus told them about the Corinthians' reception and reaction to his previous letter.

2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9

What are these chapters about?

Supporting the saints—giving

What did Paul write about Timothy and himself, the Corinthians?

Titus reported that the Corinthians were ready to give a donation to help needy saints. Paul encouraged them to do it, and sent Titus and some other brothers to ensure this. He might have also sent this letter with Titus.

Paul told the Corinthians that he was boasting to the Macedonians about what the Corinthians wanted to do.

NOTE: Some in your group might bring up that it seems Paul was in Macedonia when he wrote this letter to the Corinthians and saints in Achaia. If no one does, then leave it for a later discussion.

How does the subject in these chapters apply to believers now? Ask your group how they are doing with this. Is there something they can learn about giving from this letter?

2 CORINTHIANS 10

What is the change in Paul's mood in this chapter? Why?

The mood changes from chapter 9, rejoicing and encouragement, to severe in this chapter. He addressed what some were saying about him.

Some were commending themselves. Paul and Timothy were commended by God and were the ones who took the gospel to the Corinthians.

2 CORINTHIANS 11

What does this chapter say about Paul, Timothy, and the Corinthians?

Paul continued to explain about his relationship with the Corinthians as opposed to the relationship others, apparently claiming apostleship, had with them.

There are false apostles who are Satan's servants. They deceive.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of when he had been there and taken no advantage of them. Then he presented some of his credentials as a true apostle.

He said he was boasting and claimed it as foolishness. But he was explaining the difference in his love for the Corinthians and those who were trying to deceive them.

2 CORINTHIANS 12

Ask your group what they observed about the relationship from this chapter.

Paul was ready to visit Corinth a third time, and wanted it to be a pleasant visit. But, if necessary, he would deal with any unrepentant sins.

2 CORINTHIANS 13

How does this letter end?

Paul continued to deal with any problems before going to Corinth the third time.

He called the Corinthians to test themselves to see if they really were saved.

He closed with encouraging words in verses 11-14.

Ask your group what they think, based on their study and the discussion, are the reasons Paul wrote this letter.

To offer comfort

To explain his change of plans

To confront what some were saying about him

To encourage the collection for the saints

To challenge sin and testing to see if truly saved

It seems he closed with his main reason for writing in 13:10.

If you have time, ask what they think they can learn for their lives from studying this letter.

2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 2

Lesson emphasis

2 Corinthians 1–2

REVIEW

To begin this discussion, you can ask your group what they remember from the overview about this letter and the relationship between the authors and recipients. Ask if they remember any reasons why it might have been written.

Tell them to look at the map as a visual aid.

Paul and Timothy wrote this letter to the church at Corinth and saints throughout Achaia. Paul and Timothy had been there before, and had written them before.

This letter tells of a strained relationship between Paul and Timothy and the Corinthians. Some there had tried to bring doubt on Paul’s authority as an apostle, and as a result others were doubting him.

He reassured his love for them in this letter, but also defended his apostleship and authority with them.

He wrote to comfort them, prepare them for his next visit, and encourage them to finish the ministry of giving they had begun. And he wrote to correct the false.

2 CORINTHIANS 1

Ask your group what they learned from their study of verses 3-7.

This letter begins with comfort in affliction or suffering.

The Father of mercies and God of all comfort comforted Paul and Timothy, and they in turn offered that comfort to the Corinthians.

Though afflictions are abundant in the Christian life, so is comfort from God.

Paul viewed his afflictions as an opportunity to show others how God is the comforter. He said their affliction was for the readers’ comfort and salvation.

You can ask what they noted on their application “To Do” list and give time for them to discuss what they wrote.

Verses 8-11

What are these verses about?

This is a specific personal example of extreme affliction Paul and Timothy experienced when they were in Asia.

Tell your group to look at the map to see where Asia was.

Paul and Timothy thought they were going to die because of the severity of the affliction. They couldn't trust themselves, only God who is able to raise the dead.

God delivered them, and they were confident He would continue to do so—they were doing His work, and He took care of them while they did.

The Corinthians were aware of the affliction in Asia because they prayed for Paul and Timothy, as did others. These prayers resulted in God delivering them.

NOTE: The ESV does not say the Corinthians prayed for Paul and Timothy, but he commanded them to pray.

How do the cross-references add to the facts about affliction and suffering?

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

Believers are destined for afflictions and should not be disturbed by them. Paul warned the Thessalonians ahead of time that they would suffer.

Colossians 1:24

Paul rejoiced in his sufferings because he understood them to be his share of Christ's afflictions. This is not to say that there was something lacking in what Jesus did on the cross. It's about His body the church—believers. True Christians have a share in His afflictions.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-7

This church was used as an example because of perseverance / steadfastness, faith, and endurance. Persecution, afflictions, and suffering are to make believers worthy of God's kingdom. Understanding this helps one make it through these things with faith and endurance.

Another fact to remember is that God will give relief to the afflicted, but not until Jesus returns. So, believers can expect a life of persecution, afflictions, and suffering.

Also, God will repay with affliction those who afflict His people.

Romans 8:17-18

His children, heirs, suffer with Christ so they will be glorified with Him. A believer's current suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

Philippians 1:27-30

There are opponents to the gospel. But from God’s perspective, suffering is part of what He gives to all believers.

2 Timothy 1:8-12

Paul instructed his disciple Timothy. One who gives the gospel needs to be willing to suffer for it. God’s power is sufficient for the suffering.

2 Timothy 3:10-15

This was Paul’s last letter, also written to Timothy. He reminded Timothy of his persecutions and sufferings that he had endured. Then he made a statement that all believers will be persecuted.

How do these passages relate to believers now? Give your group time to discuss how these things relate to them.

Believers go through severe trials, afflictions, suffering.
Trusting self and one’s abilities to overcome trials doesn’t work.

Trust in the only one who can raise the dead—the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Hope in Him.

Ask for prayer from other believers.
Pray for believers who are in afflictions, and for God to be glorified.

Verses 12-14

What insights do these verses give into the relationship between the author and recipients?

Paul told the Corinthians about his confidence / boast.

He wanted them to know how Timothy and he had conducted themselves toward them. It wasn’t in fleshly / earthly wisdom, but in holiness and godly sincerity.

He wanted them to understand what he wrote to them—they should be proud of Paul and Timothy as Paul and Timothy were of the Corinthians.

Verses 15-24

How do these verses continue from the previous ones? Refer to the map as your group discusses.

Paul explained his previous plans to visit Corinth, going to and returning from Macedonia. His plans included the Corinthians helping him on his way to Judea. But, according to verse 23, he didn’t go to Corinth because he wanted to spare them.

Verses 17-22 bring up another subject, but one related to his change of plans. Paul wanted to be sure the Corinthians understood that what Timothy, Silvanus, and he preached about Jesus was absolute truth. There was no doubt about it.

Compare what Paul preached in verse 19 with the cross-references about the gospel.

John 20:30-31

John wrote this gospel so his readers might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

The main points of the gospel in this passage are Christ's death and resurrection according to the Scriptures. Burial supports His death and appearances confirm His resurrection.

What are the points to include in the gospel message? How does that compare with what is preached as the gospel now? Give your group time to think about what they hear or give as the gospel message and what the Bible says.

Jesus is the Christ
God's Son
He died for sins
He was raised from the dead

Lead your discussion back to 2 Corinthians 1:20-24.

God is the one who sent Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to Corinth to preach the gospel. He established them with the Corinthians in Christ. God anointed and sealed them, giving His Spirit in their hearts.

At this point you can ask what your group learned from Acts 18:1-19.

This is the account of when Paul first went to Corinth and stayed for a year and a half. When he first went, he reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue every Sabbath, until Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.

When they got to Corinth and worked to support them all, Paul was able to give himself completely to preaching and teaching God's Word.

After most of the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, he went to the Gentiles there and many of them believed.

The Lord told Paul in a dream not to be afraid but continue speaking there because no one would harm him. The Jews brought him before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, but he wouldn't hear their accusations.

2 CORINTHIANS 2

How do verses 1-4 continue from chapter 1?

Paul wrote that he didn't want to come to Corinth again in sorrow, so evidently his last visit had been sorrowful. It doesn't seem that he was referring to his first visit described in Acts 18.

He wrote to them previously wanting to prevent sorrow during his third visit. His intent in that letter was to let them know his love for them.

At this point, you might ask your group what they've learned from Paul's example in these two chapters. Give time for them to discuss the application.

Verses 5-11

Who and what is this paragraph about?

There was one who had caused sorrow to all the Corinthians. The majority of the church inflicted sufficient punishment on him. Paul then instructed them to forgive and comfort him, to reaffirm their love for him. If they didn't, he might become overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

Paul himself forgave so that Satan didn't take advantage of unforgiveness.
(ESV—outwitted by Satan.)

Paul wrote to test the Corinthians' obedience. What do obedience, forgiveness, and Satan taking advantage / outwitting have to do with one another? How does this paragraph relate to church life now? Are Paul's instructions here still relevant? Ask your group what they think about this and give them time to discuss application.

Verses 12-13

What is the content of these verses?

Paul continued to explain why he didn't go to Corinth as he had planned. When he got to Troas where there was opportunity to give the gospel, he didn't find Titus. Evidently, they were to meet there. Titus had been to Corinth.

It seems he didn't want to go to Corinth without hearing from Titus first. So Paul went on to Macedonia without passing through Achaia.

Verses 14-17

How do these verses continue from 12-13?

Here is a description of what happened as Paul and Timothy spoke the gospel. God leads in triumph.

God showed through Paul and Timothy a sweet aroma—the knowledge of Him—wherever they went. This was probably what happened when they got to Macedonia, after leaving Troas.

A fragrance of Christ to God among those

Being saved—aroma of life to life

Perishing—aroma of death to death

Paul asked a question about adequacy / sufficiency which he wrote more about in chapter 3. Clearly one's adequacy / sufficiency comes from God, being led by His Spirit—1:21-22 and 2:14.

Paul and Timothy spoke from sincerity, from God, in Christ.
They were not like others peddling God's word or corrupting it.

Ask your group what they learned about giving the gospel, and give them time to share with one another.

To close this discussion, you can ask what they noted on the At a Glance chart as the themes for chapters 1 and 2. And if they—or the majority of them—didn't do it, then do it together.

Maybe something like:

Chapter 1 Affliction and comfort: Paul's plans to visit Corinth

Chapter 2 Sorrow from a letter; Paul went to Macedonia from Troas

2 CORINTHIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 3

Lesson emphasis

2 Corinthians 3

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking the group what they remember from Lesson 1. What about Paul and Timothy? The Corinthians? Their relationship? Why the letter was written?

NOTE: A brief review of the main points will help them keep each lesson in context of the whole book. And when they finish this course, they should be able to rehearse the flow of thought in this letter. The goal is for them to remember 2 Corinthians.

What are chapters 1 and 2 about?

Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart if they need help remembering.

The letter began with Paul and Timothy telling the Corinthians about comfort in affliction. The God of all comfort gives so others can be comforted.

Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be sorrowful. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

He had visited them more than once and had written to them before.

They needed to practice forgiveness with each other and Paul wrote to point that out to them. He wanted to see them after they had obeyed.

Chapter 2 ends with Paul writing that they are not like some who peddle God's Word. There was false teaching at Corinth.

2 CORINTHIANS 3

You might ask what they noted on the At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter or wait until the end of the discussion to do this.

Maybe something like: You are our letter; ministry of the Spirit

Verses 1-3

How does this chapter begin? What are these verses about?

A question—do we need commendation?

The answer—you are our letter of commendation / recommendation.

Paul reassured the believers at Corinth and in Achaia that they were written in Timothy's and his hearts. They cared for the Corinthians.

The believers were a letter of Christ read by all men. It was written by the Spirit of the living God on human hearts.

Ask your group how this applies to them. What do people read from watching their lives?

Verses 4-6

What is a key repeated word in these verses? Why did Paul use it?

Adequate / sufficient

Paul was confident, but knew his adequacy / sufficiency didn't come from within himself. God makes believers adequate / sufficient.

He made Paul and Timothy adequate / sufficient as servants of a new covenant.

This new covenant is of the life-giving Spirit, not the letter which kills.

Verses 7-11

What was Paul talking about? What is the contrast?

At the end of this lesson's guide, there are two short lists that can be used as a visual aid.

The letter kills

The ministry of death

Engraved / carved on stones, but came with glory which fades away

Ministry of condemnation

The old covenant given to Moses for Israel

Contrasted with

The new covenant which gives life by the Spirit

The ministry of righteousness

Surpassing glory

The false teaching at Corinth had something to do with the old covenant. Probably this refers to some Judaizers.

What is the definition of "glory"?

doxa—"a divine and heavenly radiance"¹; "brightness, splendor"²

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 237.

² Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 119-120.

Verses 12-18

What is a repeated word in these verses? How does the contrast continue?

Veil

Moses' face was covered with a veil to prevent Israel from seeing the glory fade.
The glory of the old covenant

At the time when Paul wrote there was still a veil—over their minds when the old covenant was read. The Jews of Paul's day, and today, didn't understand.

The veil is removed when one turns to the Lord and the Spirit gives life and liberty. Then the transformation of the Christian life begins; transformation of believers into His image.

Now ask what your group learned from Exodus about the old covenant and Moses' veil.

Exodus

Through Moses, God called His people Israel to obey Him and keep His covenant. Moses communicated what God said to the people, and they agreed to do what He said. This was the old covenant, also known as the Law.

God spoke the Ten Commandments to His people at Mt. Sinai, Horeb.

Moses went up on the mountain and wrote the words God spoke to him—the book of the covenant. When he went down to the people, sacrifices were made and the blood was sprinkled / thrown on the altar and the people—the blood of the covenant.

God wrote His law on tablets of stone. Moses was on the mountain 40 days as God's glory shone from the cloud covering the mountain.

When Moses returned to the people, they had made a gold calf to worship in God's place. Moses interceded on their behalf, after he had broken the stone tablets in anger.

Then Moses went up on the mountain again to receive two more stone tablets. Moses wrote the words the Lord spoke to him. When he went down from the mountain, from the Lord's presence, his face shone. He covered it with a veil because the people were afraid to come near him. The veil stayed over his face until he met with the Lord again.

2 Corinthians 3 says the glory on Moses' face was fading / ending and the veil covered that, too.

How do the other cross-references about the old covenant, the Law, relate?

Deuteronomy 27:26

Here it's called the law.

Romans 3:20 and 7:7-11

This Law brought the knowledge of sin, but it couldn't justify people. Therefore the Law, commandment, became death to those who couldn't keep it.

Galatians 3:10

Those who live by the works of the Law are under a curse.

2 Corinthians 3 says the letter, referring to the old covenant, the Law, kills.

How is the new covenant explained in the cross-references?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

God promised a new covenant, not like the one Israel broke—the covenant He made with them when He brought them out of Egypt—the old covenant or the Law.

In the new covenant the Law is written on hearts, and there is forgiveness of sin.

Ezekiel 36:24-28

God promised Israel that He would make them clean, give a new heart and spirit to them. He also promised to put His Spirit within them.

Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20 and Hebrews 13:20

Jesus said His blood was the blood of the new covenant, poured out for forgiveness of sin. Hebrews refers to it as the blood of the eternal covenant.

Hebrews 8:1, 6-13

He is the mediator of a new covenant. This passage quotes Jeremiah 31. It contrasts the two covenants—the one Israel broke and the new. The Law was the covenant they broke, the old covenant.

John 1:17 and Romans 10:1-4

The Law came through Moses, but grace and truth were realized in Jesus. Christ is the end of the Law. Righteousness comes by faith, not keeping the Law.

You might ask your group if they are trying to be righteous by keeping some kind of law? Or do they live under the grace and liberty of the new covenant? Do they have a new heart? Give time for them to discuss the difference between living according to the old or new covenant.

What do the other cross-references teach about the Spirit?

Ezekiel 36:27

God promised that at a point He would put His Spirit within and cause the person to walk in His statutes and observe His ordinances. This promise was made to Israel, but Gentiles who are part of the new covenant receive His Spirit also.

John 3:3-8; 7:37-39

Jesus said one must be born again, born of the Spirit, to enter God's kingdom. All who believe in Him receive His Spirit. But the Spirit wasn't given until Jesus was glorified—His death, resurrection and ascension to the Father in heaven.

John 14:16-17

Jesus said the Spirit, the Helper, will be with believers forever. He will be in them.

Acts 1:3-8

After Jesus' resurrection, He told His disciples they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit came on them, they would receive power—they would be Jesus' witnesses.

Ephesians 1:13-14 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a pledge / guarantee of inheritance. All true Christians have God the Spirit dwelling within them.

Romans 8:1-16

The Law is fulfilled in those who are led by the Spirit. They are the sons, children, of God. The contrast in these verses is similar to the one in 2 Corinthians 3—the Spirit and the Law, the new and old covenants.

The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in believers. If a person doesn't have the Spirit of Jesus, that person doesn't belong to Him—is not a believer. Christians know they are God's children because the Spirit testifies to them from within.

As your group discusses the above passages, help them to consider if they have truly been born of the Spirit and are living by Him.

According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, what is the goal? How do the cross-references explain?

To be transformed into Christ's image

Romans 8:29

God predestined those He foreknew to be conformed to His Son's image.

Philippians 3:20-21

Christ will transform believers' bodies to be like His body of glory.

1 John 3:2-3

When He appears, when believers see Him, they will be like Him—pure.

John 17:20-23

Jesus prayed for unity. He gives His glory to believers.

To end this discussion, ask your group how this lesson can be put into practice in their lives.

NEW COVENANT

The Spirit
Life
Glory surpasses
Ministry of righteousness
Veil removed
Liberty
Transformed

OLD COVENANT

Letter
Kills, ministry of death
Glory fades
Ministry of condemnation
Veil over hearts, minds hardened

**2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 4**

Lesson emphasis

2 Corinthians 4

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what they remember about 2 Corinthians 1–3. Direct them to their At a Glance chart if they need help.

The letter began with Paul and Timothy telling the Corinthians about comfort in affliction. The God of all comfort gives so others can be comforted.

Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be sorrowful. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

Chapter 2 ends by Paul writing that they were not like some peddling God's Word. There was false teaching at Corinth.

And chapter 3 begins with questions about commendation. The Corinthians themselves were Paul's commendation.

The ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant, is contrasted in chapter 3, probably because of false apostles in Corinth teaching the old covenant, the Law.

2 CORINTHIANS 4

Verses 1-6

How does this chapter begin? What is the connection with chapter 3? The flow of thought? On the last page of this guide, there is a short list you might use as a visual aid.

The first statement refers to the ministry of the Spirit, of righteousness, in chapter 3.

Paul said he and Timothy didn't lose heart because of that ministry and receiving mercy.

You might ask your group why they might have been tempted to lose heart.

Then ask if they have ever lost heart. What's the solution? Give time to discuss application.

How does verse 2 relate to 2:14 through chapter 3? Discuss the word study and cross-references also.

It seems Paul was continuing to contrast Timothy and himself with those at Corinth who were peddling and adulterating God's Word, crafty men, adding to or taking away from the truth.

Paul and Timothy had renounced hidden (ESV—disgraceful, underhanded) things, but were manifesting (ESV—openly stating) the truth.

renounced—"disown"³

1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

Paul spoke to please God, not men.

Not from error, impurity, deceit, flattering speech, greed, seeking glory.

God knows hearts, and He approved them and entrusted them with the gospel.

There is a question in the lesson which asks, "What do you learn about the gospel in verses 3-4?"

It's veiled to the perishing so they might not see its light—the glory of Christ. Chapter 3 talked about a veil lifted in Christ. This refers to salvation.

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving to the gospel. Compare this with 2:15-16 and 3:14-18.

Who is the god of this world? What do the cross-references teach about him?

Genesis 3:1-5, 13, 15

The serpent deceived Eve by questioning God's word and then lying about what He had said. But God promised that the seed of the woman, Christ Jesus, will crush / bruise the serpent.

Revelation 12:9

The serpent is the devil, Satan, who deceives the whole world.

John 8:44

The devil is the father of lies and a murderer.

John 12:31; 1 John 5:19; Luke 4:5-6

He is called the ruler of this world and the evil one. The whole world lies in his power.

Ephesians 6:10-13 and 2 Corinthians 2:11

Believers do not have to be taken by surprise with his schemes.

Ephesians 6:12 explains a believer's struggle against his helpers.

³ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 62.

Corinth had false apostles.

Revelation 20:1-3, 10

This tells of his future and his destruction. And again it says he deceived the nations. His end is the lake of fire.

Give time for your group to discuss how Satan's schemes have deceived them in the past, and how they can prevent it in the future.

Lead your discussion back to 2 Corinthians 4. What is contrasted in verses 4-6?

Satan blinding unbelievers' minds
and
God shining in hearts to give light

Genesis 1:3

God began with light and continues to give light.

The gospel gives light. When it shines in a person's heart, that one comes out of darkness. The light is the knowledge of God's glory, and it comes through Christ. His face is much more glorious than Moses' face was when he spoke with the Lord.

What is the connection of "light" and "life"? Discuss relevant cross-references.

The gospel is light to those in darkness. When saved, the light of the gospel—the life of Jesus—is manifested in a believer's life. Jesus is the light and shows the light through Christians by the power of the Spirit within them. He gives life.

John 1:4-8

Life is in Christ Jesus, and that life is the light.

Matthew 5:1-16

Jesus told His disciples that they are the light of the world. That light is to shine before men. Paul and Timothy clearly demonstrated that.

Ask your group to consider how their light is shining, even in the midst of their trials. Give time for them to discuss application.

Verses 7-12

What are these verses about? How do they continue Paul's flow of thought?

He explains more about why they don't lose heart in ministry. The treasure in earthen vessels (jars of clay), physical bodies, is the power of Jesus' life.

Paul and Timothy went through a lot of affliction, persecution. But they didn't lose heart because of the power within them, God's Spirit.

They faced death for the ministry to others—to give them the gospel, and disciple them.

Ask what your group learned about this from Romans 5:1-5.

There is a progression—tribulation / suffering, perseverance / endurance, proven character, hope. The key is God's love poured into believers' hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Verses 13-15

How do these verses connect with what is before?

Paul and Timothy were facing death—as all believers do.
But they knew Jesus raises the dead.

John 6:37-40, 44

All the Father gives, draws, will come to Jesus—believe in Him.
Jesus will lose none. They receive eternal life and will be raised on the last day.

Grace spread, even in the midst of severe affliction. Thanksgiving resulted.

Psalm 116:1-10

Paul quoted from this Psalm about one God rescued from affliction.

Though greatly afflicted, he believed he would walk in the land of the living.

Paul thought the same.

Verses 16-18

How does this chapter end?

Paul repeats what he said at the beginning of this chapter—we don't lose heart.
The inner man / self is being renewed. Compare this with 3:18, being transformed.

He said his afflictions were momentary and light when compared with the result, an eternal weight of glory.

Ask your group how they view their afflictions. Has studying this chapter helped them focus on eternal things instead of temporal?

You can end this discussion by asking what they noted on their At a Glance chart as a possible theme for this chapter.

Don't lose heart—outer man / self is decaying / wasting away, but Christ's life manifested

We don't lose heart

Received mercy

Renounced hidden

Treasure in earthen vessels / clay jars—life of Jesus

Outer decaying / wasting away, inner being renewed

Look at eternal

**2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 5**

Lesson emphasis

2 Corinthians 5

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what has ministered to them from this study of 2 Corinthians 1–5. Give time for them to share.

Then you can ask what they remember about the flow of thought in 2 Corinthians 1–4. Direct them to their At a Glance chart if they need help.

The letter began with Paul and Timothy telling the Corinthians about comfort in affliction. The God of all comfort gives so others can be comforted.

Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be sorrowful. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

Chapter 2 ends by Paul writing that they were not like many peddling God's Word. There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Chapter 3 is a contrast of the ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant, with the old covenant, the Law. Probably because the false apostles in Corinth were teaching the old covenant.

Then Paul said that they did not lose heart in ministry, even when facing afflictions. The power of Christ's life is within and His life is to be manifested in believers.

If your group didn't bring up application of this when you began, ask about it now.

Has studying this letter helped when facing afflictions?

What are some specifics that help with not losing heart?

Giving the gospel, the truth, when facing opposition?

2 CORINTHIANS 5

Verses 1-10

How does this chapter begin? What is the connection with chapter 4? The flow of thought?

Tell them to look at their list on Day Two as a visual aid for this part of the discussion.

The thought continues to be focused on physical life and death compared with the eternal life in Christ for believers.

4:16 outer man / self is decaying / wasting away

5:1 earthly tent, house is torn down / destroyed

5:4 mortal

5:6 at home in the body

These refer to the physical body of a believer.

4:16 inner man / self is being renewed

5:5 the Spirit does this renewal

5:1-9 building from God, not made with hands, eternal in heavens,
at home with the Lord

What is the groaning and longing about, verse 2?

Believers focused on being in their immortal bodies in heaven, being with Christ and out of this world.

Paul looked at the eternal, not the temporal. But he did the work God gave him while he was on earth—the gospel. That was also his focus.

He was burdened because of being unclothed by the immortal body.

But contrasted with the groaning and longing is a life of courage while in the earthly body. A life of faith, pleasing the Lord.

At this point you can ask what they learned from the cross-references about life and death.

1 Corinthians 15:12-22, 42-54

Some at Corinth were questioning the resurrection.

These verses are Paul's reasoning on the subject.

If there is no resurrection, Christ was not raised and there is no reason for faith.

But He was raised, and others who believe in Him will also be resurrected.

This is what Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 4:13-14.

All people will die, and believers in Christ Jesus will be raised imperishable.

The natural is first, then the spiritual. Believers' bodies will be changed to imperishable and immortal.

Philippians 1:18-24

Paul's desire was for Christ to be exalted / honored in his body, by life or death. He saw death as gain to be with Christ Jesus. But he also viewed his life on earth as Christ's life.

Job 19:25-27

From early time, men knew of life with God after their death on earth.

Ask your group about their ambition while living here on earth. What have they learned about this from 2 Corinthians 1–5? Give time for them to discuss application.

Lead the discussion back to 2 Corinthians 5 and ask what they learned from their study of verse 10.

All will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

To receive recompense (ESV—what is due) for deeds done in the body

Good or bad / evil

bad—“morally base or worthless”⁴

That’s one reason Paul wanted to be pleasing to the Lord while alive on earth.

Romans 14:1-12

This passage mentions the judgment seat of God; similar wording to 2 Corinthians 5:10. The context is how believers treat other believers, the weak and strong Christians.

We are not to judge our brothers; God will judge all of us. We will give an account to Him.

1 Corinthians 3:9-15

The foundation of God’s building, the church in this passage, is Jesus Christ. Paul and others build on that foundation. A day will come when the quality / sort of each one’s work will be tested with fire. If one’s work remains / survives, he’ll be rewarded. But others will suffer loss, though saved.

2 John 8

This is a warning not to lose reward.

Matthew 5:10-12; 6:1

Jesus said there is a reward in heaven for the persecuted on earth. But the one who is concerned with practicing righteousness before men will have no reward from the heavenly Father. His righteousness is self-righteousness.

Luke 6:35

Jesus also said that loving enemies, doing good and expecting nothing in return, brings great reward. These are things God does.

Hebrews 10:32-36; 11:6

Confidence, even when facing persecution, has great reward. That confidence is living by faith which pleases God. He is the rewarder.

⁴ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 397.

How does all of this relate to believers now? Give time to discuss application.

Verses 11-15

What does the fear of the Lord have to do with verse 10?

Knowing about the judgment seat of Christ should put the fear of God into people. Paul said because of that he persuaded men, being known to God and hopefully by them—the Corinthians. It’s an occasion for them to be proud of / boast about Paul and Timothy to those who take pride in appearance instead of heart.

Paul and Timothy lived for Christ whether or not they were being afflicted or facing trials from the church.

Christ’s love controlled them, or love for Christ controlled them.

control—“to hold fast”⁵; “constrain”⁶; “to exercise continuous control over someone or something”⁷

This is what he had been saying from the beginning. Christ’s life by the indwelling Spirit, not living for self but for Him. Serving others as Jesus did.

Romans 6:8-14

Believers died with Christ and live with Him.

Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

Present yourself to Him and your body as an instrument of righteousness.

Verses 16-21

What do these verses describe?

The new life in Christ

This description or explanation began in 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 4:10.

Ask your group what they think of being a new creature. Old things passed away? Do they view other believers the same way? Give time for discussion.

What ministry are verses 18-19 about?

Ministry of reconciliation

This is part of the new life in Christ.

⁵ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998). G4912.

⁶ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 367.

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:473.

God reconciled the world to Himself, not counting trespasses against them.

reconcile—“to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken”⁸

Believers are given the ministry of reconciliation, the word / message of reconciliation—ambassadors of Christ begging / imploring men to be reconciled to God. Be saved.

Verse 21 tells how this reconciliation was made.
Jesus became sin, so men can become righteous before God.

Ask about the cross-references on Day Five.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

As a minister of reconciliation, Paul preached the gospel in Corinth and people believed that Jesus died for sins and rose from the grave. His burial proved His death, and the fact that He was seen by many proved His resurrection.

Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23

All people sin and die because of it. Death is the wages of sin.
The contrast is God’s free gift of eternal life for those who believe in Christ Jesus.

John 3:16

God gave His Son for the world facing death. Those who believe will not perish but have everlasting / eternal life.

John 1:12-13

Those who believe, receive Him, become God’s children. They are born of Him.

Now ask your group what they learned about their Christianity: how it came about, the result, how are they to live. Give time for discussion.

To end this discussion, you might ask what they noted as a possible theme for 2 Corinthians 5 on the At a Glance chart.

Maybe something similar to:

Courage to walk by faith; new creatures with ministry of reconciliation

⁸Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989). 1:501.

2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 6

Lesson emphasis
2 Corinthians 6

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what they are learning from their study of 2 Corinthians and give them time to share. Ask if they've seen any lessons for life from what Paul wrote about himself or about the Corinthians.

Then you can ask what they remember about the content of 2 Corinthians 1–5.

Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be sorrowful. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Chapter 3 contrasts the ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant, with the old covenant, the Law. Probably because the false apostles in Corinth were teaching the old covenant.

Then Paul said they did not lose heart in ministry, even when facing their afflictions. He continued writing about the ministry; the ministry of reconciliation—presenting the gospel so people are reconciled to God. Those who are reconciled are new creatures.

Paul and Timothy were ambassadors for Christ, and so are all believers, and have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

2 CORINTHIANS 6

Verses 1-3

How does this chapter continue the flow of thought from 5:17?

And working together with Christ because of being made righteous and receiving the ministry of reconciliation, Paul urged the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain.

NOTE: Your group might read different interpretations of this verse in their commentaries. Some think it refers only to the initial salvation experience.

Verse 2 presents an Old Testament quote explaining verse 1.

Isaiah 49:7-8

The Lord said to the despised one, the one abhorred by the nation—a prophecy referring to Jesus Christ. Paul applied verse 8 to himself, and to the Corinthians.

The Lord helps.

This is the day of salvation—the time to be ambassadors for Christ.

It's the time to give the message of reconciliation.

How are believers enabled to persevere as God's servants?

1 Corinthians 15:10

God's grace within believers

1 Corinthians 10:13

God's faithfulness to provide the way of escape to endure trials, not allowing believers to be tempted beyond what they are able to handle

2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 8-10

The life of Jesus is within, so believers don't lose heart.

Lead your discussion back to 2 Corinthians 6:3-10.

How do these verses explain Paul and Timothy carrying out the grace they received from God?

Giving no cause for offense (ESV—put no obstacle) so God's ministry of reconciliation is not discredited (ESV—no fault found).

Paul mentions commending again, commending themselves as His servants.

Ask your group what they see in this list in verses 3-10. Are there categories in the list?

The list covers everything.

Verses 4-5, physical sufferings

Verses 6-7, positive spiritual characteristics

Verses 8-10, contrasts

How does 1 Thessalonians 5:16 compare with verse 10?

Rejoice always

Give your group time to discuss application from Paul's example.

Verses 11-13

What does Paul go back to in these verses?

His relationship with the Corinthians

Timothy and he had opened their heart to them, but the Corinthians were restrained in their affections. He asked them to give a like exchange.

The Corinthians' affections had turned to false teaching: some Judaizers teaching the old covenant, but also some holding still to idolatry.

Verses 14–7:1

What is the warning?

Don't be bound / unequally yoked with unbelievers.

bound—*“be yoked with an animal of a different kind; hence be mismatched, be wrongly associated together”*⁹

How did Paul describe the Corinthians?

Righteous
Light
Believer
Temple of the living God
God's people
Sons and daughters
Beloved

You can use the above list as a visual aid.

How does this relate to verses 1-13?

Paul began this chapter urging the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain. Now is the day of salvation, so be ambassadors for Christ.

Don't restrain your affections toward us because of false apostles.
Don't be bound together / yoked with them.

It seems some Corinthians were aligning themselves with the false when they should have been ministers of reconciliation for the true.

How does 1 Corinthians 10:14 relate to these verses in 2 Corinthians?

The Corinthians had been idol worshipers before being saved when Paul and Timothy took the gospel to them and they believed.

⁹ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 176.

Ask about the other cross-references connected with verse 16.

There is no agreement between God's temple and idols.

Exodus 29:43-46

The tent of meeting, the tabernacle and later the temple was God's dwelling place among His people.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20

The indwelling Spirit makes believers God's temple, His dwelling place.

Lead the discussion back to 2 Corinthians 6. What instructions are in verse 17?

Come out and be separate, don't touch the unclean.

Again Paul supported his statements by quoting Scripture.

Isaiah 52:11 also said to purify yourselves. Relate this to 7:1.

How does Jesus' prayer in John 17 relate to 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1?

John 17:20-23

He prayed for believers to be one with the Father and Him.
That contradicts being bound with unbelievers.

What do the cross-references on Day Five add to understanding verses 14–7:1?

1 Corinthians 15:33

Bad company corrupts / ruins good morals. Don't be deceived about that.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6

God instructed His people not to make covenants with people who don't know Him.

Ezekiel 22:26

God's people are to make a distinction between the holy and the profane / common, the clean and the unclean.

Leviticus 10:1-11

Verse 10 says God's priests are to make distinctions between the holy and profane and the clean and unclean. This parallels with the verses in 2 Corinthians—believers are cleanse themselves and be holy.

The warning in these verses is what happened to Nadab and Abihu—priests. God killed them for approaching Him in an unholy way. They were careless and disobedient.

Ask your group if they hear rationalization about being bound / yoked with unbelievers. Do they do it?

What is the theme for this chapter? Maybe something like:

No cause for offense; don't be bound with unbelievers

To end this discussion, you can ask how this chapter has spoken to any of them—any application that has not yet been brought out in the discussion.

2 CORINTHIANS
LEADER GUIDE
Lesson 7

Lesson emphasis
2 Corinthians 7

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what they are learning from their study of 2 Corinthians. Also give them time to share. Ask if they've seen any lessons for life from what Paul wrote about himself or about the Corinthians. Ask what they've learned about relationships in the body of Christ from 2 Corinthians.

Then you can ask what they remember about the content of 2 Corinthians.

There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Paul was dealing with a strained relationship with the Corinthians as he defended his ministry to and for them.

the ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant
the ministry of reconciliation—presenting the gospel

Paul did not lose heart in ministry, even when facing severe afflictions.

The Corinthians were restrained in their affections toward Paul and Timothy.
Paul warned them about being bound with unbelievers, idolatry.

2 CORINTHIANS 7

Verses 1-4

How does this chapter begin? What is the connection with chapter 6?

Therefore...promises, probably referring to 6:16-18 promises.
Cleanse ourselves from defilement—referring to 6:17.

Paul requested the Corinthians to make room for them in their hearts.
Compare this with 6:11-13.

Paul and Timothy had the Corinthians in their hearts.

“Boasting” becomes a key word again in this chapter.
Paul's boasting was in or toward the Corinthians because of Titus's report.

boasting, *kauchesis*—“state of being rightfully proud”¹⁰

Verses 5-16

Who and what are these verses about? Ask your group what they learned from their study. Tell them to look at the map and “Sequence of Events in Paul’s Life after His Conversion” as visual aids.

Paul was overflowing with joy about the Corinthians, because Titus came to Macedonia and reported to Paul about his visit with them. Although Paul and Timothy were afflicted in Macedonia, they were comforted by the good news from Corinth.

Evidently, Paul had sent Titus to the Corinthians to see how they responded to his letter. It had caused them sorrow, but they had repented and were mourning, longing, and zealous for Paul. Titus’s report gave comfort and joy to Paul.

Titus had been comforted and refreshed by the Corinthians.

Ask what your group learned about Titus from this chapter and cross-references.

Titus 1:4-5; 2:1, 15; 3:8, 12-15

Paul left him in Crete to set things in order and appoint elders in the churches of the cities on the island. He was to speak sound doctrine with authority and confidently.

Paul wanted him to come to him after Artemas or Tychicus got to Crete.

Galatians 2:1-3

Titus was an uncircumcised Greek. Paul took him to Jerusalem along with Barnabas.

2 Timothy 4:9-10

Paul had evidently sent Titus to Dalmatia. It seems Paul sent Titus as his representative to several places.

2 Corinthians 2:12-14

Paul had explained earlier in this letter that he didn’t go through Corinth on his way to Macedonia was because he didn’t find Titus in Troas. It seems he wanted the report from Corinth before he visited there.

Was Titus the only person Paul sent to check on a church?

1 Thessalonians 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 4:14-21

Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica and to Corinth.

¹⁰ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). GK3018.

Lead the discussion back to 2 Corinthians 7. Ask about verses 8-12.

Paul had written a letter causing sorrow / grief for the Corinthians. He regretted it and then didn't when he heard it had resulted in good.

NOTE: Commentators disagree on whether or not the letter was 1 Corinthians or a letter between 1 and 2 Corinthians.

What are the two kinds of sorrow / grief in this chapter?

Sorrow / grief according to God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation.
Sorrow /grief of the world produces death.

How does regret compare with repentance? Ask your group what they learned from the cross-references.

repentance (*metanoia*)—"a change of mind which results in a change of life(style)"¹¹

Hebrews 12:14-17

Esau didn't repent, though he was tearful and seemingly sorrowful.

1 Samuel 15

Saul disobeyed God's instructions to him regarding the Amalekites. When confronted by Samuel, he repeatedly said he had sinned. But it was Samuel who carried out God's instructions. The Lord regretted making Saul king.

2 Samuel 11:1-12:13

After David's sins of adultery and murder, he was convicted by the Lord and turned from his sin, confessing it to Nathan and the Lord. David repented.

How can knowing these truths help believers now? What about dealing with others?
Give your group time to discuss application regarding worldly sorrow and godly sorrow.

According to verses 11-12, what did the godly sorrow produce in the Corinthians?

Earnestness

Vindication of yourselves (ESV—eagerness to clear yourselves)

Indignation, regarding what they had done or not done

Fear

Longing and zeal, compare with verse 7, for Paul and also for obedience

Avenging of wrong / punishment

They demonstrated innocence in the matter. The matter of 2:4-11.

Titus said they obeyed in verse 15.

¹¹ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). GK3567.

Paul again referred to the letter stating that he wrote it, not for the sake of the one offended or the offender, but that the Corinthians might know their earnestness for Paul.

How does this chapter end?

Paul had boasted to Titus about the Corinthians, and he was rejoicing because it proved to be true. Titus reported their obedience.

To end this discussion, ask what they remember about chapters 1–7. Use their list on Day Five or the At a Glance chart as visual aid. Give them time to summarize what they've studied in these chapters.

Chapter 7 returns to the matter begun in chapters 1 and 2, the planned visit and the letter.

In chapters 3–6, there are several instances where Paul mentioned the relationship he had with the Corinthians. His desire was for them to open their hearts to Timothy and to himself as they had to the Corinthians.

Ask your group how they summarized chapter 7 on their At a Glance chart.

Titus's report of the Corinthians' godly sorrow

How does this letter of 2 Corinthians help believers now when facing difficult relationships? Ask your group what they've learned as lessons for life from 2 Corinthians 1–7.

2 CORINTHIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 8

Lesson emphasis

- 2 Corinthians 8–9
- Giving

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking what your group remembers from 2 Corinthians 1–7. Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart if they need help remembering.

It begins with comfort in affliction. Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be sorrowful. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Chapter 3 compares the ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant, with the old covenant, the Law. Probably some false apostles in Corinth were teaching the old covenant.

Then Paul said that they did not lose heart in ministry, even when facing their afflictions. He continued writing about the ministry, the ministry of reconciliation—presenting the gospel so people are reconciled to God.

Throughout chapters 1–6, Paul referred to his relationship with the Corinthians and asked them to make room in their hearts for Timothy and him. It was a strained relationship. The Corinthians were restrained in their affections toward Paul and Timothy.

Paul warned them about being bound with unbelievers, idolatry.

In chapter 7, Paul referred to a letter he wrote which caused sorrow / grief to the Corinthians but also repentance. Titus brought news of how they received it, and Paul rejoiced. He ended chapter 7 by saying he had confidence in them.

2 CORINTHIANS 8

Verses 1-6

How did Paul approach the subject of giving with the Corinthians?

The grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia

NOTE: Refer your group to the map, if needed.

The churches in Macedonia were being afflicted, as were saints in Achaia.
But they liberally / generously gave out of their poverty.

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus commended the poor widow who gave out of her poverty. She gave all she owned, evidently trusting God to provide her needs.

They wanted the favor of helping the saints—maybe the saints in Judea.
In 2 Corinthians 1:15-16, Paul’s plan had been for the Corinthians and the churches in Achaia to help him financially on his way to Judea.

But first they gave themselves to the Lord and Paul, Timothy and Titus—the very thing Paul desired from the Corinthians.

Titus had previously begun a work of giving among the Corinthians, so he was sent to complete it.

Ask your group what they think about giving being referred to as a gracious work / act of grace. Also, you can begin a list of what these chapters teach about giving. See last page as an example.

Verses 7-15

What is the exhortation? The basis? The history?

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to abound in this gracious work (act of grace) as the Macedonians had. They did abound / excel in faith, utterance / speech, knowledge, earnestness, and love. It was a way of proving their sincerity.

Jesus is the example of the rich becoming poor for others to be made rich—not in money, but spiritual riches.

Paul further encouraged them by writing that the Corinthians had been the first to desire and give. Now they needed to complete the readiness and desire. So he was sending Titus.

What are the principles of giving in verses 12-15?

Giving is based on what a person has, not what he doesn’t have.
It’s for equality / fairness; one’s abundance supplying the need of another.
Paul supported his statement by quoting from Exodus 16:18 about equality.

Ask your group what they think about these things and how they see church participation in this gracious work / act of grace.

Verses 16-24

What happened in this paragraph? What did Paul want the Corinthians to know?

Titus agreed to go to Corinth; he wanted to go again. Verse 23 calls him Paul's partner and fellow worker among the Corinthians.

A famous brother was sent along with Titus. This brother had been appointed by the churches to travel with Paul in the gracious work of giving. This was a precaution so the ministry not be discredited.

And even another tested and diligent / earnest brother was sent with them. The churches wanted all of this to be honorable and look that way to people.

Verse 23 refers to these brothers as messengers of the churches.

Ask if they know the integrity of the people they give money to. How can they know? How accountable should churches and others be in handling donations?

What was Paul's final exhortation in this chapter?

Show Titus and the others coming with him the proof of your love.
Show them Paul and Timothy's reason for boasting about them.

2 CORINTHIANS 9

How does this chapter continue from chapter 8?

It continues the subject of giving.

Paul didn't need to write the saints in Achaia about giving. They already wanted to give. He had boasted about their readiness to Titus and the Macedonians.

But he sent them ahead so the gift would be ready when he got there.

What was the concern?

That the promised blessing not be affected by covetousness

NOTE: The ESV does not say anything about covetousness.

Verses 6-15

What are principles of giving in these verses? Discuss each as it comes up.

Sow sparingly= reap sparingly
Sow bountifully= reap bountifully

Do as purposed / decided in the heart—not grudgingly / reluctantly or under compulsion, but cheerfully

God’s grace abounds to sufficiency in everything. He gives the abundance for every good deed, including giving. Paul quoted Psalm 112:9 about the one who gives.

People who give are enriched in everything.

Thanksgiving is given to God.

It’s a ministry of service to fully supply the saints’ needs.
Those who receive give thanks to God and glorify Him.
They pray for the giver.

Ask what your group learned about God from this chapter and give them time to discuss how each point applies to them.

He is able
He abounds in grace
He supplies all—Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12

Thanksgiving to Him, glorify Him
Surpassing grace
His indescribable / inexpressible gift

How does this chapter close?

Thanksgiving to God
His indescribable / inexpressible gift is Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection
—the gospel, life in Him.

Where did Paul put the focus? Why?

On God because it all comes from Him

Give time for your group to discuss how this should be their focus in all, especially in giving.

What are chapters 8 and 9 about? What are possible themes?

These chapters are a segment in 2 Corinthians about giving.

Chapter 8 Corinthians began gracious gift, now finish it
Chapter 9 Bountiful giving / generous contribution

Ask if anything in chapters 8 and 9 changed how they view giving.

Giving

Liberally / generously

Help saints

Gracious work / act of grace

Equality / fairness

Supplying needs

Take precautions

Sow sparingly= reap sparingly; sow bountifully= reap bountifully

Cheerfully

Glory, thanks to God

2 CORINTHIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 9

Lesson emphasis

- 2 Corinthians 10–11

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what they remember about the letter of 2 Corinthians. Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart if they need help remembering.

It begins with comfort in affliction. Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again and be in sorrow / pain. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Paul said that Timothy and he didn't lose heart in ministry, even when facing afflictions.

Throughout chapters 1–7 Paul referred to his relationship with the Corinthians, and asked them to make room in their hearts for Timothy and him. It was a strained relationship. The Corinthians were restrained / restricted in their affections toward Paul and Timothy. Paul warned them about being bound / unequally yoked with unbelievers, idolatry.

Chapter 7 connects with chapters 1–2. Paul referred to a letter he wrote which caused sorrow / grief to the Corinthians, but also repentance. Titus brought news of how they received it, and Paul rejoiced. He ended chapter 7 by saying he had confidence in them.

Chapters 8 and 9 are a segment in 2 Corinthians about giving. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to complete what they had begun a year before, and he sent Titus again to stimulate the gracious work / act of grace.

How do chapters 10–11 fit with 2 Corinthians 1–9?

Paul goes back to his strained relationship with the Corinthians. He exposes even more of what was going on there. The emphasis is stronger in these chapters than in 1–7.

He refers to war and a contrast between the false apostles of Satan at Corinth and himself, a true apostle appointed by God.

2 CORINTHIANS 10

Verses 1-6

What are these verses about? The situation?

Wrong thinking about Paul and the Lord
Some thought Paul lived according to the flesh.
Then he brought up war, weapons, destruction of fortresses / strongholds.

The war was against speculations / arguments and thinking against the knowledge of God.

What value did Paul and Peter place on knowledge?

2 Corinthians 6:4-6 and 8:7

Paul and Timothy showed themselves to be God's servants in knowledge.

Paul commended the Corinthians in saying they abounded / excelled in knowledge.

2 Peter 1:1-3

The apostle Peter wrote to believers about grace and peace being multiplied in knowledge, the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus. He granted believers everything that pertains to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him.

How do these verses about knowledge apply to believers now?

Lead the discussion back to 10:5.

The war was to be won by taking thoughts captive to obedience of Christ.

You can ask your group if they've ever had to take any of their thoughts captive to obey? Give time for them to discuss application. Are they in situations where people are saying things against what God says is true? Have they been accused of walking in the flesh?

What does verse 6 say about obedience?

Paul was ready to punish disobedience, but not until the Corinthians' obedience was complete.

It seems that he wanted first for the true believers there to understand and think properly before he did anything about it. Hopefully, they would obey before he punished disobedience.

Verses 7-11

What were the Corinthians doing? How were they thinking?

Looking at things outwardly (ESV—look at what is before your eyes), specifically about Paul's authority. He clearly stated that the Lord gave him the authority to build them up.

Then he wrote about his letters, which were weighty and strong, in contrast with his personal presence, which was unimpressive. Some there were saying these things about him. They said his speech was contemptible / no account.

He corrected the thinking—he was the same in person as in his letters.

Verses 12-18

How does Paul's explanation or defense continue?

He didn't compare himself with those who commended themselves.
They compared themselves with themselves, but had no understanding.

You might ask your group if they see this happening now? Give time to discuss how.

What did Paul boast about? How did he defend his authority with the Corinthians?

He boasted about the sphere / area God apportioned / assigned to him as a measure to reach with the gospel and disciple. He reminded them that he was the first to bring the gospel to them.

Acts 18:1-5

Paul went to Corinth from Athens. Then Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy came from Macedonia, and Paul devoted / occupied himself to giving God's Word to the people there.

The growth of their faith would enlarge his sphere (ESV—area of influence) even more. He was concerned about their spiritual growth. He was given authority in this area by God.

He even wanted to go beyond them to other areas preaching and discipling.
He was commended by the Lord, not himself. Therefore, he boasted in the Lord.

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Speculation / argument; Paul's authority from Christ, boast in the Lord

2 CORINTHIANS 11

Verses 1-6

How do these verses further explain what was going on at Corinth? What Paul dealt with in this letter?

He was jealous for them to belong to Christ.
He feared that the devil was deceiving them to the point of being led astray from Christ.

Some preached / proclaimed another Jesus, a different spirit, a different gospel. But Paul gave them true knowledge from a true apostle about Jesus Christ, the gospel of God.

Verses 7-15

What are these verses about?

Paul reminded them that he preached to them without being paid or supported by them. Other churches supported him when he was in Corinth. Even when he was in need there, he didn't burden them with it.

Compare verse 9 with Acts 18:1-5.

When Paul was in Corinth, he first supported himself by working with Aquila and Priscilla. Then when Silas and Timothy came, they worked and Paul spent his time teaching.

What did Paul write the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:6-18? How does it compare?

Men who sow spiritual things among them, should reap material things. In other words, because he taught them God's Word and spread the gospel among them, he should be supported by them while he was there doing spiritual work.

But Barnabas and he didn't use that right in order not to hinder (ESV—put an obstacle in the way of) the gospel.

Compare this with 2 Corinthians 2:17.

Lead the discussion back to 11:10-11. How do these verses continue?

Paul would not be stopped in his concern for the believers in Achaia. He loved them.

Verses 12-15 explain in more detail. He would continue to do as he was doing in Achaia so false apostles would not have opportunity (ESV—undermine their claim) to claim the same.

Those false apostles were deceitful, disguising themselves as Christ's apostles, but they were Satan's servants.

How do the cross-references in Galatians add to this?

Galatians 1:6-9; 2:1-5

People were following Paul, and presenting a different gospel—a distortion of the truth. Paul checked out his gospel with the elders and apostles in Jerusalem to be sure he was accurate. But there were some false brothers whose teaching put people in bondage.

You can ask your group if they think such deceitful workers still exist close to the church now.

Give time for them to discuss this. You might even ask them who they listen to. Are they sure of how true they are?

What does verse 15 say about their end? Discuss the cross-references in Titus.

Their end will be according / correspond to their deeds.

Titus 1:16; 2:11-14; 3:8

There are people who profess to know God but deny Him by their deeds / works. What they do demonstrates that they don't know God regardless of what they say. That was the case with the false apostles of Corinth.

Believers are redeemed from lawless deeds (ESV—lawlessness) to be zealous for good deeds / works.

Those who speak and teach believers are to encourage them to good deeds / works. That's what Paul did.

Verses 16-33

How did Paul reason with the Corinthians in these verses?

Since they gladly tolerated / bore with foolishness, he boasted in pretend foolishness. He was weak in comparison with those who did what verse 20 says.

The list in verses 22-29 is what Paul experienced in serving the Lord.
If the false apostles were Jews, so was he. He wasn't inferior.
If they were Christ's servants, so was he.
But the things listed in verses 23-29 were most likely not experienced by the false.

What had he labeled such things in 2 Corinthians 4:17?

To him they were momentary light afflictions in comparison with the eternal weight of glory from faithfully serving Christ Jesus the Lord.

How does chapter 11 end, verses 30-33? Compare this with the cross-reference from Acts 9.

Paul boasted in his weakness—while in Damascus, the ethnarch / governor tried to seize him, but he escaped by being lowered in a basket through a window.

Acts 9:22-25

This seems to be the same event as Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33. The Jews plotted to kill him, but he discovered the plot. His disciples helped him escape by night in a basket.

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

Deception; Paul not inferior apostle

To end this discussion, ask your group if there is anything else in these two chapters that they want to discuss or have questions about.

Give time for them to share any other application from this lesson that has not been discussed.

2 CORINTHIANS LEADER GUIDE Lesson 10

Lesson emphasis

- 2 Corinthians 12–13

REVIEW

You can begin your discussion by asking your group what they remember about the letter of 2 Corinthians. Tell them to look at their At a Glance chart if they need help remembering.

It began with comfort in affliction. Then Paul explained why his plans to visit Corinth changed. He didn't want to go again in sorrow / pain. He spared the Corinthians by not going to see them at that time.

There was false teaching at Corinth and people questioning Paul's authority as an apostle.

Paul said that Timothy and he didn't lose heart in ministry, even when facing afflictions.

Throughout chapters 1–7 Paul referred to his relationship with the Corinthians, and asked them to make room in their hearts for Timothy and him. It was a strained relationship. The Corinthians were restrained / restricted in their affections toward Paul and Timothy. Paul warned them about being bound / unequally yoked with unbelievers, idolatry.

Chapter 7 connects with chapters 1–2. Paul referred to a letter he wrote which caused sorrow / grief to the Corinthians, but also repentance. Titus brought news of how they received it, and Paul rejoiced. He ended chapter 7 by saying he had confidence in them.

Chapters 8 and 9 are a segment in 2 Corinthians about giving. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to complete what they had begun a year before, and he sent Titus again to stimulate the gracious work.

In chapters 10–11 Paul goes back to his strained relationship with the Corinthians. He exposes even more of what was going on there. The emphasis is stronger in these chapters than in 1–7.

He refers to war and a contrast between the false apostles of Satan at Corinth and himself, a true apostle appointed by God.

How do chapters 12–13 connect with Paul's flow of thought?

They are a continuation of the segment begun in chapter 10. From chapter 11 into 12 is the continued subject of boasting in Paul's experiences.

Then chapter 13 continues the train of thought from 12:14 about his third visit to Corinth.

2 CORINTHIANS 12

Verses 1-10

How do these verses continue from chapter 11?

This continued the list of Paul boasting in his weaknesses begun in 11:16. His apostleship had been challenged, and he responded in 11:1-15 about false apostles.

He boasted in visions and revelations of the Lord from 14 years before. The man who had the visions was Paul.

He was caught up to the 3rd heaven, but couldn't tell what he heard. And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, he was given a thorn in his flesh to keep him from exalting himself / becoming conceited—the thing the false apostles were doing.

The thorn is described as a messenger from Satan to torment / harass him.

Paul asked the Lord to remove it three times, but the answer was about His grace which is sufficient. And His power is perfected in weakness. Therefore, Paul boasted about his weaknesses.

Ask what your group learned from the cross-references about the thorn being a messenger of Satan.

1 Corinthians 5:5

Satan can destroy a person's flesh. But that doesn't have to affect his spirit.

1 Timothy 1:20

Experiencing Satan's control can teach people lessons they need to know.

Job 2:1-10

Satan had to have the Lord's permission to touch His servant Job. Adversity / evil along with good comes from God, and does not have to lead to sin.

Deuteronomy 32:39

God kills and makes alive. He wounds and heals. No one can deliver from His hand. He is the ultimate authority. All things are under his control, even Satan's power.

At this point, you might ask if there is any application from Paul's thorn in the flesh for believers now. Give your group time to discuss it.

Then ask what they learned about weakness versus strength. Discuss application also.

God's strength works in believers, even in a believer's weakness. His power is perfected in weakness—Christians can always depend on His power working within.

Because of God's grace being sufficient and His power being perfected in weakness, Paul was content with weaknesses.

There is another list here of things he was exposed to.

Philippians 4:13

Paul knew God's strength, and lived accordingly. This verse is quoted a lot by many believers. You might ask your group if they really understand it.

Ephesians 3:14-21

This is one of Paul's prayers for believers. It's one we should be praying for one another.

His power is through His Spirit in the inner man / being, and is able to do far more than any believer thinks. That power, His Spirit, is within all believers.

Verses 11-13

How did Paul become foolish and why?

He wrote that he was compelled / forced by the Corinthians to be foolish, although they should have commended him. He was not an inferior apostle. They had seen him display the signs of a true apostle.

Signs, wonders, miracles / mighty works with perseverance / patience in afflictions

His foolishness was boasting, and verse 13 reasons in foolishness—he didn't treat them as inferior (ESV—favor them less); he wasn't a burden to them when he was there.

He also used sarcasm when asking forgiveness.

Verses 14-21

What subject does this letter turn to at this point?

He planned to go to Corinth again, and again would not be a burden to them—he would support himself.

Paul was their parent in the Lord. He cared for them. He asked them again to love him.

Not only did he not take advantage of them, but neither did any of the men he sent to them. Titus and the brother went to them in the same spirit and conduct as Paul did. They expended themselves for the Corinthians to build them up.

He knew what kind of servants Titus and the brother were.

1 Corinthians 5:9-12 and 15:33

Paul had written the Corinthians before about the company they kept.

Verse 20 states Paul’s fear—that he would not find them as he wanted or that they wouldn’t find him as they wanted. He didn’t want to cause sorrow when he went to them the third time, but he would not spare anyone who continued to sin.

He listed certain sins in these verses; sins he did not want to deal with when he got to Corinth.

The humiliation he wrote about was connected with their sins. He would be humiliated if they were not living as they should have been. He was their parent.

You might ask your group if they have the same attitude that Paul did when facing the situations he faced. Contentment in weakness? Love in correction?

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

His grace sufficient—content; Paul ready to come 3rd time to Corinth

2 CORINTHIANS 13

Verses 1-4

How does the flow of thought continue?

12:21 mentions those who sinned in the past / earlier and haven’t repented, then verse 2 also refers to those who sinned in the past / before. But verse 2 includes all the others.

These verses are about confronting sin.

2 or 3 witnesses to confirm the facts

A quote from the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy

Paul told them in advance that he would not spare anyone.

He would show them the power of Christ in him if he had to confront sin.

Unrepentant sin leads to more sin, divisions in the church, and eventually to death.

Who and what are verse 4 about?

Jesus, the gospel

Several times in this letter Paul presented the facts of the gospel

—Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Ask your group what lessons for life they see in verse 4 and the cross-references about the gospel. How do these verses relate to the life of a believer?

Weakness and power—Jesus died in weakness, but was raised in power.

Paul was weak in the flesh, but strong in the Spirit.
That's true for all believers.

Sin brings weakness and death.
God's power is over sin and leads to life.

1 Cor. 1:21-25; 15:4; Romans 1:4; Acts 2:22-24; Romans 6:8-14; Philippians 3:7-11
Jesus' resurrection shows God's power over sin and death.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31
This says the same as what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:17.

What power do believers have? Discuss the application.

Verses 5-10

What was Paul's instruction? And the results?

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.
Examine yourselves.

Failing the test means not saved. Jesus Christ is not within the person who fails.

The Corinthians needed to test themselves, and realize that Paul and Timothy didn't fail the test. They belonged to Christ Jesus.

What had Paul written the Corinthians before?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11
The unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom. Only those who are washed, sanctified and justified in Jesus will be in the kingdom.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 17
Believers are new creatures, no longer living for themselves. Christ's love controls.

2 Corinthians 5:21
Believers become righteous in Him.

How did Paul reason in verses 7-10? Discuss the word studies.

Timothy and he prayed for the Corinthians to do right.
True believers do right and are approved / meet the test—they don't fail the test.

Paul and Timothy were true, truly saved, and spoke the truth.
Their prayer was for the Corinthians to be made complete (ESV—their restoration).

Paul was not concerned for how it made him look; he was concerned for the Corinthians.

Then he again stated his reason for writing.

Ask your group to consider verses 1-10. Can they say they pass the test?

What happened when Paul visited Corinth the 3rd time?

Acts 20:2-3 and Romans 15:26-27

Paul spent three months there in Greece. As he was about to leave for Syria, the Jews set a plot for him so he went to Macedonia again. In his letter to the church at Rome, he wrote about the contribution for the saints in Jerusalem given by the churches in Macedonia and Achaia.

Verses 11-14

How did Paul end his letter?

With several instructions for the Corinthians and the greeting

Rejoice.

Be made complete / aim for restoration; be comforted and like-minded / agree.

Live in peace and the God of peace will be with you.

What is a possible theme for this chapter?

If come, not spare anyone. Test yourselves. Prayer—you're made complete / your restoration.

Ask your group what they learned from 2 Corinthians that they are applying in their lives. Give them time to share what they've learned.