



For the week of July 31



Monday, August 1 — 2 Corinthians 2

Chapter Summary: Paul encourages the Corinthians to forgive and restore a brother who had been under church discipline. He reminds them that restoration is always the goal of discipline. He also gives them an update on his situation and encourages them to live lives of distinction in

the world.

Devotional: Have you ever walked outside at night and smelled a skunk even though you couldn't see or hear one? Or maybe you come home and walk into your kitchen and you immediately know that something has gone rotten in the pantry. You can't see it yet, but you can smell it! On the other hand, maybe you've come into the house and smelled fresh bread baking or warm cookies just out of the oven. You know something good is coming even though you can't see it yet! Paul says that Christians are the aroma of life and of death. To other Christians who see us living our faith, we remind them of our eternal life. To non Christians who see us living by faith, it points to the emptiness in their own life. So how do you smell?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul says in v.1 that one of his goals is to make the Corinthian Christians happy. How can we make our brothers and sisters glad?
- Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians that the church needed to discipline a brother. Here he says that it is time for the discipline to end. What is the role of the church in forgiveness of an individual Christian?
- How are Christians both the aroma of life and death?



Tuesday, August 2 — 2 Corinthians 3

Chapter Summary: Paul reminds the Corinthians he doesn't have to commend himself to them because they know him. He also tells them how glorious it is to be in the ministry of life in the Spirit that is New Testament Christianity. It is much better than the ministry of the law and the old covenant. In Christ we have liberty and look forward to being more like Jesus every day.

Devotional: Tell a story about a time you learned a new skill or hobby. Did it happen all at once? How did you learn it? How have you grown in your knowledge and ability? Paul says that the Christian life is a transformation - it's a process. It has a definite beginning point, but it last a lifetime. If you are a Christian, tell how you became one. Talk about how you have grown in your Christian walk through your years of faithfulness.

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- What does Paul mean when he says that Christians are "living epistles" from God?
- Paul says the Old Testament was a ministry of death and condemnation. Is this a fair assessment? How is it true? How did the Israelites find life and salvation under the Old Law?



Wednesday, August 3 — 2 Corinthians 4

Chapter Summary: Paul emphasized that his ministry was to preach Christ and give light. Even though his earthly life did not always go as he wanted, the spirit of Christ in Him meant that he was never defeated. For the gospel's sake, Paul never lost heart because he knew that problems were temporary afflictions but heaven is an eternal glory.

Devotional: What gets you through the difficult times? Paul shared many of his frustrations in ministry but he explained that they didn't get him "down." As he explains how his hope in heaven gives him strength during times of adversity, we also learn another of his secrets. He was telling his brothers and sisters about the problems he was facing. Paul shared his concerns as well as his hope for the future. We can follow his example by sharing our problems but also sharing why we have hope that things will improve. This way we can help one another get through the tough days.

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul talks about some people who are blinded to the light of the gospel. How can people be blinded to the truth today? How can we reach out to them in spite of their blindness?
- Paul says his faith requires him to speak to others (v.13). How does what we believe shape what we say to others?
- What are some of the seen but temporary things and unseen but eternal things Paul talked about in verse 18?



Thursday, August 4 — 2 Corinthians 5

Chapter Summary: Paul shares with the Corinthians that he is looking forward to eternity in heaven but that he is also excited about ministry now. He tells them that we walk by faith, not by sight. Because we trust God, we want to please Him in everything we do. We are ambassadors for Christ encouraging everyone to be reconciled to God.

Devotional: What do you know about ambassadors? How would you feel to meet an ambassador from a foreign country? What questions would you like to ask them? What knowledge would you expect them to have?

Paul says that Christians are ambassadors for Christ. How can we share our own personal experiences as Christians as well as the central teachings of the Bible with others? In our role as ambassadors we must remember that we are “always on.” At any time someone may be watching us and evaluating Christ. They may ask us questions about the Bible and our faith. Who do you know that is a good ambassador for Christianity? How can you be like them?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul says the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of all the promises God has made us about life after death. How is this the case?
- Paul longs for heaven and says that he is confident he will go there after this life. How can he have such confidence? How does that allow him to “walk by faith, not by sight”?
- How does the love of Christ influence how we judge other people (14-15)? How did Christ’s love and his judgement work together?



Friday, August 5 — 2 Corinthians 6

Chapter Summary: Paul tells the Corinthians about the marks of his ministry and lists the sufferings he has undergone as proof of his work for the Lord. He encourages them to live holy lives and specifically calls on them not to be “unequally yoked” together with unbelievers. He tells them that there is a level of fellowship and communion that must be reserved just for those who share a like faith.

Devotional: What makes a person your friend? How did you get to be friends? Paul talks to the Corinthians about their relationships and says that there is a certain closeness that must be reserved just for people who share our faith. This certainly doesn't mean we can't be friends with non-Christians, but we have to be careful who we let into our “inner circle.” How can we work to share our faith with others while also making sure our closest counselors will give us godly and wise advice?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul lists several great “paradoxes” of Christian faith. He says we are poor but make many rich, we are unknown and yet known and we are dying but also living. How can hard times bring out these contradictory moments in our faith?
- What do you think Paul was saying to us about being unequally yoked with unbelievers? How should that command be seen in our lives today?

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