



2 Corinthians

Integrated Bible Study Guide

How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies focused on the book of 2 Corinthians. These Study Guides are designed in a three part format...

- 1 Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
- 2 Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
- 3 The **Take Away Value** section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Background to 2 Corinthians...

Written by Paul in 56-57. Paul established the church in Corinth in 50-52. In this letter he refers to his second visit (2:1). This visit was probably to deal with a disciplinary issue and was written from Macedonia. Paul has made a painful visit (2:1) recently to the Corinthians over a disciplinary issue. Their relationship is going badly. The Corinthians have been criticising Paul and withholding their affection. They question the genuineness of Paul's apostleship. This letter was written to prepare them for Paul's final visit to them, to defend himself and to defend the gospel against conflicting teachings.

Study 1 – Essentials of Christian Community | 3

Appetisers

What things in life create communities (Christian or otherwise) and help maintain them?

Do you think that suffering would make or break a community? Why?

Main Course

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

How do we know that Paul is a real apostle?

Christians are bound up with Christ. What is one effect this has on the lives of Christians? See verse 5 and also Philippians 1:29, 3:10-11, 1 Peter 4:12-13.

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What happens for the Corinthians when Paul suffers for them?

What happens for the Corinthians when Paul is comforted?

When God comforts us what ministry should that lead to?

For what purpose has Paul suffered?

How do the Corinthians take part in Paul's deliverance?

What happens when many people pray?

Paul is concerned that his relationship with the Corinthian church and the relationships between the members of the Corinthian church lack closeness and community. How will Paul's thoughts in this passage help to bring them all closer?

Take Away

After reading this passage what should Christians do when other Christians are suffering? Put these things into practice for a member of your group or congregation now or during the week.

How can suffering make a Christian community stronger?

Appetisers

Have you ever had an experience of someone saying one thing and meaning another? What was it like? What did it make you think of that person?

If you have children and you need to discipline them, how do you know when it is right to end the punishment? What do you do next?

Main Course

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11

Paul has changed his travel plans. The Corinthians criticise him because they think he is fickle, unreliable and two-faced. Why should they know better? (Look for all the parts of the passage that testify to Paul's integrity and good character.)

Why did Paul change his plans; what were his motives?

What does Paul mean in verse 17 when he says “Yes, yes” and “No, no”?

Who is the basis for Paul’s faithfulness? Why does this make a difference?

Why should the Corinthians bring an end to the discipline of the member who grieved Paul?

Take Away

Why is it important that a Christian never say “Yes, yes” and mean “No, no”?

What promises has God made? How do we know he will keep them?

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What must always come after discipline?

How could Satan gain a foothold in peoples' lives if we are unrelenting in discipline?

Appetisers

Think of smells, good or bad, that you remember. What are they like? Are they powerful in some way? What do they make you feel like?

If you remember high school science, what do you know about smells and theory of gases?

Main Course

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6.

What is the gospel likened to?

Why is the gospel like a fragrance?

Who is the spreader of the fragrance and who are the instruments?

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Why does the aroma of Christ smell good to some and bad to others?

The Corinthians seemed to want a letter of recommendation about Paul to convince them that he was a trustworthy and competent minister of God. Why didn't Paul need such a letter? (see verses 2:17-3:6)

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. What is the new covenant?

Why does the message of Paul (as opposed to the message of his opponents) bring life to the Corinthians?

Take Away

Are you fragrant? That is, is God using you as an instrument to spread the Gospel? If not, why not?

How would you know if a minister is sincere and trustworthy? What would recommend him or her to you?

Appetisers

Some old things are worth keeping but many old things need to be replaced with something new. What are some reasons we might replace something old with something new?

Main Course

Read Exodus 34:1-35. What kind of laws were in the covenant God made with the Israelites?

Did the Israelites follow the terms of the covenant? What does this say about the covenant?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

In what ways is the new ministry better than the old? What are the differences between them? See verses 7-11.

Why did the Old Covenant need to be replaced?

What part did the Spirit play in bringing in the new ministry or covenant?

What part did Christ play?

How do we know that Christ and the Spirit are working towards the same goal and have the same purpose?

Take Away

What is the end result for us when Christ takes away the veil of misunderstanding?

Do you ever find yourself trying to please God through obeying laws? Why is this the wrong way to please God?

Look at the passage again and summarise all the great things Christ and the Spirit have done for us.

Appetisers

How can you tell the difference between a real minister of God and an egotistical religious leader?

Main Course

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18.

How should the Corinthians have known that Paul was a real minister of God and not a false teacher?

Why does Paul describe himself and his friends as "jars of clay"?

What does this mean for Paul's ministry?

How are Paul's trials helping the Corinthians?

What motivates Paul to preach the Gospel?

Paul is going through a difficult time: the Corinthians don't trust him, he is always travelling, he is often in prison, people are critical of his message and critical of his choices, people are trying to usurp his position by dragging his name through the mud and others are keen to just get rid of him. It seems from other passages in his letters that he is unwell. Why is he not discouraged?

Take Away

What are your limitations or weaknesses as a person?


Do you think these matter when it comes to ministry?

What "seen" things do we set our eyes on?

What "unseen" things would it be better to set our eyes on?

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