

Second Corinthians – Comfort in Affliction

In this series we will be looking at 2nd Corinthians, Paul's fourth letter to that city (see Appendix 1 for clarification). At the time of writing, we are in the midst of heavy restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic and all our Life Groups are meeting online. Please visit stjohnsdc.info and read the article titled 'How to meet online using Zoom' for some hints on leading in this new way.

Study One 2 Cor 1:1-11

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been 'good' about this time for people? We are looking for more than "I'm Good" or "I'm fine", so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is amended)

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

Read second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Also, you might like to try these questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- It says God "*comforts us in all our affliction*" (v4), do you think God protects us from affliction?
- Verse 5 speaks of us sharing "*abundantly in Christ's sufferings*" (v5), what does that mean?
- God is called "*The Father of Mercies*" (v3) and "*God of all Comfort*" (v3); do you know him by these names **OR** do you see Him like this? Share how or how not, in your experience, this has been the case.
- Verse 8 has the Apostle Paul speaking like he "*Despaired of life itself*", what does this mean?

- What is a healthy Jesus-centred perspective on suicidal thoughts and feelings? What about depression more generally?
- Verse 11 talks about prayer, specifically that the Corinthians *must* help the Apostle Paul by praying for him. What are your thoughts about this verse?
- Verse 1 speaks of ‘all the saints’, *but I thought that Saints were a Catholic Church thing*.
 - So what does the word Saint mean?
 - Who is a Saint?
- This passage talks a lot about affliction being linked to comfort and salvation.
 - Why do you think that is?
 - How are they linked?
 - How can you share in comfort if you share in suffering?

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God’s word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they’re struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

If you have time, take another moment to pray, to thank God for his blessings and the time he has given us to be able to sit and think on His word.

Appendix 1: History of the Epistles of Corinth

We call this Second Corinthians, but it should, perhaps, be called Fourth Corinthians, because it is the last of four letters that Paul wrote to the church there. Two of these letters have not been preserved for us -- that is why we only have First and Second Corinthians -- but they are not in the order that these titles suggest. If I can just recapitulate a little bit of the background, at least this one time, then you can refer back to this if you are confused about the chronology.

Paul began the church in Corinth somewhere around 52 or 53 A. D. He stayed there for about a year and a half; then he went to Ephesus, where he remained for a few weeks, and then he went on a quick trip to Jerusalem, returning again to Ephesus.

While he was at Ephesus, he wrote a letter to the church at Corinth which is lost to us. It is referred to in First Corinthians 5:9, where Paul says he wrote to warn them about following a worldly lifestyle. In response to that letter, the Corinthians wrote back to him with many questions. They sent their letter by the hands of three young men who are mentioned in First Corinthians. In reply to that letter, Paul wrote what we now call First Corinthians. In it he tried to answer their questions, and we have looked at those answers. He tried to exhort them and instruct them how to walk in power and in peace; and he tried to correct many problem areas in the church. Evidently that letter did not accomplish all that Paul intended. There was a bad reaction to it, and in this second letter we learn that he made a quick trip back to Corinth. How long that took we do not know. Paul calls it a "painful" visit. He had come with a rather sharp, severe rebuke to them, but again he did not accomplish his purpose; again there was a great deal of negative reaction.

So when he returned to Ephesus, he sent another brief letter, in the hands of Titus, to Corinth to see if he could help them. Now Titus was gone a long time. Transportation and communication were very slow and difficult in those days. Paul, waiting in Ephesus, grew very anxious to hear what was happening in the church there. He became so troubled that he left Ephesus and went to Troas and then up into Macedonia to meet Titus. There in Macedonia, probably in the city of Philippi, he and Titus came together. Titus brought him a much more encouraging word about the church, and in response to that, out of thanksgiving, Paul wrote what we now call the Second Corinthians letter, although it was really the fourth of a series of letters.¹

¹ <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/2-corinthians/why-does-it-hurt-so-much>

Second Corinthians – Paul’s Pains & God’s Comforts

Study Two - 2 Cor 1:12-2:4

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. How has their week been?
- What has been ‘good’ about this time for people? We are looking for more than “I’m Good” or “I’m fine”, so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section’s aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren’t important, hence the occasional appendix is amended)

This letter is a part of a series of letters (or Epistles) between Paul and the Church of Corinth, the letter before this one has not survived to make it into the bible (known as the Severe Letter), and it is referenced here in 2 Corinthians. Suffice it to say that it dealt with matters concerning the detractors, or opponents of Pauls teachings, and that it was written to correct the church, however his detractors have been calling Paul out for some discrepancies and failures on his part, and this letter serves in part as a defence against what is being said of him. For further understanding see appendix 1.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

For a greater understanding of the word ‘vacillating’, see Appendix 2

Read a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Also, you might like to try these questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- Verse 2:4 speaks of Paul writing to the Corinthians out of affliction and anguish of heart...not to cause pain. Have you ever had to do something painful to help others, or to show your love?
- Paul is trying to be open and honest to an entire group of people, including those who have caused him pain/disagreed with him. What is it like to be so vulnerable and open?
- Have each member of the group sum up their opinion of Paul based on this (and last week's) passage. Ask for a word to summarise their understanding of Paul.
 - What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values?
- It says v.20 "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him". What do you think that means?
- Paul was at this time a well-established leader of the Christian movement and church, yet he does not call upon his authority, or his successes in other cities to defend himself, how do you think he handles these unknown 'pains' and detractors?
- It could be argued that Paul was using his openness as a model to help younger believers in the Corinthian church; by showing his pains and God's comfort, others might see God's comfort is available to them. How do you respond to this idea?
- Is it a good or a bad idea to show your own struggles to new/potential disciples?

Potential Take-Home Idea: Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn't need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

If you have time, take another moment to pray, to thank God for his blessings and the time he has given us to be able to sit and think on His word.

Appendix 1 – Background Information

The letter is difficult to date, for we do not know the amount of time that separated 1 and 2 Corinthians. It has been variously dated between A.D. 55 and 57.

Events between 1 and 2 Corinthians. The reconstruction of these events is helpful for understanding the issues addressed in the letter. However, there is no universal agreement on these matters.

1. The Corinthians probably rectified most of the practical abuses Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians.

2. However, because of the arrival of the intruders (Paul's opponents), conditions at the church had deteriorated, thus calling for Paul's painful visit (see 2:1; 12:14; 13:1–2).

3. Titus was sent from Ephesus to Corinth with the severe letter in which Paul called for the discipline of the wrongdoer (2:3–9; 7:8–12). Paul instructed Titus to organize the collection for Jerusalem (8:6). Titus was to meet Paul in Troas or in Macedonia (2:12–13; 7:5–6).

4. Paul left Ephesus, then suffered his affliction in Asia (1:8–11), and then crossed to Macedonia to organize the collection in the churches there (2:13; 8:1–4).

5. Titus arrived in Macedonia with the report of the Corinthians' response to the severe letter (7:5–16).

6. On returning to Macedonia and hearing of new problems at Corinth, the apostle wrote 2 Corinthians.

7. Paul spent several months at Corinth (Acts 20:2–3), at which time he authored Romans.^[1]

Appendix 2 – Vacillating

Did I use lightness.—Ἐλαφρία (lightness) is found nowhere else in the New Testament, although the adjective occurs twice (chap. 4:17 and Matth. 11:30), but not with an ethical signification. Χρῆσθαι, when used with reference to moral states or qualities, means to have a hand in, to be occupied with, to enter upon, some business, and is equivalent to: behaving or conducting one's self in a certain manner. Ἄρα, in an interrogative sentence, implies that the inquirer will wait for an answer (well, really! indeed! comp. [Jelf. Gr. Gram., § 873, 2.] Passow I., 377), and hence indicates necessarily no logical deduction (a consequence from this state of thing).^[2]

[1] Dockery, D. S. (1998). [The Pauline Letters](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (pp. 561–562). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[2] Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., Kling, C. F., & Wing, C. P. (2008). [A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 2 Corinthians](#) (p. 22). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Second Corinthians – NEW

In this series we will be looking at 2nd Corinthians, Paul's fourth letter to that city (see Appendix 1 for clarification). At the time of writing, we are in the midst of heavy restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic and all our Life Groups are meeting online. Please visit stjohnsdc.info and read the article titled 'How to meet online using Zoom' for some hints on leading in this new way.

Study Three 2 Cor 2:5-17

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been 'good' about this time for people? We are looking for more than "I'm Good" or "I'm fine", so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-17

Read a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences between the translations.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Also, you might like to try these questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- Have each member of the group sum up their opinion of Paul based entirely on these (and previous) passages. Ask for a word to summarise their understanding of Paul.
- What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values with this section?
- Verse 5 mentions a person who has 'caused pain' and then in v.t we read: "For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, ⁷so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him"
- Have a discussion about the meaning of these verses and how they relate to church and life today.

- In 2:10-11 Paul speaks of Satan. What do you believe about Satan?
 - (Answers may vary, some people believe Satan is make believe, others a representation of evil, others a real spiritual being. Find out what the group believes and then compare your answers to what Paul seems to be saying.)
- In 2:10 Paul says that by forgiving others, in the presence (or person) of Christ would prevent us being 'outwitted' by Satan. What do you think that means?
- Paul also talks about these Christians not being 'ignorant of [Satan's] designs. What are Satan's designs?
- A door was opened for Paul in Troas, yet he chose not to take full advantage of this because his spirit was not at rest. Have a discussion about making Godly plans. What does it mean to have a door open for you? What might Paul have meant when he described his spirit as not being at rest?
- Verse 17 speaks of 'peddlers of God's Word', and how they are 'men of sincerity'. How can we tell if our faith is sincere?

Potential Take-Home Idea: Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn't need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.'

Or if you started last week, look over those epistles if time allows, ask how your members may add or change it from this week's reading.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

If you have time, take another moment to pray, to thank God for his blessings and the time he has given us to be able to sit and think on His word.

Roman Military Triumphs

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

A Roman military triumphal procession was one of the grandest spectacles of ancient times. It was granted to a conqueror only when certain conditions had been fully complied with. Among these it was required that the victory be complete and decisive, that it should be over a foreign foe, that at least five thousand of the enemy should be slain in a single battle, that the conquest should extend the territory of the state, and that it put an end to the war. When the senate decided that all required conditions had been met, a day was appointed and every necessary arrangement was made for the splendid pageant. When the day arrived the people crowded the streets and filled every place from which a good view of the procession could be obtained. The temples were all open and decorated with flowers, and incense was burned on every altar. Fragrant odors from burning spices were profusely scattered through the temples and along the streets, filling the air with perfume.

In the procession were the senate and chief citizens of the state, who by their presence honored the conqueror. The richest spoils of war—gold, silver, weapons of every description, standards, rare and costly works of art, and everything that was deemed most valuable by either conqueror or vanquished—were carried in open view in the procession. The general in whose honor the triumph was decreed rode in a chariot that was of peculiar form and drawn by four horses. His robe was embroidered with gold, and his tunic with flowers. In his right hand was a laurel bough, and in his left, a scepter. On his brow there was a wreath of Delphic laurel. Amid the shouts of the soldiers and the applause of the populace, the conqueror was carried through the streets to the temple of Jupiter, where sacrifices were offered, after which there was a public feast in the temple.

To the splendors of such a scene the apostle doubtless alludes in our text-verse, and also in Colossians 2:15: “and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”²

Savour (or Fragrance)—retaining the image of a triumph. As the approach of the triumphal procession was made known by the *odor* of incense scattered far and wide by the incense-bearers in the train, so God “makes manifest by us” (His now at once triumphed over and triumphing captives, compare Lu 5:10, “Catch,” literally, “Take captive so as to preserve alive”) the sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ, the triumphant Conqueror (Col 2:15), everywhere. As the *triumph* strikes the eyes, so the savor the nostrils; thus every sense feels the power of Christ’s Gospel.³

² Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. (1998). [Manners & customs of the Bible](#) (pp. 541–542). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

³ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 2, p. 303). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Second Corinthians – Lifting the Veil of God’s Glory

Study Four 2 Cor 3:1-18

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been ‘good’ about this time for people? We are looking for more than “I’m Good” or “I’m fine”, so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section’s aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren’t important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Today’s passage references a story from the history of the Israelites so we recommend reading a bit of that before getting stuck into 2 Corinthians.

Read Exodus 34:29-35

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn’t there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Read second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Read a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences between the translations.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn’t there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- How does this passage stack up during this time of social distancing?
- Have each member of the group sum up their opinion of Paul based entirely on these (and previous) passages. Ask for a word to summarise their understanding of Paul.

- What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values from this section?
- This passage speaks at length of a veil that was unlifted and lifted, what does Paul mean here?
- Explain in your own words what you believe Paul to mean when he talks about "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (V.6)
- Paul speaks of the Old Covenant being the ministry of condemnation – what are your thoughts on this?
- Verse 13 speaks of Moses wearing a veil when the radiance from God started to fade away; and Verse 18 speaks of all being with unveiled faces being transformed from one degree of glory to another – what do you make of this?
- This section ends with Paul talking of a transformation from one glory to another thanks to the Holy Spirit, does this mean that this transformation is/should be painless?
- It has been said that "*believers are bold and remove veils, because God is present within, and the Holy Spirit has undertaken a process of transformation.*"⁴ How does this affect/reflect your own witness and understanding of mission?
- Does this passage raise any concerns that you might be emphasizing Old Covenant ways that are distracting you from embracing a New Covenant life? What about your Life Group? What about your wider church community?
- Paul talks at the beginning of the chapter about how the Corinthians are their letters of recommendation; do you think the company you keep speaks or *recommends* you?

Potential Take-Home Idea: Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn't need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.'

Or if you started last week, look over those epistles if time allows, ask how your members may add or change it from this week's reading.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

If you have time, take another moment to pray, to thank God for his blessings and the time he has given us to be able to sit and think on His word.

⁴ Richards, L. O. (1987). [*The teacher's commentary*](#) (p. 878). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Second Corinthians – Godly treasure hidden in earthly bodies

Study Four 2 Cor 4:1-18

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been 'good' about this time for people? We are looking for more than "I'm Good" or "I'm fine", so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Read second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- Have each member of the group sum up their opinion of Paul based entirely on these (and previous) passages. Ask for a word to summarise their understanding of Paul.
- What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values in this section?
- Last week Paul spoke of Moses being veiled and how people who receive the Spirit of Jesus are in effect unveiled and being transformed into an image of glory (3:18), how is/isn't this passage to the previous chapter?
- Verse 4 says: The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers... Who is this god? Why do you think our God would allow such a thing?
- What do you think Paul means when he talks about treasure in jars of clay in v.7? (See appendix for more information.)
- Paul writes of being afflicted, struck down, perplexed and persecuted. Does this type of experience fit with your view of the Christian life?

- Verse 16 says: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.” Discuss.
- Verse 2 talks of not distorting the word of God. Discuss the complications of this given we now need to translate the scriptures from an ancient language into English 2000 years after they were written.

Potential Take-Home Idea: Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn’t need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.’

Or if you started last week, look over those epistles if time allows, ask how your members may add or change it from this week’s reading.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God’s word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they’re struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

Appendix 1 – Jars of Clay

7. “Lest any should say, How then is it that we continue to enjoy such unspeakable glory in a mortal body? Paul replies, this very fact is one of the most marvellous proofs of God’s power, that an earthen vessel could bear such splendor and keep such a treasure” [Chrysostom, Homilies, 8.496, A]. The treasure or “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” The fragile “earthen vessel” is the body, the “outward man” (2 Co 4:16; compare 2 Co 4:10), liable to afflictions and death. So the light in Gideon’s pitchers, the type (Jdg 7:16–20, 22). The ancients often kept their treasures in jars or vessels of earthenware. “There are earthen vessels which yet may be clean; whereas a golden vessel may be filthy” [Bengel].⁵

⁵ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 306). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Second Corinthians – Tents on Terra

Study Five 2 Cor 5:1-10

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been 'good' about this time for people? We are looking for more than "I'm Good" or "I'm fine", so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Read a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values in this section?
- Knowing the Jews sometimes used the word tent to be a reference to the tabernacle (*Tent of Meeting*) does that influence the meaning here?
- This section references being naked, clothed and unclothed, why do you think the author uses this imagery?
- Paul talks of being clothed with our heavenly dwelling, what do you think that means?
- Verse 6 talks about being at home in the body, and that means we are away from the Lord. What does this mean?
- Verse 7 says "*for we walk by faith, not by sight*" – What has this looked like in your life?
- Verse 10 speaks of the judgement of Christ. Do you think of Christ as a judge? How can your understanding of the rest of the NT fill in your understanding of v.10?

- Imagine trying to explain this passage to someone new to Christianity (maybe you have someone in your group who is in that situation). What would you tell them? Would there be anything you'd be tempted to leave out?
- Knowing that this passage was not written with verse numbers or headings, does its meaning change when you read it together with last week's passage?
- How does this passage change/confirm your understanding of living a Christian Life?

Potential Take-Home Idea: Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn't need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.'

Or if you started last week, look over those epistles if time allows, ask how your members may add or change it from this week's reading.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

Second Corinthians – Love Means...

Study Five 2 Cor 6:3-13

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been 'good' about this time for people? We are looking for more than "I'm Good" or "I'm fine", so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-13

Read a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- What insights do you get into Paul's motives or values in this section?
- Paul put no obstacle in anyone's way, what are some of the obstacles that have been put in your own path, (or what are some obstacles you have put in another's way)?
- How do you think that Paul is trying to show love to the Corinthians?
- Paul speaks of hardships and sacrifices made; how does this self-sacrifice reflect on your understanding of Paul?

- Note about this listing in verses 4-10: Hellenistic writers in Paul's day used such lists to promote their own virtue. Paul, by contrast, boasted of his struggles because they highlight God's power working through his weakness.⁶
- Imagine you had endured these hardships to show your love and commitment to the Gospel and the Corinthians, only to be rejected (as Paul surely was at times); How would you react?
- Imagine someone from church wrote a letter to you saying they had endured these hardships for you, how would you react?
- Paul commends himself by purity, knowledge, the Holy Spirit, genuine love and the power of God; how do you believe he commends himself like that, and are there any lessons you can learn from his example?
- Imagine trying to explain this passage to someone new to Christianity, what would you tell them?
- Knowing that this passage was not written with verse numbers or headings, does its meaning change when you reflect on last week's passage?
- How does this passage change/confirm your understanding of living a Christian Life?

Potential Take-Home Idea

Have everyone write up their own epistle as Paul, writing to the Anglican Church of Diamond Creek, it doesn't need to be long, nor complete, have them keep this epistle, we can revisit, revise and rework it next week.'

Or if you started last week, look over those epistles if time allows, ask how your members may add or change it from this week's reading.

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

⁶ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (2 Co 6:4–7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Second Corinthians – Surely you’re yoking?

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What is life like during lockdown? How are people feeling?
- What has been ‘good’ about this time for people? We are looking for more than “I’m Good” or “I’m fine”, so dig deeper if you can.
- What has been difficult or challenging about this time? Identify the needs of the group.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section’s aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren’t important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

- Make some initial quick reactions to the text. Don’t discuss them yet, just gauge the group’s reaction to reading the passage for the first time.

Read it a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn’t there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

- Leader Note: you might like to look up the quotes using footnotes in your bible and read their original context. Be warned that they are not all direct word-for-word quotes (more like paraphrases) so be sure to do this yourself before-hand so you don’t get confused.

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about us?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- How does this stack up during this time of social distancing?
- What insights do you get into Paul’s motives or values in this section?
- What does it mean to be yoked to someone/something?
 - Leader note: you may need to look this up yourself. Here is a link that explains what a yoke actually is: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoke>
- If two people are yoked together unevenly, what sort of dynamics might this cause?

- You might like discuss specific types of relationships such as a friendship, romantic relationship or workplace relationship.
- There are a series of rhetorical questions in verses 14-16. Work your way through each of them one by one, discuss what they mean and why the answer might have been obvious to the Corinthian Christians.
 - Is the answer obvious to us today?
- Read in isolation, it might feel like these verses are telling Christians they should socially distance themselves from unbelievers. This would however seem inconsistent with the behaviour of Paul and Timothy (the authors) who have travelled the world specifically to reach unbelievers with the good news about Jesus. How might the details of v.14-16 help us understand what they're on about more specifically?
 - Leader note: the general scholarly consensus is that the authors are not advocating complete separation from unbelievers in general, but specifically when it comes to issues of worship/idolatry.
- 7:1 refers to the promises listed in the previous verses; how would you summarise these promises in your own words?
 - How might these promises encourage us to live lives of purity and holiness?
- Is holiness something you think about much in your own life? What even is holiness?
 - The Bible Project has a nifty video on holiness here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9vn5UvsHvM>
- What's the difference between God's holiness and human holiness?
- What would be a healthy way to pursue holiness in your own life?
 - Are there unhealthy ways to pursue holiness?

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge-focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.