

Dear Teacher
Introducing Second Corinthians

If our only pursuit in life was God, how would our physical lives change? If our search through Scripture was driven by a desire to know God, how would our spiritual lives change? The answers to these questions are played out in the book of II Corinthians. We can witness situations resulting from those driven by a desire to know God and others who desired “self.”

On our trip to the United Kingdom my husband and I were able to see the Crown Jewels. We actually saw the smaller set in Edinburgh, Scotland and the larger set in the Tower of London. As you can well imagine, the security was immense. The government made it so difficult that if you did successfully steal the Jewels, you would be caught somewhere in the intricacies of getting out of the buildings. Ironically, there is nothing as precious as the character of God displayed in Scripture and yet we have free access. There are no dark mazes or hidden cameras to keep us away from God. All we have to do is read His Word. II Corinthians specifically opens up more than a dozen of these traits.

In attempting to glean out the riches of our Lord’s character, the theme chosen for the purpose of teaching our students is: Because God is _____, I will _____.

Here’s what we’re going to learn:

- Chapter 1 God comforts me/So, I will comfort you.**
- Chapter 2 God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word**
- Chapter 3 Because of God’s covenant of glory/I will be bold.**
- Chapter 4 Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart**
- Chapter 5 Because God’s work is eternal/I will have courage**
- Chapter 6 God lives in me/I will be holy**
- Chapter 7 God brings joy/I will encourage you**
- Chapter 8 God is gracious/I will give lavishly**
- Chapter 9 God has blessed me/I will give to you**
- Chapter 10 Because of Christ’s Example/I will be meek and gentle**
- Chapter 11 God provided sacrificial leaders/ I will be grateful**
- Chapter 12 Because of Christ’s power/I will boast in my weakness.**
- Chapter 13 God is powerful/ I will serve Him.**

Background

II Corinthians is an epistle of Paul written to the church in Corinth. He makes allusions in II Corinthians to his previous letter addressed to the same church. He wrote this in the early 50’s AD, while he was in Macedonia. The purpose of this letter was to dispute false teachers, reaffirm Paul’s apostleship and integrity, reaffirm his love for the church and charge them to do better, all while praising God for His wonderful provisions.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

When reading II Cor.1, I think of the battle Joshua fought against Amalek in Exodus 17. After Moses, Hur and Aaron climbed to the top of a hill to watch the battle, Moses held up his hands. When his hands were up, Israel would win. When his hands went down, Amalek would win. Moses' arms grew tired. So, they rolled a stone under him and Hur grabbed one arm and Aaron the other. After the sunset, the battle ceased and Joshua was victorious.

In this first chapter, we are called to be the support during each others' afflictions. 'Helping together' (vs. 11) and 'comfort' (vs. 3-7) are forms of encouragement we need to be practicing. 'Helping together' means 'with, under, work'; it's what Aaron and Hur did for Moses. 'Comfort' means 'with strength' or 'to come along side of and help.' (Wiersbe, Warren, Be Encouraged)

Today, we talk about comfort food, comforters, helping hands, and being a helper, but many times these are no more than a box of Kleenex and a warm blanket. All of those things do bring a certain amount of warmth to others' lives, but sometimes they lack proper motivation and depth. Are Kleenex and blankets enough?

This book challenges the way we do church. Our goal is to comfort like God has comforted and our help is through His power. In this chapter, comfort comes in various forms and help is demonstrated by prayer.

Paul has been afflicted in many ways. In Corinth, his affliction was due to slander. Yet, in good conscience, he stood up for his integrity and set out to encourage the church through the whole process. Paul lived a life of gratitude for God's comfort. He realized God's strength was sufficient where Paul's own strength failed. Paul's motivation was very focused and God-sized.

God comforted me; therefore, I will comfort you. How do we do church? Are we open and honest enough to allow people to get to know us? How can they fulfill God's design for the church if we cannot be vulnerable? On the other hand, do we hold up the arms of our afflicted brothers and sisters? How's our prayer life? How is our love life? We are a far cry from comforting each other the way we are comforted by God.

The demonstration of this chapter is going to influence our students more than anything we will ever say.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 1

Aim

The theme for this lesson is: God comforts me. So, I will comfort you.

Briefly, we will introduce the book of II Corinthians and establish the theme for the entire book.

Primarily, we will show that God's goodness obligates us to strengthen others and in return they will praise God.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of fellowship with purpose. Also, time to do "housekeeping."

Emphasize Again

We have just finished up the book of Galatians. What are two specific ways we are to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ written in chapter 6? (1-Restore them; 2-Bear their burdens) Did you have circumstances this week where you needed these things or you gave these gifts to someone?

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 1:3 (NAS)-"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort."

Learn

The study of Galatians will help us understand the book of II Corinthians. This book is also a letter written by Paul to a church, not in Galatia, but in Macedonia. Actually, he wrote at least two letters to this church in Corinth; the first we call I Corinthians. There were problems in this church, too, but they were different than in the churches of Galatia.

After Paul wrote his first letter, the people in the church tried to change. II Corinthians is a follow-up letter, because there were still problems that needed to be addressed; specifically false, slanderous teachers.

Over the next 13 weeks we are going to learn two particular things in each lesson: 1-A characteristic of God; 2-A characteristic we need to find in ourselves. For example, today we are going to learn about God's comfort of us. So, the main theme for today is: God comforts us, so we will comfort others. It will work very similarly throughout our study of II Corinthians.

Let's begin by reading II Corinthians 1:3-7 (New International Reader's Version attached). Since we are talking about comfort, *what does the word mean? Discovery Word for the Day:*

Comfort-strengthening someone. Last week we studied about bearing others' burdens. Comfort is very similar to that. Comfort is usually what happens when you bear someone's burdens.

How does God comfort/strengthen us or how has God strengthened you? (Let the students tell of past experiences). The most important way God gives us strength and comfort is through the Holy Spirit. Did you know that the Holy Spirit is called the Helper or Comforter? In John 14:16ff, we find that the Spirit is sent to dwell in us for this very reason.

Since God comforts us, we can comfort other people. *Give examples of how we can come along someone and comfort them.* In verse 11, we have one superior way of comforting others. Prayer strengthens others. We have already learned that God comforts us, so we need to ask Him for his strength for others. Not only can He answer your prayer, but calling on the power of God helps the burdened person understand you and God care about their situation.

Comforting people isn't always - easy is it? There are some people we want to help through hard times and some people we don't. *Do we enjoy strengthening people that are bad to us?* No, but we aren't given that option. God doesn't comfort us only when we are perfect or He would never comfort us. Even in the situation Paul is going through in Corinth, he is trying to enrich all of the people. Some of

those people had believed slanderous or false reports about him. *How easy is it to build people up when they are trying to tear you down?* It's not. However, since God comforts us, we can comfort others no matter what the circumstances are.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

There are some tasks that we perform that are considerably over our heads. I remember a friend of ours being offered a very specialized job she had never been schooled nor trained for. She was overwhelmed by the responsibility. That's precisely where we find Paul at the end of chapter 2. He even asks the question, "Who is adequate for these things?" (vs.16b) His dilemma may come as a surprise to our self-assured, irreverent society. His quandary involved the handling of God's Word. He was overwhelmed with the responsibility and overflowing with gratitude all at the same time. Have you ever cringed at the enormous responsibility of teaching children the Word of God? Have you ever wondered at God's grace for setting this responsibility on your heart? If so, you will spend the entirety of your ministry longing to know God's Word better and humbly marveling at the awesomeness of the task required of you. If not, than it's time to search through the Bible and find out who God is.

It has been fascinating to read different scholars' accounts of verse 14, 'He leads us in His triumph.' Paul is using a Roman phenomenon to make his point. The Romans had a celebratory parade when they conquered a people. The victorious general or commander would lead a parade of his defeated enemies. The Roman people would ecstatically cheer for their beloved victors as they marched their conquered opponents away to the Roman circus. The conquered would then entertain the crowds by fighting wild beasts. In the end the enemy would be slaughtered or be sold into slavery. Paul uses this imagery to declare God, the triumphant victor, leading him, Paul, the enemy, through town. Paul is giving thanks that God took him captive. It's rather an odd way of looking at your relationship with God, isn't it? Actually, it fits together beautifully with this incredible inadequacy Paul feels in being a minister of God's Word. Paul is a humble slave and grateful that God is his conqueror. He considers it a joy that he could be a fragrant aroma to God through his ministry.

God is my victor. In my teaching and other handling of God's word, I want to be humbled by the gravity of the ministry. I desire to be an enchanting fragrance to God, who captured my heart. I will not be able to control how others receive me, but I will do my best to live a life worthy of my calling. God bless your ministry!

Discovering God-II Corinthians 2

Aim

The kids will grasp that a part of our relationship with God is honoring His greatness. They will also get a glimpse of what a privilege it is to serve in His kingdom by sharing His Word with others.

Practically Speaking

This is fellowshiping with a purpose. Also, time to do “housekeeping.”

Emphasize Again

Last week we began studying what book? (II Corinthians) Who wrote this book and to whom? (Paul wrote it to the church at Corinth, which is in Macedonia) What did we learn that God does for us? (Comforts us) Because God comforts us, what can we do for others? (Comfort them) What is another word for comfort? (Strengthen)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 2:14 (NAS)-“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

Or

“Thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ,”

Learn

What is one of your favorite things to smell? (Let them share) Did you realize that we can be a sweet fragrance to God? Let's read vs. 15. We are a fragrance of Christ to God. To understand this we must turn to Ephesians 5:2 and read it. When Christ died, He became a fragrant sacrifice to God. So, when we teach the

truth about Jesus' death to those around us, we become a fragrant aroma to God. That's what verse 14 also tells us.

Do Teacher's

Illustration. We are not only a sweet smell to God, we are a sweet smell to those around us. Let's read verse 16. When we teach about Jesus, those who listen and accept Jesus consider us a pleasant aroma. Continue Teacher's Illustration.

However, there are those who do not like us to teach about Jesus. When we do, they consider us and our message of Jesus to be a disgusting smell. *Do you think we are disgusting when we teach others about Jesus?* No, remember that no matter what others think about us or our message, we are a sweet fragrance to God.

There is something very important to understand about God's Word. It is the most precious book you will ever read. It is a privilege for us to be able to read and study the words of God. It is also a great honor and responsibility when we share His truth.

Have you ever wondered why God would trust us to share His Word? God is so awesome and we are so sinful. In verse 14, Paul demonstrates God's awesomeness by describing Him as Paul's captor or master. Did you realize that God is triumphant over all things, even us? This means God is our master and lord and He has given us an incredible assignment. Our assignment is to share the story of Christ to others and bring a fragrant aroma to the world around us. This is no little task. We don't even deserve to carry God's Word, but God is a loving Master. He values us enough that He has given us His Son and His Word to share with others.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

You do not have to be around kids long before you realize they are enamored with transformation, whether it's superheroes, villains, princesses, car transformers, television shows, or bugs. It is part of their everyday life. This absorption with change was brought home to me when my son, while gazing starry-eyed into space, said, "Mom, are white-blood cells alive?" "Yes," I said. "Do they see and feel? Can I turn into one?" he asked. How they dream up their ideas, I do not know. I do know that we all are fascinated with transformation. Our world is driven by a makeover, fairy tale, 'something out of nothing' mentality. Is it healthy? Let's look at it this way. Maybe the desire to transform into a new creature is God designed.

II Corinthians 3 says, "We are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." This is the greatest, most powerful change we will make. How would you like to transform into a Christ look alike? To fully understand what Paul is getting at we must look at the chapter in its entirety.

Paul brilliantly sends his readers back fifteen hundred years to a much noted event on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 34). There he recalls the account of God's commandments given to Moses and His glory shining on Moses' face. Paul uses these two events, especially the latter, to vindicate, teach, convict, reprimand, challenge and edify the church at Corinth. Through this, we begin to see life in a new dimension.

This dimension is truly glorious. It is the glory connected with God. First, we see the glory of ministry. The old covenant was a ministry engraved in stone, a ministry of death (vs.7), of condemnation (vs.9) and one that faded away. Still it had glory. If the old ministry had glory, the new ministry full of life, love, righteousness and everlasting promise would abound even more in glory. This new ministry is different than Moses' veiled and fading ministry, because the veil is removed through Christ (14). We get to enjoy the "mirrored" glory of Christ first hand, until that day when we see it in full and are remade to look like Christ.

Transformed into looking like Christ; what a day that will be. At CHCC, we are blessed by Phil Mehrens' song "Glory to Glory." "And we all with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another." These are Paul's words put to a beautiful tune. While humming this song next week, think of the boldness we can possess with such a ministry of glory. *Because of God's ministry of glory, I will be bold.*

Discovering God-II Corinthians 3

Atm

The student will begin understanding the importance of ministry. They will learn of the glory it possesses and that glory is a continual process of growing more like Jesus. The theme will be: Because of God's covenant of glory, I will be bold.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Let's review the themes from the last two weeks: (God comforts me, so I will comfort you; God is triumphant, I will be a servant of His Word). Who is God triumphant over? (Us) Is being a servant of God a good thing? (It is a privilege that God wants us to share His precious Word). When we share God's Word, what do we become to God? (A fragrant aroma) When we share Christ's story, what kind of an aroma are we to others? (A fragrant or life-giving to those who believe or a disgusting/death like smell to those who reject God's Word)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 3:4-5 (NIV) "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."

Learn

Last week we were learning about the honor it is to be able to share God's Word with others. This week, in II Corinthians 3, we are actually going to travel back in time and take a look at a powerful event in the lives of Israel. Let's begin reading in Exodus 34: 29-35. (Teacher, you may want to read this out loud yourself rather than taking turns). As you can understand from these verses, Moses had just received the Ten Commandments from God. He went down the mountain to where the children of Israel were waiting. Everyone became scared, because of his bright and glorious face. His face shone because He had been talking to God.

Now, let's read in II Cor. 3:7-18 (Teacher, you may want to read this section out loud also. New International Reader's Version attached). *Do you hear the comparisons between what we just read and what we read in Exodus?* Paul is using this event from Moses to make a point of how grand and glorious the new covenant is compared to the old. Let's check your memory. *Do you remember talking a lot about the differences between the Law and the new covenant in Galatians? What were some of the differences?* (Spirit filled life rather than laws; Sonship and promise rather than slavery; Lives of faith and freedom in Christ).

Let's look through at a few of the verses from this chapter, and find what some of the differences between Law and the new covenant are. (Teacher, you may want to draw a line down your board. One section write Law or Old Covenant/One section write New Covenant and then make lists of what you read. You may need to explain or refresh their memories on the meanings of each).

Vs. 6-Old Covenant *kills*

New Covenant comes from the *Holy Spirit* which gives *life*

Vs. 9-Law leads to *death*

-Work of the Spirit *makes people right with God*

Vs.10-Old Covenant *not as glorious*

-New Covenant *far greater glory*

Vs. 11-Old Covenant *fades away*

-New Covenant *lasts forever*

We are going to concentrate on what verse 10 said about glory. This verse says that the Old Covenant has glory. *Why would the Law have glory when we can read all the bad things it brings?* (See if the kids can think back to what Galatians taught). *Who did the Law point to?* (Jesus) By pointing to Jesus and being a part of God's plan for us it does have glory. But, the New Covenant has much, much more.

Since the New Covenant has all of these wonderful things we see listed on the board, we can feel very confident when we tell others about God's Word. Verse 12 even says so. We have such **hope** that we can be **bold**. That's our theme for the day: Because of God's covenant of glory, I can be bold or straightforward.

The ultimate purpose of our boldness is to help others see Jesus. When we all see and obey Jesus, we can look more like Him every day. Isn't that what we as Christians want?

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

II Corinthians 4 can be a source of great encouragement for us in our ministries. Paul set up some guidelines by which he abided in his apostleship. We can use these in our own service.

Because God is merciful, we do not lose heart (1). In God's merciful plan, He endowed me as a servant of His Word; because of this I will not be reluctant to fulfill my ministry.

Our conscience bears witness that we do not deceive others, but teach the truth (2, 6). My purpose in life is to shine God's light in a dark world.

We are a servant to others for Jesus' sake (5). My motivation in ministry is not to lead people to myself, but to give up myself for others in the hope they will be led to Christ.

We are a vessel of God's power (7-9). My ministry is all about God's power and greatness being displayed through me. In so doing, people will be attracted to the God that can work through such a broken, fragile vessel.

We carry around Jesus' death in us (10-14). Christ's death and resurrection are my grounding and focus. I may suffer, even as Christ suffered, because of God's Word; but, I can look forward to His resurrection also.

We spread God's grace, so that He may receive glory (15). My ministry's aim is to bring God praise and glory.

At Ozark Christian College, there is a ceremony performed every Convocation. After the students and faculty eat together, the students are led in a pledge committing themselves to service and study for the year. The faculty is also led in a pledge binding themselves to a year of teaching truth and serving the student. It is a good idea to have a repeated event in one's ministry where a minister can evaluate and recommit himself/herself to God's service. II Corinthians 4 could be used to accomplish this goal, as a mission statement for ministry.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 4

Aim

We are going to focus on ministry. Tying in with last week's theme- Because of God's covenant of glory, I can be bold. We are going to challenge the student to ministry through the example of testimony. From here on out, ministry will become the primary avenue of application for our lessons. The theme for this week is: Because of God's mercy, we will not lose heart.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Let's review the themes for the book of II Corinthians: Chapter 1-God comforts me, so I will comfort you; Chapter 2-God is triumphant, I will be a servant of His Word; Chapter 3-Because of God's covenant of glory, I will be bold.

Last week we learned about the Old and New Covenants. When Moses received the 10 commandments, what happened to his face? (It shone with the glory of God). What are some of the differences between the Old and New Covenant that we learned in chapter 3? (Old Covenant-kills, leads to death, fades away; New Covenant-gives life, from the Holy Spirit, makes people right with God and lasts forever). Which Covenant has the most glory? (New Covenant) Since the New Covenant is so great, how are we to be when we teach of Jesus? (Bold) Do you remember what bold means? (Bold means to be straightforward and honest) What is our goal in obeying and teaching others about Jesus? (We and the

other people will grow to be more and more like Him)

✠Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

Galatians 4:1 (NAS)-"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,"

Learn

How many of you were bold in sharing God's Word to someone last week? (Let them share. You may also want to share your experience). Since we have God's precious Word, we can be bold and truthful. We have nothing to hide or be ashamed of.

In chapter 4 of II Corinthians, we are going to talk about serving God by using Paul as an example.

Let's begin with verse 1 (this is the memory verse for today). Paul says in this verse that God is merciful to him. *What do you think Paul means by this?* God is merciful in many ways, but, in this verse in particular, Paul is overwhelmed that God would want him to be a minister of His Word. We have talked about this before. It is a great privilege for us to be asked by God to minister. When Paul talks about not losing heart, he means we do not become reluctant to minister. Even if we are tired, scared, disappointed or busy, we never hesitate to share God with those people around us.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

When I was in high school, I invited a young man to church. Though I don't recall being overly disruptive during the service, my Mom confronted me at home. She said, "Do you want (this boy) to fall in love with you or God?" I thought about that a great deal. Even though I was only 16 at the time, I did need to get serious about ministry and that has not changed in the past 20 years.

Our ministries need to focus on God. II Corinthians 4:16-5:21 brings out controlling factors for our ministry:

Governed by things unseen;
Holy Spirit is God's pledge of resurrected bodies;

To be well-pleasing to God
There will be a judgment;

Fear of God,

Controlled by our love of Christ;

Christ died, I live for Him;

Persuade others to be reconciled with God;
Christ became sin.

We become righteous because

Are we properly motivated for the job(s) we have been entrusted with? The factors listed above sound vaguely familiar. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (4:7-10)." I believe Paul is trying to make his point clear. Our ministries are about God, not ourselves. If we are willing, God will take care of all the details. In the list above, we don't find incentives to be an ambassador for God like we would in the world. There is no promise of promotions, big houses, new cars or prestige. We don't care about that kind of initiative, do we? We are not governed by things we can feel, see and touch, but by things that are eternal and only temporarily out of our sphere of reality. We need not have a worry in the world. God has provided all we need to carry out our task. The only important things we do on this earth are the eternal ones. Makes life simpler, doesn't it?

Because of God's covenant of glory, I can be bold and straightforward. Because God is merciful and gives me a ministry, I will not be reluctant. Because God's work is eternal, I will have courage. My prayer for you is that people will fall in love with our Father because of your ministry.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 5

Aim

The student will understand that the world is only temporary, but what we do for God is eternal. While highlighting again the privilege of being in God's ministry, we will teach that motivation for ministry is God and not self. We serve God as a gift of love, because of what His Son did for us.

Practically Speaking

This is structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Review the themes for the last four weeks:
Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you.

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word

Chapter3: Because of God's covenant of glory/I can be bold.

Chapter4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart

How did we learn that God is merciful towards us? (He allows us to be His ministers, even though we don't deserve this privilege). What did you learn from last week's guest speaker?

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 5:20 (NAS)-"For we walk by faith, not by sight-we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

Or

"For we walk by faith, not by sight"

Learn

The last couple of weeks we have been discussing ministry. *Have you been thinking about how you are gifted to serve God? What particular ministries are you interested in?* (Take a good deal of time to let the students share their desires. If you have a non-talkative group, get the class started by asking specific questions. For example: Do you like art? Do you like to get up in front of people? Do you like to sing or play an instrument? Then help them understand how they can use those talents for God. Help the students think broadly about service: camp, community, schools, organizational, congregational, in their neighborhood, at home).

The theme for today is "Because God's work is eternal, I will be courageous." At the end of II Corinthians 4 and all of chapter 5, we learn of 6 reasons we want to minister for God. (Teacher, after discussing each point, write the 'reason' on the board). We will need volunteers to help read a verse or two at a time. We will read II Corinthians 4:17-18, 5:6-9, 5:10-11, 5:14, 5:18 & 20, 5:21.

4:17-18- This talks of how persecution for talking about God is only temporary and will be to our glory, and that glory is being more like Christ! Also, we aren't worried or controlled by things in this world, because we are focused on things that are eternal. *Discovery Word for the Day: Eternal.* Eternal means things that last forever. What we do for God will last forever. **Reason #1-God's work is eternal**

5:6-9-This talks a little more about life here in this world. When we live in these earthly bodies, we are away from the Lord. We would rather be with Jesus, but

no matter where we are, we want to be pleasing to God.

Reason #2-Be pleasing to God

5:10-11-It is a good thing to fear God. He is awesome! There will be a judgment day. When Jesus comes back, the good and bad that we have done will be known. So, we must tell those around us about Jesus. We want others to be forgiven and to live eternally with Jesus, too.

Reason #3-Fear of the Lord

5:14-Christ died for our sins and we are grateful for that.

Reason #4-We love Christ

5:18 & 20-We tell others about Jesus' death, because He reconciled us to God. We want others to know about this reconciliation.

Reason #5-Reconciliation to God comes through Christ

5:21-Jesus took on all of our sins on the cross and that is how we can be righteous before God.

Reason #6-Righteousness comes from Jesus

Paul gives us 6 excellent reasons why he ministered for God. We can focus on these things in our service, too.

As we know, it is a privilege to love and serve the Creator of this world. We understand that people are not always going to appreciate us talking about God. We may even experience hurtful times, because of our ministries. However, people can only hurt the outside body and that's only temporary anyway. No one can take away God's eternal promises of salvation and resurrected bodies. God's work is eternal. It's the only thing that really matters.

Devotional Thoughts for the Teacher

The next two chapters in II Corinthians will expose the heart of the Apostle Paul. In our society, we are used to such a demonstration revealing corruption and suspect behavior. Not so with Paul's heart. In chapter 6, Paul's heart shows integrity and perseverance in ministry along with love and admonition for the saints in Corinth.

As often seen in Paul's writings, he establishes what God has done for us and then how we are to deal likewise with others. This same pattern is being used here. God's great salvation is established and Paul defends his ministry. Paul testifies to the fact that he gives no one cause for offense (vs.3); he endures hardship and he loves with an open heart and broken-hearted discipline.

Do we follow Paul's example in our ministry? Are we so in love with our God and our fellow man that we do whatever it takes? The 'whatever it takes' attitude is exemplified in many lives throughout church history. One such person was John Wesley, one of several preachers that brought Christ back to England. He was credited by Woodrow Wilson for having saved England from the turmoil experienced by France (History of the Word in Christian Perspective). This quote of Wesley's seems to sum up Paul's philosophy of ministry:

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you ever can."

Whether Woodrow Wilson was correct about the impact of Wesley's life on England, I cannot say. It is a historical fact that, due to John Wesley's preaching, thousands of people gave their lives to Christ. The life of one man with a 'whatever it takes' drive can change the world.

The second half of chapter 6 deals with the intricate balancing act of living as God's people. The balance requires changing lives, but remaining undefiled by the corruption around us. Peer-pressure is not just a problem with teens. Paul wasn't just writing a guide to teen living, he was writing a letter to a church. Verses 14-16 shows the ludicrousness of "binding" ourselves together with unbelievers. The contrast between righteousness/lawlessness, light/darkness, Christ/Satan, believers/unbelievers and a temple of God/idols is addressed in rhetorical questions by Paul. It is reminiscent of the Sesame Street song 'One of these things is not like the others; one of these things just doesn't belong.' Each one of these nouns is mutually exclusive of the other. The question for us is, where do we, the temple of God, poise ourselves between monasticism and being a stumbling block for others? The answer seems to be enveloped in the question. We are a temple of God, and, as verse 1a says, our partnership is with God. God is linked with us and dwells inside of us. Our goal is to love and teach others into a relationship with Christ, so others can have that same relationship. Being involved in the world and not bound by the world is not terribly complicated when our focus is on God's kingdom.

Like our Christian forefathers, when people speak of our ministries may they see integrity, perseverance, love and, most importantly, God.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 6

Aim

This lesson will address the issue of living in the world and being changers of lives, not victims of Satan.

We will come back next week and discuss how 6:1-11, 7 and the previous chapters relate to Paul's own ministry.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Let's review the themes for II Corinthians

Chapter 1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you

Chapter 2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word

Chapter 3: God's covenant is glorious/I will be bold

Chapter 4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart.

Chapter 5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage.

From last week's lesson, Do you remember the six reasons we want to minister for God? (1)God's work is eternal (2) To be pleasing to God (3) Fear of the Lord (4) We love Christ (5) Reconciliation to God comes through Christ (6) Righteousness comes from Jesus.

⌘Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 6:16b (NIV)-"For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'

Or

"For we are the temple of the living God."

Learn

Have you ever gotten the feeling that you were being watched? It's a strange thing, but we usually know when we are being stared at. Try this: sometime when you are in a crowd of people, stare at one person. More than likely, they will get the feeling they are being watched and they will look back at you.

Why do you think people like to observe each other? (Let them give a few answers). We learn a lot when we pay attention to other people. We can see how people work through problems, how they treat each other, how they make people laugh, what makes people happy, etc. It's important to watch people, but it's also important to realize people watch us, too.

Paul talks about this idea of being an example in II Corinthians 6:14-18 and 7:1. We are going to read this section. (Attached is the New International Reader's Version) Being a good example is a big part of having a pleasing ministry for God. In this section we are told that we are not to be joined together with unbelievers. *What does that mean?* First, it could mean not being married to an unbeliever, but, since we are too young to be married, there must be some way it applies to us. It could mean our best friends, or kindred spirits, shouldn't be

unbelievers. *Why not?* Paul mentions a few reasons why it can't work. Verse 14-16 says that believers and unbelievers have nothing valuable in common, light and darkness can't be friends, Satan and Christ can't agree. All of these reasons listed show us opposites. We can't be in a dark room and a light room at the same time, can we? Well, the light of Christ shines in us and it doesn't in our unbelieving friends. The most important part of our life is God and that makes us different than everyone else.

BUT-does that mean we can't be around non-Christians? No, we want to be with them, because we know God and we want to share God with those who don't believe in Him. We just need to be careful that we are changing them rather than them changing us.

Remember, we learned in verse 16 that we are the temple of God. Do you remember how God dwelled in the Jewish temple in the Old Testament? He was in the Holy of Holies and the High Priest could visit Him once a year to ask forgiveness for the sins of the people. Now, since Christ became our High Priest and died for our sins, there is no need for an earthly High Priest to ask for forgiveness. We also receive the Holy Spirit in us when we believe and are baptized. So, we are like the Old Testament temple, because God dwells in us now.

According to verse 17, we are to be separate. We are to be different than non-believers because we are God's sons and daughters (18). *What kinds of things would we do differently than non-Christians?* (Especially in the light of their school year being in full swing, help them in the particulars of everyday life). Chapter 7:1 answers that question. We should be pure and unpolluted inside our bodies and in our minds. In other words, we are to be holy. Keep in mind that holiness means to be set apart, pure, with God's purposes in mind. When people watch us, they will know we are different. And people do watch us!

Even other Christians watch us. Not only do we set an example for non-believers, we want to make sure that our behavior will not hurt another believer.

It's not as difficult to be holy around non-Christians, when you understand that you are on an assignment. Your purpose is to show them the fruit of the Spirit in the way you live. You also need to tell them about Christ. You are on a mission for Christ!

When it comes to relationships, reserving your deep friendships for Christians is very important. We have the same goals, way of living, love for each other and God. Those are the qualities of the best kind of pal.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

Great blessings are hidden deep within our most troublesome times. Our leaps of spiritual growth seem to be the greatest when in desperation we use God's strength to catapult us to realms we have never been. I remember a friend of mine once saying that when he would literally fall on his face in anguish over a situation, he knew God would take over. Was God not there the whole time? You and I know that God is not the problem, we simply can't let go of our troubles. In II Corinthians, we have witnessed Paul in a time of struggle. His affection and concern for the church in Corinth is like a father longing to spare his son from the grief of bad choices. Paul, unlike most of us, does his best and then lets God be God. God blesses, too.

In chapter 7, we will see how God feels Paul's discouragement and sends a comforter. God is good and Paul never stays down long. In the midst of being encouraged, he turns around and encourages others. Warren Wiersbe lays out the chapter this way: God sends Titus to encourage Paul. Paul encourages the church. The Church reciprocates by encouraging Titus. The true circle of life is not a food chain, it's a support chain. Support can foster an environment for spiritual health.

As we see encouragement in this chapter, it comes in many forms. First, it comes in building up with words. Paul sincerely gushes over the church. He shows his heart is with the people in love and reconciliation. Second, his words are meant as a challenge. He is not one to mince words. Encouragement can come in the form of speaking the hard truth for someone's benefit. Third, the building up comes in a visit from a co-worker and friend. Just being together with those of like faith and circumstances can bolster one for months. We see that is the occasion here with Titus' visit to Paul. Fourth, the church rallied around this newcomer, Titus, and "refreshed his spirit."(vs. 13) A part of this refreshment would have been affection and care, but also their obedience and repentance encouraged both Titus and Paul.

We know who the author of encouragement and comfort is. Paul writes in verse 6, "But **God**, who comforts the depressed, comforted us." The theme for this chapter is: Because God brings us joy; I can encourage you. Joy in our times of affliction and happiness only can be supplied by God. Praise God that he cares about the experiences of our everyday lives. He always provides for us a way to be faithful and in II Corinthians 7 it is through encouragement.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 7

Aim

The students will understand that a defense of Paul's own ministry has prompted much of the letter to the Corinthians. The lesson will focus on the ways God encouraged Paul and how Paul encouraged others. The theme: God brings us joy/I will encourage you.

Practically Speaking

This is structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Review themes for II Corinthians:

Chapter 1: God comforts me/I will comfort you

Chapter 2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word

Chapter 3: God's covenant is glorious/I will be bold

Chapter 4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart

Chapter 5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage

Chapter 6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy

From last week, we learned that we are not to be joined to unbelievers. What does that mean? (We are not to be married or be very special friends) Does that mean we are not to be around non-Christians? (No, we are to be good to them so that they will know God) What makes us different than the rest of the world? (God lives in us. We are his temple and his children)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 13:11 (NAS)-"Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace;

and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

Learn

*(Teacher, write ENCOURAGE on the board). We're going to talk about how to encourage people. You need to be warned that it's a tricky word. It's very hard to get a definition for, because this word has so many jobs. It's kind of like owning a truck. If someone asked you what that truck did, you couldn't really answer it in one word. You would tell the person that it hauls things, takes you to work, 4-wheels in the mud, tows, etc. The main purpose of the truck is to get you from here to there, but there are many ways it can do that. That's something like what encouragement does. It gets us and others closer to God, but there are a lot of ways to do that.

But, before we talk about II Corinthians 7 and encouragement, we need to find out who did their homework. *Remember last week, the question was asked: What types of things happened to Paul in his ministry?* (Let the student discuss what they have found) Paul's ministry is talked about in many books, including Acts and most of his Epistles. There are two particular places in II Corinthians that speaks of Paul's ministry: 6:4-10 and 11:23-28. We are going to read 11:23-28. *(Teacher, you may want to read this out loud yourself). There is no doubt that Paul had a wonderful ministry, but he experienced a lot of hard times. Even in Corinth we find that Paul is experiencing bad times. We know that the people had been sinning and that is why Paul wrote his first letter. There were also false teachers trying to persuade the people to follow them rather than God. They lied about Paul to keep the church from listening to him. In verse 4 we can read

how Paul was dealing with all the stress. (Let's read) He has joy! Joy is different than happiness. Joy is peace that God gives us even in times of great sadness or pain. That's where ENCOURAGEMENT comes in. God cares about us in good times and bad. He sends us encouragement when we need it most.

In chapter 7, we will learn four ways in which we can be encouragers to other people. Encouragement is another big part of ministry, just like being good examples, having the right motivation, being willing and boldly speaking the truth. All of these things help others become more like Christ and that's the goal of encouraging someone! Like the truck example we talked about earlier, encouragement does a lot of things, but they all get people closer to God.

Looking back at what we just read in verse 4, we see that Paul is boasting or taking pride in the people of the church. He loves them and tells them how much he cares. *How is it encouraging someone to tell them you love them?* (Let the students discuss this). Love is a fruit of the Spirit. God loves everyone and we are to love each other. Our love helps people see God.

The second form of encouragement is in verses 8-9. Let's read this. *What is the encouragement in these verses?* This encouragement from Paul is one that we usually don't think is good. Saying the hard things to someone we care about is sometimes for the best. We understand by now that part of our responsibility as Christians is to encourage others to stop sinning. That's what Paul is talking about in these verses. He wrote his first letter (I Corinthians) to the church and many of them repented because of it. That was the intention of this form of encouragement.

The third way is back in verse 6. *How did God encourage Paul?* God sent Titus to Paul. Sometimes the best form

of encouragement is a friend to come by your side and be God's arms and legs.

The fourth source of encouragement is in verse 13. The church came together as a group of encouragers for Titus. *Think together-- how can a church encourage a person?* (Let them form a think tank). The church can encourage people by prayer, accountability, offerings of money, sharing testimonies on God's faithfulness, coming together in worship, etc. The church body can provide many forms of encouragement.

After all of these verses, *what is encouragement?* (Listen to their answers). It's still hard to define. It's loving, disciplining, being a friend and being a good church body. Encouragement is a commitment to do whatever it takes to help people be more like Christ. The wonderful thing about this commitment is that we have a great example. God always encourages us. That's why the theme of this week is: God brings joy/I will encourage you.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

Because God is gracious, I will give lavishly. In an offertory devotion in church one day, a young man stood and with much trepidation began to speak. He ended with a prayer that was more convicting than anything he had nervously uttered. To paraphrase his words, he said, "Lord, I know you don't need my money. Everything is yours, but thanks for letting me give to further your kingdom." He was right. God doesn't need anything from us, but He is gracious enough to accept our meager offerings.

Giving is rather a humbling event. What do you give a God who has everything? It will never be honoring enough. We quibble over whether we should still use the Old Testament system of a tithe, but since when can 10% of our gross worth be a satisfactory gift for our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer? Even idolatrous peoples give better gifts to their gods. What does a person do?

We must understand giving has never been about money. What is copper, nickel, gold or silver to God? Giving is an outward expression of deep gratitude. That's why the widow in Mark 12 and Luke 21 drew Jesus' attention. She understood what few before or after her have recognized. As we read in this chapter, giving involves joy, willingness, eagerness, earnestness, sincerity, cheerfulness, purposefulness, commitment and faithfulness. II Corinthians 7 & 8 calls giving a 'gracious work' (6, 7, 19). Temporal things will never repay God's gift to us; because of this, giving falls under the realm of grace.

In these chapters, there are two reasons we give gifts as an act of ministry: God and others. First, gifts express love and thanksgiving to God. Second, we give to physically and spiritually strengthen God's kingdom. Physically, our gifts take care of our brothers' and sisters' needs. Spiritually, our gifts promote God's kingdom, serve as an example for other believers and ultimately give glory to God.

"Whatever it takes" seems like the motto in II Corinthians. In our studies the next two weeks, "whatever it takes" concerns our resources. These resources consist of money, belongings, and time. We are a fortunate people. Our God has blessed us in more ways than we can imagine and yet He still accepts our trifling gifts with pleasure. That's grace!

Discovering God-II Corinthians 8

Aim

The importance of this lesson is to teach the students what giving is. Giving is an act of grace on God's part. God accepts our offerings because He is good to us and not because He needs our resources. Our gifts are an outpouring of our love and gratitude to God.

Practically Speaking

This is a structured time of fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Review the themes for II Corinthians:
Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word

Chapter3: God's covenant is glorious/I will be bold

Chapter4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart

Chapter 5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage

Chapter 6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy

Chapter 7: God brings joy/I will encourage you

What one word sums up what we talked about last week? (Encourage)

What is encouragement? (Love, discipline, being a friend and being the church)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 8:9 (NAS)-"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

Learn

In II Corinthians 8, we are going to talk about another part of our ministry. Paul calls it the 'gracious work.' It's going to be up to you to figure out what the 'gracious work' is. Do Teacher's Illustration.

What was the gracious work mentioned several times in this chapter? It was the ministry of giving. Did you realize that giving is a ministry? It is an act of service to God and for each other. The verses that you read showed the reasons why we give-what were they?

Vs.1 Grace of God

Vs.2 Joy

Vs.3 Willingness

Vs.4 Eagerness to support saints

Vs.5 Gave themselves to the Lord

Vs. 7 Earnestness and love

Vs. 8 Sincerity of your love

Vs. 24 Proof of your love

Vs. 9 Example of Jesus

Vs.19 God's Glory

Why do you think giving is called a gracious work? There could be two reasons. First, our gift is a gracious act to others. Second, the act of giving is God's grace to us (see verse 1). Even though God is God of all that we know, He still desires our gifts. It's pretty incredible to think that the Creator of the Universe wants our humble little gifts, but He does. He doesn't need the money, or anything that belongs to us, but He does accept it. Most importantly, He wants our attitude about "our stuff" to be correct.

Everything that we own or can get is His anyway. What makes it special is when we lovingly and freely give of ourselves/things to bring Him glory.

God blesses us with good things and He wants us to use those things for His kingdom. What are some examples of

using our resources for God? The ideas are innumerable.

The importance of this lesson from II Corinthians 8 is to understand that God is gracious. That means our giving is an act of grace. Sometimes people get too caught up in the money part of giving, not realizing that God wants our heart to be giving. We can never give God enough to repay His blessings. How much would we owe for His Son's death, the next breath of air we breathe or for the sun to rise tomorrow? We can't pay back the debt, much less give Him a gift. Fortunately, God took care of the debt Himself through Jesus and He loves us enough to take our gifts. God is good!

We are going to talk more specifically about giving and God's kingdom next week.

Devotional Thoughts for the Teacher

When I was 21 years old, I saw the fulfillment of a dream. I was blessed with the opportunity to spend a semester on the mission field. Though San Juan, Puerto Rico, may sound like a vacation rather than a mission, it proved to be a time of spiritual testing for me. Coupled with it being one of the loneliest times in my life, I received a rather deflating shock when I arrived. My housing had drastically changed and I realized that I had grossly underestimated my expenses. It was a desperate time for an adolescent who could not even afford a plane ticket to go back home. What happened over that five months absolutely showed me God provides. I did not have wealthy supporters for my trip. I had worked two jobs and had one time gifts from family and church friends to provide for the entirety of the semester. The one source I had to draw on was what my parents always taught me (through example and words)--that God takes care of His people. I can tell of a God who not only took care of my physical needs, but also my emotional ones. At my lowest times, I would receive a letter, box of goodies or phone calls. When a bill would come due with no possible way to pay it, I would receive a check in the mail for that exact amount. If I had no more food in the pantry, a box would arrive with enough cheese, noodles, and snacks to get me through until the next gift. The principal of the school even offered me a small salary, because they appreciated my work. Life played out in an almost hysterical fashion. I never needed anything. It was supplied to me on a daily basis, like the children of Israel during their wanderings. From that time on, I have relished the times when income is low or times are hard. I enjoy watching God's hand move to provide.

In II Corinthians 9, we get to experience being a part of God's gracious provision. Paul officially calls it the ministry of service. We more clearly understand why giving is grace from God. We are honored with the job of being God's hands and feet! That is an unfathomable concept.

People who complain about giving do not understand the privilege or significance involved. We need to have a demeanor of gratitude. Rather than asking God what He wants us to do with our extra resources, we should ask God what He wants to do with the total. God blesses His people. It's not hard to give lavishly when God is so faithful to provide. It's not difficult to take care of others when God takes care of us. It's not a hardship to invest our lives when God has invested His Son in us.

By the end of my internship, I felt like a child asking her Dad for money. God would hand me, in some form or other, all I needed, but He'd say, "Honey, this is only a loan." I can never repay these debts, but trying has been very satisfying.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 9

Atm

This lesson is a continuation of last week's lesson on the grace of giving. The student will understand how to apply their knowledge.

Practically Speaking

This is structured fellowship. Also, time to do "housekeeping."

Emphasize Again

Let's review II Corinthians 1-8:

Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word.

Chapter3: God's covenant is glorious/I can be bold

Chapter4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart

Chapter5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage

Chapter6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy

Chapter7: God brings joy/I will encourage you

Chapter8: God is gracious/I will give lavishly

What is the gracious work we talk about in Chapter 8? (Giving) Why is it gracious for us to give? (#1-It's an act of goodness to others; #2-It's an act of grace on God's part. God's is gracious enough to accept our gifts to Him). Last week there were many reasons that we give. Name some. (Grace of God, Joy, and love, Sincerity of your love, Proof of your love, Example of Jesus, God's Glory Willingness, Eagerness to support saints, Gave themselves to the Lord, Earnestness)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 9:12 (NAS)-"For the ministry of service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God."

Learn

In just a minute we are all going to participate in the lesson, but first, let's continue to review from last week. II Corinthians 8 and 9 are both about the gracious work of giving. (Teacher, you may want to use the attached sheet from the Teacher's illustration last week). Think about (or look at) the reasons for giving. They can break up into three categories or groups. *Do you have any ideas what those three categories would be?* (You, others, and God) It talks about us and how our attitude in giving is supposed to be. It says a lot about love for others. Most importantly, giving also has to do with God's grace and offering Him glory.

To sum up what we learned last week, **we** willingly give in order to love **others** and glorify **God**. We are going to learn specific ways we can do this. Do *Teacher's Illustration*. Some of those items may have seemed ridiculous, but when you think long enough, you can put almost anything to use for God's Glory.

In the chapters 8 and 9, Paul talks about giving. He writes to the church at Corinth about the kindness the churches in Macedonia have shown to them. He even says that the Macedonians were poor, but they went out of their way to find ways to give. The Corinth church is asked to do the same. Corinth had told

Paul that they would send a money gift, but they hadn't lived up to their commitment. Paul is reminding and challenging them to honor their pledge for God's sake, others' sake, and their own reputation. He wants them to realize some very important features about giving. We find these in 9:6-8; let's read these together. Let's also read verses 12-15. *What are things we learned about giving from what we have read?* (Let the students talk through these verses. Fill in details they miss. You may want to write these items on the board).

Verses 6-8:

- Lavishly give and God will lavishly bless your gift
- God loves cheerful gifts
- God provides for us
- God blesses us, so we can give

Verses 12-15

- Giving is a ministry
- Giving provides for others needs
- Giving is a way to thank God
- Our giving makes others glorify God
- Giving shows God's grace
- God is a giver

Those verses are so full of the beauty of giving. We are going to take the theme for today from verse 8: God blesses me, so I will give to you. This theme goes along with last week's: God is gracious, I will give lavishly.

Giving is not something that we resent or don't want to do. It is a very special type of ministry. When we give, we get to love God and other people in a unique way. God blesses us with our resources, we get to turn around and bless others, and then we all praise God together.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

No one likes to deal with difficult people. There are seminars, books, pamphlets, television programs, and sermons that try to make the process doable, but who wants to go there? If you're in the midst of trying circumstances, you don't want to read about it. If you're not, you don't want to borrow trouble. In II Corinthians 10, like it or not, Paul is going to deal with people who have cast themselves in the role of "problem." Paul may not sell himself as the leading guru on the subject, but he has more relevant information on the subject than most modern day experts.

He has dealt with many a problem in his ministry and the trouble isn't over yet. When Paul clothed himself with Christ, his choice of garment provoked controversy wherever he went. The particular issue in chapter 10 is Paul's appearance. He didn't wear the proper power tie or suit, leather shoes, or business "do." His face wasn't a mixture of austere, good-humored, yuppyish, good looks. He just didn't have it. His letters were half-way decent. He wrote well and boldly, but the letters combined with the person just didn't work. He was pretty comical or so the Judaizers were trying to make the Corinthians believe. Through all the joking, Paul wasn't laughing. Paul wasn't all that concerned about being made fun of, but he had to make this a teachable moment. He had to expose the false teachers' shallow, self-seeking ways.

Paul uses several arguments defending his ministry against the charges made by the Judaizers. First, Paul writes that he doesn't act like the world does. Paul acts like Christ. Christ corrects the guilty, while soothing their soul. The hopeful outcome is building up a brother not winning a fight. This leads into Paul's second point; the battle is not with each other, it is of supernatural origin. His goal here is for Christ to take custody of everything Christians think or do. In doing so, the ministry of Christ will be opened up into new areas beyond Corinth. Unfortunately, Paul's Christ-likeness made him seem ridiculous and weak to the church.

There is a glaring contrast between Paul's focused vision for Christ's church and the petty, superficial criticisms of the Judaizers. Paul had every right to tell the church at Corinth to grow up. It was of dire consequence that they repent of their straying from Christ. It not only impacted Corinth, but many Christians and unbelievers in the area. However, Paul takes the gentle route. He teaches, exhorts and loves all in the same breath. It truly wasn't about winning a fight, impressing people or building up an entourage for himself. He was a servant of Christ. He desperately wanted God to be glorified in his life.

What would Paul's book say about dealing with difficult people? Deal with them the same as Christ deals with us, with meekness and gentleness. These people should feel as if they had just walked in the presence of God.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 10

Aim

The lesson will encourage godly responses to difficult people. It will challenge the student to see a trial as an opportunity to imitate Christ's example.

Because of Christ's example, I will be meek and gentle.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do 'housekeeping.'

Emphasize Again

Review the themes for II Corinthians:

Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you.

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word.

Chapter3: God's covenant is glorious/I will be bold.

Chapter4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart.

Chapter5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage

Chapter6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy

Chapter7: God brings joy/I will encourage you.

Chapter8: God is gracious/I will give lavishly

Chapter9: God has blessed me/I will give to you.

From chapter 10, we learned that _____ is a special type of ministry. (Giving) Name some reasons we want to give to God (See the list in last week's lesson)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 10:5b (NAS) "And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

Learn

Do you know anyone that is difficult to get along with? Is it easier to be kind or unkind to them? In II Corinthians 10, we are going to discover how Paul dealt with difficult people. Remember that Paul was experiencing some hard times because of the false teachers in Corinth. In this chapter, we learn that the false teachers were trying to make Paul look like a fool. They were making fun of his appearance, the way he handled situations and his ministry. The Judaizers were doing this so that they could discredit Paul's ministry and turn the church at Corinth to themselves.

Through all of this, Paul's ministry sets a good example for ours. Before we begin, we need to talk about ministry. It is important to understand that our ministries are not something we do once a day or a couple times a week. We may do certain things, such as sing in church, work in the nursery, greet people, or visit people in the hospital. These are all ministries, but we don't act differently when we do ministry as compared to when we don't. We are ministers all the time, whether we have a job or not. So, when we talk of Paul's ministry and how he deals with people, it is not any different than the way Paul would deal with someone any other time.

Paul's ministry looked a lot like someone else's ministry. Let's look at verse 1. *Whose ministry did Paul's look like?* Christ's. Paul acted like Christ. He was

meek and gentle. That meant that he would do what was right and just, but with a mild, soothing attitude.

It is important that we act this way. We need to help others understand what is right and what they are doing wrong, but we do it in a loving, gentle way. Working with difficult people takes meekness and gentleness like Christ.

Second, Paul wanted to make it clear to the Corinthians that he was not going to fight with them. Verses 3-5 say, Paul's battle was not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual forces. His goal was to help others be more like Christ in their thoughts and actions. He did not want Satan to get into the church and cause trouble.

The Judaizers did not love the Corinthians or Paul. They were not worried about the church's relationship with Christ; they were concerned about their own popularity. That's why they were making fun of Paul. This attitude is very different than Paul's.

Dealing with difficult people, like the Judaizers, not only takes Christ's meekness and gentleness; it also takes remembering that our battle is for Christ and against Satan, not against people.

The third example Paul sets for us is in verse 8. Let's read. Paul uses the authority God gave him in a way that builds other people up rather than tearing them down. *How were the Judaizers tearing others down?* They were making fun of Paul. They even lied about him. They were doing whatever they could to cause trouble in the church.

What are ways that we can build each other up in Christ? How can we tear down each other? (The students need time to discuss specific applications to this). It can be easy to tear down each other. Sometimes if we lose focus on Jesus, we begin acting badly towards each other. But, this chapter will help remind us that our goal, like Paul's, is to help others be more like

Christ. Building up people is like building a building. Each brick of kindness or encouragement makes the building grow taller and stronger.

Let's review the three ways to deal with difficult people: Follow Christ's example in His meekness and gentleness towards others. Remember that the battle is not with people, it is a spiritual battle with Satan. Lastly, we are to build people up in the Lord and not tear them down.

Really, dealing with difficult people is not any different than connecting with anyone. We want others' relationship with God to be stronger, because of Christ's example in us.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

I'm sitting here on the eve of Father's Day. I've been thinking of my father and the legacy he is in the midst of writing. I've always thought him to be one of the finest men in the world. He was and is a godly man. When growing up, God the Father was a concept that I found easy to grasp, because of my own father's example.

Though I am not a father, I can only imagine the enormous weight on a man's shoulders: loving, correcting, teaching, and forgiving each child for a lifetime. In my life, I know that I am blessed with much more than a wonderful earthly father. My father was a spiritual father also, just like we see in the Apostle Paul. However, fathering is not always graciously received by the child. This ingratitude is evident in the church of Corinth. The Corinthians wanted to be betrothed to the Judaizers rather than Christ and they did not want to receive Paul's correction.

This chapter is a father writing his daughter a heart-rending letter warning her of seduction. She is throwing away the love of another man for a deceitful liar, who only wants her for a trophy. The daughter doesn't want to heed his warning. She has been embittered towards her father as well. The father has to remind her of his love for her. He even goes as far as comparing his life of sacrifice, on her behalf, to that of the destructive party. In short, Paul is a father desperately fighting for the soul of his daughter the Corinthian church.

Has anyone fought desperately for your spiritual health? Obviously, the answer is yes. I appreciate the sacrifices of so many on my behalf. History records many people who relinquished their comfort, rights and even lives for our spiritual well being. Will my name be written on the pages of anyone's spiritual biography? More importantly, will someone's name be written in the Book of Life because of my sacrifice?

Discovering God-II Corinthians 11

Aim

The students will begin thinking about their spiritual family. They will spend time in thought about their own spiritual lives. Hopefully a new awareness of the sacrifices others have paid for their spiritual well being will provoke gratitude in them.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also time to do “housekeeping.”

Emphasize Again

Review II Corinthians themes:

Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you.

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word.

Chapter3: God’s covenant is glorious/I will be bold.

Chapter4: Because God is merciful/I will not lose heart.

Chapter5: Because God’s work is eternal/I will have courage.

Chapter6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy.

Chapter7: God brings joy/I will encourage you.

Chapter8: God is gracious/I will give lavishly.

Chapter9: God has blessed me/I will give to you.

Chapter10: Because of Christ’ example/I will be meek and gentle.

Last week, we learned more about ministry. There are three ways we deal with difficult people, what are they? (Like Christ would, remembering our war is with spiritual forces and not people, with an attitude of building others up and not destroying them).

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God’s Word

II Corinthians 10:17 (NAS)-“But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.”

Learn

What kinds of things could make us broken-hearted in our ministries? (Let the students think and talk about this. They may have their own experiences they want to share). We have already learned that in Paul’s ministry he had some bad times. Last week, we talked about how the Corinthian church was being difficult for him. In chapter 11, Paul writes to the church as a loving father would to his child. He wants the people to love Christ with a pure heart. He also wants them to stop listening to the false teachers, because they are leading them away from God.

Paul also writes of the sacrifices he has made for the Corinthians. If the Corinthians compared the false teachers to Paul, they would have been very ashamed of the way they were treating him. Paul lovingly sacrificed and the false teachers took from the church. There are other differences, also. Let’s read vs.13-15. *Paul says that these men are apostles of whom?* (Satan) Obviously, these are not good men. Now we fully understand why Paul

wants to protect this church from these men. He loves them and cares for their spiritual lives.

We all need someone like Paul in our lives, someone who wants to protect us from evil and encourage us to grow in our relationship with Jesus. Paul was a spiritual father to the Corinthian church. He even brought the gospel to them from the beginning. *Do you have a spiritual mother or father that strengthens your spiritual life?* (Let them have time to think through this question. Give them suggestions like parents, grandparents, ministers, and adult friends). We need this kind of accountability and help in our lives.

More than likely you have many people in your lives that care about your relationship with God. There are people you may never have met that have made significant sacrifices for you. Isn't it interesting to think that the apostles, like Paul, made sacrifices for us as well as the people in their lifetime? For example, a couple of weeks ago we read the hardships that Paul endured. The beatings, shipwrecks, dangers, hunger, etc. were all experienced for us, too.

There are many more people down through the ages that have given up everything on this earth so that we could have opportunities to grow in our relationship with Jesus. Do
Teacher's Illustration.

Ministry for God matters. Remember our work for God is the only thing that lasts forever. God's work is eternal. So, we need to keep two things in mind: first, what we do for God is significant for generation after generation and second, we need to be grateful for the sacrifices made for us down through the centuries.

Devotional Thought for the Teachers

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord.”
Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Looking at life through the eyes of the Lord always changes our perspective. These words from Jeremiah summarize II Corinthians. Our bragging rights are in the Lord. The world, like the Judaizers, feeds us a bill of bogus goods. We must stay focused on God’s truth.

Why is it such a discipline for us to keep God at the forefront of our minds? It’s rather alarming to analyze how soon we, like the Corinthians, exchange God’s ways for another--whether it’s ours or someone else’s. It’s ludicrous to try to run our lives and our ministries on our own. The point was just illustrated for me a moment ago by our little cockatiel. Since she needs exercise and I am in the same room as she, I let her out for her morning fly. Though she was moderately annoying, I didn’t mind her helping me type or eating my snacks, but I could only handle so much of her climbing up my bare arms. Crisscross patterns etched in my skin rather irritate me, so naturally I stuck out my hand to her and tried to put her away. It became a dramatic ordeal. She squealed and then bit me. Obviously, she had a desire contrary to mine and she boldly communicated that desire. If she was something more intelligent than a bird, I might sit down and analyze the situation for her and produce a teachable moment. I bought her, feed her, water her, clean her cage, protect her, play with her, and even give her fun little toys. It’s rather audacious of her to “bite the hand that feeds her.” But isn’t it more than audacious of us not to be a servant of the God of the universe?

Paul, however, does not forget who he is. In chapter 12, he embraces his weaknesses and marvels at God’s gracious work preformed in him. He, like the passage in Jeremiah, boasts in God as he came to understand and know Him. Paul is actually grateful for his hardships and frailties because they showed God’s power and grace all the more. What a fine way of looking at our trials.

As Christians, we have a new perspective on life. Our existence, ministry and resources are to be used for God’s glory. We are a fragile jar of clay that somehow God wants. We have a gracious God!

Discovering God-II Corinthians 12

Atm

This lesson ties into chapter 4. Since we had guest speakers that day, we will go back and pick up Paul's jars of clay imagery. The student will learn of the power and grace of God that is demonstrated through our weakness.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do "housekeeping."

Emphasize Again

Review of II Corinthians themes:

Chapter1: God comforts me/So, I will comfort you.

Chapter2: God is triumphant/I will be a servant of His Word.

Chapter3: God's covenant is glorious/I will be bold.

Chapter4: Because God's is merciful/I will not lose heart.

Chapter5: Because God's work is eternal/I will have courage.

Chapter6: Because God lives in me/I will be holy.

Chapter7: God brings joy/I will encourage you.

Chapter8: God is gracious/I will give lavishly.

Chapter9: God has blessed me/I will give to you.

Chapter10: Because of Christ's example/I will be meek and gentle.

Chapter11: God provided sacrificial leaders/I will be grateful.

Last week, we talked about sacrifices people have made to strengthen our relationship with Christ. Did you think of other people that have done this in your lives? Take the time to share your story.

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God's Word

II Corinthians 12:9a (NAS)-"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'" (This verse will be continued next lesson).

Learn

Do Teacher's Illustration. This pot is very fragile and inexpensive. It's not something you put up on a fireplace mantle to look at. You buy a pot like this for a particular job. So, what is inside the clay pot is more important than the clay pot itself. Paul mentions a clay pot in his letter to the Corinthians. Let's go back to the 4th chapter and read verse 7 (NIrV is attached). *When Paul mentions the clay pot or jar, who was he speaking of? (Christians) What does the clay jar hold? (a treasure or the gospel).* Paul is making the point that we are a fragile vessel for God's use. It is a great privilege for us, the clay jar, to be able to minister the good news to others. Paul repeatedly mentions that it is God's graciousness that allows us to minister. We have learned that many times in II Corinthians.

Now, let's move to chapter 12, where we will read verses 7-10 (NIrV is attached to lesson). Keeping in mind what we have already learned about our ministry as a clay jar, *what makes us strong?* The power of Christ makes us strong. So, not only is it an honor to have a

ministry, our weakness shows the world God's grace and power. *How would our weakness show God's grace and power?* (Let the students make application). Let's look back at this pot. What if this pot began to light up the whole room? You would know that it wasn't the pot that did anything. There must be something inside of it that lit up, right? Or what if the pot began to play music? Wouldn't you assume that the music was from some source inside the pot and not the pot itself? It's the same with us and our lives of ministry. When bad things happen to us and yet we let God to empower us, people will be curious how we handled that situation so beautifully. Or when people see great things happening through us, they will wonder why we are so different than everyone else. That's when an opportunity arises to talk about what really makes us special-God.

In verse 7, Paul talks about pain in his body or a messenger from Satan. Some Bibles call it a "thorn in the flesh." We don't know what the problem is for Paul. It could have been an illness, a problem person, or temptation. What we do know is that Paul is grateful for the problem, because it keeps him humble about his ministry. *Why would Paul need to be kept humble?* (If the students have trouble with this question, help them consider Paul's popularity and power among people). Paul was grateful that this "thorn in the flesh" caused him to be weak, because then God would be glorified all the more.

Paul looked at life differently than most of us do. He wanted God to be praised by the people around him. He took the good and the bad and did whatever it took for God's glory. God needs more ministers like that in His kingdom.

Devotional Thought for the Teacher

I recently read an article from the Focus on the Family magazine which said George Barna's research indicated 4% of Americans have a 'biblical' worldview. A worldview is the lens by which we look at and approach reality. So, a Christian worldview is based on serving and loving God. As the evidence shows, many people claim to be Christians, but they don't live it out on a day-to-day basis. As disappointing as this statistic is, there is hope. The goal for our Sunday school period is to teach God's greatness and help the students develop a 'biblical worldview'. Not only does focusing on God's characteristics naturally provoke love and obedience, but we also have the examples of godly people.

II Corinthians has been an excellent book for growing a 'biblical worldview' in our students. Paul's writing highlights God's awesome attributes, his own obedient ministry and the bad example of the disobedient lifestyle of the Corinthians.

In chapter 13, Paul concludes his letter with many exhortations, one of which we will explore. In light of the riches obtained in the past twelve chapters and the worldview mentioned before, the challenge to test ourselves to see if we are in the faith seems appropriate (vs.5). Have we as teachers turned our sole focus upon God? In other words, are we one of the 4% of Americans who have a God centered worldview? With our worldview, do we set an example of obedience as Paul did? If there is hope for our Christian way of life, it must begin with our relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, it will blossom into our desire to nurture others in their love for Him. Let's take the test.

Through the living out of your life and ministry, "may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Amen.

Discovering God-II Corinthians 13

Aim

We are going to wrap up the book of II Corinthians with an expansion of the theme of weakness from last week. The students will also spend a great deal of time reviewing the entire book of II Corinthians, dealing with God and their ministry.

Practically Speaking

This is a time of structured fellowship. Also, time to do “housekeeping.”

Emphasize Again

*We will review the themes for II Corinthians in the lesson.

In last week’s lesson, Paul used what item as an example of what we are like in ministry? (clay jar or pot) What is the treasure that we hold in our clay jars? (The Good News) When we are weak, like this jar, what makes us strong? (God’s power and grace) What good thing happens because of our weakness? (God’s power shows through our weakness)

⌘ Prayer and Praise Time

Love God’s Word

II Corinthians 12:9b (NAS)-“Most gladly therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Learn

We learned about our weakness in the last chapter, but in II Corinthians 13, we learn that Jesus was weak, too. *Did you realize that Jesus had a weakness?* Let’s read verse 4. *What was Jesus’ weakness?* His weakness was found in his mortal body.

In other words, Jesus’ body could be killed; that’s why the people could crucify him. Just like Christ, we have bodies that can die. But the verse we just read says that God’s power made Christ live again. We can share in God’s power, too. Not only will we one day have resurrected bodies, we also share in the power of his resurrection as we share Christ’s story and serve others in His name. We do not serve a God who is weak, but one with power to resurrect the dead. Like we said last week, this power makes us strong when we are weak.

Does God’s power in you change the way you think of ministry? (You may need to help the student understand the significance of this question). We minister for a God who can do all things and can work through our weakness. God is worthy of our praise and service! That’s why our theme for today’s lesson is: God is powerful/I will serve Him.

Since we are concluding the book of II Corinthians, we need to review what we have learned. *Do Let’s Take a Quiz.* Let’s review our test. *Teacher, grade and review at the same time.

Chapter1 talks of God’s comfort. What does comfort mean? (Strengthen) Chapter2 in this chapter we learned about being fragrant aromas. What is God triumphant over? (Everything, including us)

Chapter3 says we are under the Old or New Covenant? (New) Being bold means we are what? (Truthful or straightforward)

Chapter4 says God shows us mercy by letting us do what? (Be His ministers)

Chapter5 says that _____lasts forever? (God’s work)

Chapter6 challenges us to be holy. What does that mean? (Be separate, or different than non-Christians, and acting like Christ)

Chapter7 talks about 4 ways to encourage. Can you remember any of them? (Loving, disciplining, being a friend and being a good church body)

Chapter8 talks about God's gracious work. What is that? (Giving)

Chapter9 talks of why we give. Name some reasons. (God: bless, loves cheerful giving, provides, is a giver. And we can minister, provide for others, thank and glorify God, show God's grace).

Chapter10 shows us Christ's and Paul's example in working with what kind of people? (Difficult)

Chapter11 talks about Paul's sacrifices for the church. What are we to be grateful for? (Sacrifices made by others for our spiritual growth)

Chapter12 gives us permission to boast, but in what? (Our weakness)

If you could summarize this book in a couple of words, what would they be? (Let the students think this through).

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