



2 CORINTHIANS - SMALL GROUP SERIES

Project Supervisor: Nick Diliberto
Artwork: Ever Graphics
Editor: Angela Ivey

Created by Ministry to Youth
<https://ministrytoyouth.com/>

2 CORINTHIANS - SMALL GROUP SERIES

Week 2: 2 Corinthians 4-7

Big Ideas: God's power in difficult times; being friends with God; Jesus' love; new creations in Christ; living like Jesus; joy.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at 2 Corinthians 1-3. This week we'll look at chapters 4-7.

If you recall from last week, there were teachers whom others were following in the church at Corinth. These teachers caused people to question Paul's leadership.

In chapters 4-7 Paul writes about how his humility, suffering, poverty, and service to the Corinthians is proof that he represents Jesus.

This is enough evidence that his teaching and authority are from Jesus.

He wants the Corinthians to follow Jesus and be transformed by the Spirit. His life of humility, suffering, and service is an example of this.

He has much to say to the Corinthian church in these letters. And much to say to us as well.

Notes to Youth Leader:

- *All Bible references in this series are from the NCV version unless otherwise noted. Feel free to use whatever version of the Bible that best works for you and your group.*
- *This series contains A LOT of content. Go at your own pace. You don't need to cover everything. Focus on parts of the lesson that hit home with your students.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4-7

Say: As we read this passage, let the words sink in. What truth or idea sticks out to you the most? What questions does it bring up for you? What's confusing about it? Be ready to talk about that as a group.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12:

We have this treasure from God, but we are like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us. We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the hope of living. We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but

we are not destroyed. We carry the death of Jesus in our own bodies so that the life of Jesus can also be seen in our bodies. We are alive, but for Jesus, we are always in danger of death so that the life of Jesus can be seen in our bodies that die. So, death is working in us, but life is working in you.

Ask:

- What questions come up for you from this passage? Is there anything that is confusing for you? If so, what?
- What truth or idea sticks out to you the most in this passage?

Say: Pottery was a common material for creating a variety of items (pots, jars, bowls, etc.) in ancient times. It wasn't expensive material and had many uses for the average everyday person.

Clay jars were especially popular for storing liquids because the pottery hindered evaporation and kept the contents cool at the same time.

But clay jars were easily broken.

In this passage, Paul compares us to a clay jar (an average, easily broken utensil). And he compares the presence of God in our lives to a valuable treasure put in the clay jar.

He's saying that the presence of God (the treasure) in us (the clay jar) gives us great power to endure troubles of all kinds.

A clay jar on its own would not be able to endure much pressure. Nor are we able to do so.

But with God's power living in us, we can face any difficulty that comes our way. When we surrender and rely on God's strength, we tap into great strength.

This idea touches on a theme we talked about last week. Last week we talked about how God comforts us in times of trouble. Now, Paul is saying that God is a source of power that helps us endure the problems we face.

In this passage, Paul is referring to himself and the many difficulties he faced. He's also talking to the church at Corinth and us today.

Ask:

- Have you ever faced a problem and believe that God gave you the strength to get through it? Explain.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

Say: So, we do not give up. Our physical body is becoming older and weaker, but our spirit inside us is made new every day. We have small troubles for a while now, but they are helping us gain an eternal glory that is much greater than the troubles. We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time, but what we cannot see will last forever.

Say: So, we do not give up. The NIV version says: “Therefore, we do not lose heart.” When life hits you hard, it’s so easy to lose heart and get sucked into the problem.

Paul is saying that there is another way. And this other way is not about us sucking it up and moving forward. It’s about relying on the Holy Spirit who lives inside us.

In **2 Corinthians 5:11-21**, Paul writes about what it means to be friends with God.

Let’s look at some of the highlights.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15:

The love of Christ controls us because we know that One died for all, so all have died. Christ died for all so that those who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from the dead so that they would live for him.

Say: The love of Christ controls us. The NIV version says that Christ’s love compels us. Wow! Those are powerful words. The word *control* or *compel* in this verse means “to hold together (like glue); to be seized.”

Think about that. Jesus’ love holds us together. He’s the glue that keeps us intact.

It’s our choice to what extent we experience God’s love. The more we’re open to His love, the deeper we experience it.

Ask:

- Love is such a broad word. How would you describe the love of Jesus in your own words?
- Does Jesus’ love for you affect your everyday life? Why or why not?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17:

If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new!

Say: When you surrender your life to Jesus, you are made new from the inside out. The power and penalty of sin are removed. Your heart, the core of your being, is completely transformed.

Like a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly, your heart is transformed to be more like Jesus.

This doesn't mean you'll never mess up, do wrong, or make mistakes. It does mean now you have the power (through the Holy Spirit) to live like Jesus. To live a life of love, compassion, forgiveness, self-control, etc.

Ask:

- What is one thing about yourself that you love? What is a talent or something you're really good at?
- What is one thing about yourself that you would change if you could? Or a talent/skill you wish you had?
- What's difficult for you to understand about being a "new creation"? (If students get silent on this question, ask: How would you describe what it means to be a "new creation" in your own words?)

Say: Now we move into chapter 6.

In **2 Corinthians 6:1-11**, Paul explains that we show we are servants of God by the way we live our lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 6: 4-7:

But in every way, we show we are servants of God: in accepting many hard things, in troubles, in difficulties, and in great problems. We are beaten and thrown into prison. We meet those who become upset with us and start riots. We work hard, and sometimes we get no sleep or food.

We show we are servants of God by our pure lives, our understanding, patience, and kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by true love, by speaking the truth, and by God's power.

Say: Paul is making his case to the Corinthians about his leadership, authority, and the validity of his teachings.

He demonstrates his leadership by facing difficulties and relying on God's strength, living a pure life through the power of the Holy Spirit, speaking the truth, etc.

The same is true for us. We show that we're Christ-followers by the way we live our lives. When we stay closely connected to our relationship with Jesus, we're able to endure hardship and live a life of love, truth, patience, and kindness.

But we can't do any of this by willpower, discipline, or in our own strength. We can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our goal isn't to "be good" or "do good." Our focus is on Jesus. The more we set our hearts and minds on him, the more good flows out of our lives.

Ask:

- How would you describe willpower?
- Have you ever used willpower or discipline to learn a skill or get better at something? (Ex: play the guitar, get better at basketball, etc.)
- Do you think willpower or discipline works when it comes to living like Jesus? Why or why not?

Say: Now we move on to **chapter 7**. Here Paul sums up much of what he said so far in the letter and gives the listener more reasons to accept his leadership.

Let's look at one verse that really stands out.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:4:

I feel very sure of you and am very proud of you. You give me much comfort, and in all our troubles, I have great joy.

Say: Have you ever had tension in a relationship? Maybe with your parents or a friend? You're making your case and trying to get a point across, but they're not quite getting it.

This is what's happening in chapter 7.

At that moment, how do you feel? (Get a few responses).

You might feel angry, misunderstood, or frustrated.

But Paul has a much different response: *In all our troubles, I have great joy.*

What? He's somehow found joy in the midst of tension with people that he deeply cares for.

Only God can do that. Only God can bring joy in the middle of conflict.

How was Paul able to tap into this joy? Was he superhuman? Was he faking it?

Those are all great questions to ask ourselves. Maybe that's one thing we should do with this verse. Sit with it a bit. Ask God to show us something here.

Ask:

- How would you describe joy?
- Do you think it's really possible to find joy in the middle of conflict? Why or why not?

End the lesson by asking for prayer requests and taking a moment to pray together for each other.