



**Studies on Encouragement  
from 2 Corinthians**

## Introduction

These six studies investigate a repeated theme in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians - the theme of how we encourage each other in our faith and build each other up as followers of Christ. Paul speaks in a variety of ways about how our 'thanks' to God for what he has done for us flows out into our 'giving' to others. This shows one of the great dynamics of the Christian life, one that gives us power to keep serving others without becoming burnt out or discouraged. We give out because we have experienced grace and the generosity of God and others ourselves.

Paul had a troubled relationship with the Corinthian church. He had to correct them on many areas of basic Christian belief and behaviour, as we see in 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians finds him writing to them as he is about to visit them for the third time (13:1). This time he is concerned that they will continue to grow in their faith in Christ and generosity to other Christians, and deals with attempts by other 'apostles' to discredit his authority and gifting. He has in view his project of taking up a collection among the churches in the Mediterranean to support the church in Jerusalem (chapter 8-9), and wants the Corinthians to be ready to receive him.

2 Corinthians reminds us that, as with Paul, God is looking to work through weak and struggling people who realise that they need his grace. That is the way that we learn to receive from him and give to others. The goal of this series is that we will become better at encouraging each other in our faith and in our mission as Christians.

## **Study 1 – The God of All Comfort**

### **2 Corinthians 1:1-11**

1. What gives you strength and comfort in your faith?
2. Who specifically does Paul 'praise' in vv2-4? Why does he praise him?
3. Describe the 'flow' of suffering and comfort in vv5-7? Who does it flow from and flow to? (perhaps try to create a diagram) Does this idea of 'participation' in other's suffering and joy make sense to you?
4. What purpose does Paul see behind their sufferings in Asia (vv8-11)? How were the Corinthians involved in his deliverance?
5. How have you received comfort from other believers in your difficulties?
6. How can we be more intentional about comforting others who are suffering?
7. Share any particular needs at the moment that you have for God's comfort, and pray for each other using the ideas in this passage.

## **Study 2 – Outwitting Satan**

### **2 Corinthians 1:21-2:11**

1. Share with the group a struggle that you have had with your faith.  
What got you through it/is getting you through it?
2. How does God make Paul and the Corinthians ‘stand firm in Christ’ (1:21-22)?
3. Describe to each other what is happening in Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians in 1:23-2:4. Why does it cause him such grief?
4. What does Paul want them to do in response to the member of the congregation who has fallen into sin (2:5-9)?
5. Why has Paul forgiven him? How does this ‘outwit Satan’? (2:11)
6. What ‘schemes’ of Satan are you aware of that are aimed at stopping us from standing firm in our faith? Share experiences of this reality that you have had in your own life.
7. What would you say to someone who is struggling with temptation or despair over their sinfulness?

## Study 3 – A Living Letter

### 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

1. Who is the person who has had the biggest impact on your faith and/or spiritual growth? Describe how they have affected you.
2. What does it mean for us to be the ‘aroma of Christ’ (vv14-17). [*A triumphal procession was the parade a victorious general gave when arriving back at his home city, bringing along his captives and creating a festival atmosphere by spreading decorations and incense*].
3. Why does Paul not need ‘letters of recommendation’ to the Corinthians (3:1-3)?
4. Do you feel competent to help others grow in their faith? Where did Paul’s ultimate confidence as a minister come from (vv4-6)?
5. What would you like your legacy (your ‘living letter’) to be in the lives of your family, friends, and fellow Christians? What would you need to learn or to do to achieve this?
6. What opportunities do you have to encourage others in your daily life?

## **Study 4 – Jars of Clay**

### **2 Corinthians 4:6-18**

1. How strong are you feeling at the moment? Rate yourself from 1 (not at all strong) to 10 (super strong).
2. Why (according to Paul) has God put his glory into ‘jars of clay’ (vv6-7)? *[You might want to read chapter 3 together to understand Paul’s idea of ‘glory’ more clearly]*
3. What does it mean in vv10-12 when Paul talks about the relationship between our experience of the ‘life’ and ‘death’ of Jesus?
4. What does Paul put his confidence in during times of suffering (v10, 13-14)? How does this enable him to say what he does in verse 8?
5. What does it mean to ‘fix our eyes on what is not seen’ (v18)?
6. What encouragement do we need from each other in our suffering?
7. How can we use our experiences of suffering to encourage others?

## **Study 5 – Make Room in Your Hearts**

### **2 Corinthians 7:2-13**

1. Who are your closest friends? What emotional support do you receive from them?
2. How important were the Corinthians to Paul (vv2-4)?
3. How did God comfort Paul and his friends (vv5-7)?
4. Find all the references to emotions in this passage and discuss the variety that you can see.
5. Is it alright for Christians to be a bit ‘up and down’ in their feelings?
6. What is the benefit of honestly sharing your feelings and struggles with other people?
7. What is the difference between ‘godly sorrow’ and ‘worldly sorrow’ (vv10-11)?
8. What ‘encouragement’ can we find from each other as Christians, according to this passage?
9. Is there room in your life for these kind of intimate spiritual friendships? If not, what gets in the way and what can you do about it?

## **Study 6 – Thanks/Giving**

### **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

*[Paul's references in this passage to giving are specifically directed towards his intention to collect an offering from the Corinthians and other churches to support the church in Jerusalem].*

1. When has someone shown you particular generosity?
2. What prompts you to be generous in your giving?
3. What does Paul mean when says 'Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously' (v6)?
4. Read vv7-10 carefully and explain to each other what Paul is saying about the relationship between generosity and receiving blessing.
5. What does 'God loves a cheerful giver' mean? How might this saying be misused?
6. What are the benefits that the Corinthians will receive from their giving (vv12-14)?
7. What is the 'indescribable gift' that God has given (v15)?
8. What can you give thanks to God for right at the moment?
9. What opportunities do you have to give generously to others (whether money, time, energy or some other way)?



# Notes