

Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Nine: Corinthians, Part 3 – 2 Corinthians 1-7

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:11.

- 1) List at least three reasons why God allows suffering, according to 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. **God allows suffering so that we can pass on the comfort we received from God in our trials to others in theirs (1:4), that we might rely on God and not ourselves (1:9), and so that many will thank God for how He has answered their prayers on our behalf (1:11).**
- 2) Paul explained the reason for a change in his travel plans in 2 Corinthians 1. According to 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4, what accusations (stated and implied) were leveled against Paul as a result of his changed plans? **Paul implied that he was accused of being insincere and ungodly (1:12), unreliable (not worth boasting over) (1:14), and indecisive (1:17), so that his message was now untrustworthy (1:18). He was also accused of not standing firm (1:21).**
- 3) With reference to 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, are you more likely to be tempted to hold on to a grudge against someone, even after they have been disciplined for their wrongdoing or to refrain from meting out discipline altogether, even when doing so is your responsibility? Is there someone being disciplined (by family, church, civil authorities, or God) to whom you could bring some comfort this week (please avoid slander by inappropriate sharing of names or circumstances in your discussion)? **Personal sharing**

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:18. Beginning in 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul digresses from discussing recent events to begin speaking about (his) ministry in general.

- 4) How many times do the words “minister” and “ministry” occur in this passage? **Six times: 3:3, 3:6, 3:7, 3:8, 3:9 (twice)**
- 5) Define the verb “to minister” (from a dictionary, if you have access to one). Recalling Paul’s words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 and 14-27 (especially verse 27), who are the “ministers” in the body of Christ? **The verb “to minister” means to give service, care, or aid. Paul told the Corinthians previously that each of them is part of the body of Christ and that no part (person) should consider the spiritual gift or role of another part (person) indispensable. All Christians are given gifts for the common good. Therefore, in the broad sense of the word, all are ministers.**
- 6) What joys and challenges of ministry does Paul describe in this portion of Scripture? After you have listed them, share ways you have personally experienced each of these joys and challenges. **The joys Paul describes include triumph in Christ (2:14), being the aroma of Christ (2:15-16), people’s lives being transformed (3:1-3), being made competent by God Himself (3:5-6), carrying a message that is glorious (3:7-11), and personal transformation into Christ’s likeness (3:18). The challenge listed in this passage is the inability of many to whom we minister (like Jews) to grasp the message (3:14-15). Personal sharing**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-5:10.

- 7) To what “treasure” might Paul be referring in 2 Corinthians 4:7 (note the verses preceding and immediately following)? **Paul felt that having the “plain truth” (4:2) of Jesus Christ (4:5) unveiled (4:3-4), when God shone light in his heart (4:6) so he could grasp this glorious knowledge (4:6), was a great treasure (4:7). Alternatively, he might have been thinking of the ministry he had been given in sharing this truth with others (“setting forth the truth plainly” [4:2]). The latter seems more likely in light of Paul’s statement that the treasure reveals God’s power in Paul’s weakness.**

- 8) List all the things Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 about remaining in our bodies at present and being away from our bodies in the future. Paul teaches these truths: when our earthly body is destroyed, we will have a heavenly “building” from God, eternally in heaven (5:1). While in this body, we “groan and are burdened” (5:4). We groan, in part, because of death itself (being “unclothed”), but we also groan in anticipation of our heavenly bodies (5:4). Remaining in our earthly bodies separates us (in a physical sense) from the Lord’s presence in heaven (5:6). Being away from the body is being at home with the Lord (5:8). We must all appear before Christ in judgment for all we have done while in our earthly bodies (5:10).
- 9) How did focusing on the future affect Paul’s perspective and attitude toward the many hardships that he faced in ministry (refer to 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18)? Paul clearly stated that he was hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, and wasting away outwardly, much as a direct result of his ministry to others. Yet, he said he did not lose heart because he fixed his eyes on eternal things, including the resurrected body he would receive and being in the Lord’s very presence one day. Furthermore, Paul taught that present trials in serving Christ would “achieve for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (4:17).
- 10) Reread 2 Corinthians 4:10-11. What did Paul mean by “carry[ing] around in our body the death of Jesus” (see also 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 and Galatians 2:20)? In what way are you currently being “given over to death” in order that Christ’s life might be revealed in you? Paul probably had some physical dangers and troubles in mind (such as those he listed in 2 Corinthians 4). However, we are more often “put to death” by forsaking our sin nature (an ever-present lure and enemy for each believer). As we choose to put God’s priorities for us over our natural preferences, our old self (sin nature) is put to death (diminishes). One could also make the case that as our bodies physically age, we are progressively identifying with the death of Christ. In this case, Christ’s life will be revealed in us when we are given bodies that are like His (in the meantime, the presence of God’s power [4:7], which should be evident in every true believer, testifies that the life of Jesus is living in these weak vessels [our fragile earthly “jars of clay”]). Personal sharing

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:13.

- 11) What did Paul say was Christ’s motive in dying for us (2 Corinthians 5:14), Christ’s goal in dying for us (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), and Christ’s resulting expectation of us (2 Corinthians 5:18b, 19b-20a)? Christ’s motive was love and His goal was reconciling us to God (verse 18) by becoming a sin offering for us and imputing us with his righteousness (verse 21) in order that we might be “new creation(s)” (verse 17). His expectation is that we will be ambassadors for Him (messengers of reconciliation).
- 12) From the list in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10, name one very specific way you can emulate Paul and Timothy in your life today. Personal sharing

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:16.

- 13) Explain the teaching of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 and list some ways in which the principle taught by Paul can be applied. As the “temple of God,” and on the basis of His command that we separate ourselves from what is “unclean,” Paul teaches that the spiritual and the unspiritual should not be united. He specifically references relationships between believers and unbelievers (6:14-15). Elsewhere in Scripture, Christians are told to evangelize unbelievers. So we know that associating with unbelievers is not what Paul had in mind. Rather, he is forbidding unholy alliances. This principle of not being “yoked together” with unbelievers is most commonly applied to marriage. However, Paul had the much broader principle of personal holiness in mind. Believers are to purify themselves from *everything* that contaminates soul and spirit (7:1).

- 14)** Paul wrote a severe letter (7:8, 12) chastising the Corinthians because they had mishandled a discipline issue in the church (this severe letter is probably not 1 Corinthians but a letter that has been lost. Paul also references this letter in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, 9; 7:8, 12). The Corinthian believers responded to the letter with “godly [deep] sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7:7, 9-10). What does 2 Corinthians 7 say the result of “godly sorrow” can be (and was, in the case of the Corinthians)? **Verse 11 says the Corinthians’ godly sorrow produced earnestness, eagerness to clear themselves, indignation, alarm, longing, concern, and readiness for justice.**
- 15)** Paul experienced inner turmoil over the Corinthians being brought to a point of such sorrow (even though their own sin was the ultimate cause [7:8-9]). No one enjoys seeing someone they love in pain. However, “godly sorrow” is exceedingly fruitful (question #14). Who do you love enough to pray that they will be brought to the point of “godly sorrow” for the sake of God’s glory and the individual’s own spiritual benefit? (Be careful not to slander this individual in your group discussions.) **Personal sharing**