



Foundations: PT IV | The Book of 2 Corinthians

Mark Allen | 08.23.26

Overview

In this message, we explored five key themes from 2 Corinthians: our encouragement, our existence, our exhortation, our enlargement, and our earthen existence. Paul wrote to a church that had faced deception, hardship, and spiritual warfare, and his words remain just as relevant for believers today. This guide is designed to help your group go deeper into those themes and apply them to everyday life.

Before You Meet

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 on your own before your group gathering. As you read, note any phrases or ideas that stand out to you personally.

Key Takeaways

- Hardship and discouragement are not signs that God has abandoned us. Paul teaches that difficulty often comes so that we learn to stop trusting ourselves and start trusting God.
- Our physical bodies are temporary. The real and lasting life we have in Christ is what matters for eternity.

- Believers are called to be separate from the world in terms of deep partnership, not isolated from it. Who we choose to partner with in life and business matters spiritually.
 - Generosity is not primarily about money. It is a spiritual discipline that grows our hearts and draws us closer to God.
 - We are in a real spiritual war, and the way we fight it is not through human effort but through prayer, obedience, and the armor of God.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- When you hear the word "encouragement," what comes to mind? How does that compare to the kind of encouragement Paul describes in 2 Corinthians?

Our Encouragement (2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 4:8-9; 7:5-6)

1. Paul describes being "burdened excessively, beyond strength," to the point of despairing over life itself. Have you ever experienced a season like that? What did it feel like?
2. Paul says those hardships came so that he and his companions would not trust in themselves but in God. Is it easy or difficult for you to accept that some of your struggles might serve that same purpose? Why?
3. Pastor Mark noted that Titus coming to Paul from the Corinthian church was a source of deep comfort during Paul's affliction. What does that tell us about the role of Christian community in our lives? Have you ever been that kind of presence for someone else?
4. Paul says twice that he chose not to "lose heart." What does it look like practically to make that choice in the middle of a hard season?

Our Existence (2 Corinthians 5:1-4, 21)

5. Paul describes our physical bodies as a "tent" -- temporary and subject to hardship. How does keeping an eternal perspective change the way you handle suffering or physical limitations right now?
6. 2 Corinthians 5:21 describes how God made Jesus, who had no sin, to take on our sin so that we could receive Christ's righteousness. How does that truth affect the way you see yourself before God on a daily basis?

Our Exhortation (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

7. Paul warns against being "unequally yoked" with unbelievers. The pastor applied this to marriage and business partnerships. Where else in life might this principle apply? How do you navigate building relationships with people who do not share your faith while still being a witness to them?
8. Pastor Mark said, "You show me your ten closest friends, I'll show you your future." Do you agree with that statement? How does it challenge you personally?

Our Enlargement (2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:7)

9. Paul lists faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, and love as areas where the Corinthians had excelled, then challenges them to also excel in giving. Which of those areas feels most developed in your own life right now? Which feels like it still needs growth?
10. Pastor Mark shared that his and his wife's journey into greater generosity was a process over many years. What has your own journey with giving looked like? What has it taught you about trusting God?
11. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says God loves a cheerful giver. What is the difference between giving out of compulsion and giving from a cheerful heart? What does it take to get from one to the other?

Our Earthen Existence (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 12:1-4)

- 12.** Paul says the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but are "divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." What does that mean in practical terms for how you face temptation, conflict, or fear?
 - 13.** Pastor Mark pointed out that at the end of the armor of God passage in Ephesians 6, prayer is mentioned seven times. What does that tell us about the role of prayer in spiritual warfare? How would you honestly describe your current prayer life?
 - 14.** Paul hints at having experienced a glimpse of heaven during what many believe was a near-death experience after being stoned. He says he heard things "not permitted to speak." How does the reality of heaven change the way you think about what you are going through right now?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week:

For Personal Growth

- Identify one area of hardship in your life right now. Write out a short prayer surrendering that situation to God and asking him to use it to grow your trust in him rather than yourself.

For Relationships

- Think about the people you spend the most time with. Prayerfully consider whether those relationships are drawing you closer to Christ or pulling you in a different direction. Ask God for wisdom about how to invest your time and energy.

For Generosity

- If you are not currently giving, take a step this week. Start where you are. If you are already giving, ask God whether he is prompting you to take a next step in generosity, however small.

For Spiritual Warfare

- Set aside a specific time this week to pray intentionally for your family, your marriage, and your home. Write down what you are praying for so you can look back and see how God answers.

For Community

- Is there someone in your life right now who is in a season of depression, discouragement, or hardship? Consider how you can be a "Titus" to them this week -- showing up, reaching out, and reminding them they are not alone.

Closing Reflection

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians were written from a place of deep personal suffering. He had been beaten, imprisoned, and stoned. Yet he chose not to lose heart. He kept his eyes on what was unseen and eternal rather than what was seen and temporary.

Close your group time by asking each member to share one word that describes where they are spiritually right now. Then pray together, asking God to meet each person in that place.

Memory Verse for the Week

Proverbs 3:5-6 -- Trust in the Lord with all your heart rather than leaning on your own understanding. Acknowledge him in everything you do, and he will direct your path.