

Help Without Taking Over

Sunday, August 17, 2025

Start with Application Testimony

- **Last week's exhortation:** Real love requires humility. Humble yourself in the way you love others this week.

INTRO

- **We are going verse-by-verse, in a topical study through I & II Corinthians**
 - **Current Topic:** Church Relationship – The holy work of being the Body of Christ.
 - Over the past few weeks, we've been walking through a series on Church Relationship—what it really means to be the Body of Christ together. We've seen that spiritual maturity isn't just an individual pursuit; it's a shared calling. God is building something holy through our relationships with one another, that reflects His heart to the world.
 - Today, we're going to see how that plays out in the way we comfort, speak to, and support each other. Paul gives us a glimpse of what healthy spiritual relationships look like—not controlling or performative, but honest, gracious, and grounded in trust. This kind of community doesn't just happen—it's formed through the way we show up for one another in everyday life.

READ

2 Corinthians 1 CSB

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother: To the church of God at Corinth, with all the saints who are throughout Achaia. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will also share in the comfort. ⁸ We don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction that took place in Asia. We were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and he will deliver us. We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again ¹¹ while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many. ¹² Indeed, this is our boast: The testimony of our conscience is that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with godly sincerity and purity, not by human wisdom but by God's grace. ¹³ For we are writing nothing to you other than what you can read and also understand. I hope you will understand completely—¹⁴ just as you have partially understood us—that we are your reason for pride, just as you also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus. ¹⁵ Because of this confidence, I planned to come to you first, so that you could have a second benefit, ¹⁶ and to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and

then come to you again from Macedonia and be helped by you on my journey to Judea.¹⁷ Now when I planned this, was I of two minds? Or what I plan, do I plan in a purely human way so that I say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time?¹⁸ As God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes and no.”¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you—Silvanus, Timothy, and I—did not become “Yes and no.” On the contrary, in him it is always “Yes.”²⁰ For every one of God’s promises is “Yes” in him. Therefore, through him we also say “Amen” to the glory of God.²¹ Now it is God who strengthens us together with you in Christ, and who has anointed us.²² He has also put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.²³ I call on God as a witness, on my life, that it was to spare you that I did not come to Corinth.²⁴ I do not mean that we lord it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in your faith.

EXAMINE

#1 | We must pour into one another, what God has poured into us

1. God wants to bless us *through* one another

a. 2 Corinthians 1:4 “He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”

- i. In a strong family, kids don’t just connect with their parents, they connect deeply with each other – the family is a web of relationships, not just separate branches. It’s the same with the us and God.

2. God wants to grow us *through* one another

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:6 “If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer.”
 - i. When we suffer, we not only grow ourselves but also help prepare others for their own struggles – giving them an advantage.

#2 | We must be direct, sincere, and foster understanding with one another

1. We have to be open and honest about the struggles in our life – as appropriate

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:8 “*We don’t want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction that took place in Asia. We were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself.*”
 - i. When we’re honest about our struggles—not to get sympathy, but to help others—it builds trust, draws people closer, and reassures them in their own hard moments.

2. We have to build a culture that focuses on understanding, not lecturing.

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:12–13 “*...we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with godly sincerity and purity... writing nothing to you other than what you can read and also understand...*”
 - i. Speak to help others, not to impress them or vent your opinions—because even wise words fall flat if they aren’t clear or relevant.
 - ii. A culture of understanding is what builds strong, lasting relationships in the church.

3. We have to train ourselves to always speak the truth.

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:17–18 “...was I of two minds?... so that I say ‘Yes, yes’ and ‘No, no’ at the same time?... our message to you is not ‘Yes and no.’”
 - i. We should be as gracious and committed to truth as God is. If we bend the truth to keep peace or stay comfortable, we create a false peace that ends up working against what God wants to do in the church.

#3 | We must strengthen each other’s spiritual life – not manage it

1. We often will be tempted to try to manage or control one another’s spiritual life and journey – even out of love.

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:23 “I call on God as a witness, on my life, that it was to spare you that I did not come to Corinth.”
 - i. Paul was comfortable using his authority as an apostle – it was his job – but he intentionally held himself back at times.
 - 1. *He knew his concern for the people could turn into overcorrecting and/or being too hard on them.*
 - ii. When we try to manage someone else’s spiritual journey, even with good intentions, we risk stunting their growth and replacing the Spirit’s leading with our own.
 - 1. *This can show up when we try to take responsibility for someone else’s faith choices, or push them to grow on our timeline instead of trusting God to work.*

2. It’s not our job to manage one another’s spiritual life and journey – only to partner for mutual benefit.

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:24 *“I do not mean that we lord it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in your faith.”*
- i. At the end of the day, each person’s spiritual life and growth belongs to God. (Romans 14:7-8)
1. *If we can’t manage our own spiritual life without the Holy Spirit, how could we possibly manage someone else’s?*
- ii. God has called each of us to support and encourage one another—that’s what He holds us accountable for, and that’s where our passion should be. The rest belongs to Him.

REFLECT

Let’s take a moment to pray

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide our attention and lead our conversation, helping us see and understand what He wants us to apply in our lives.

APPLY

Process the passage together with these questions:

- Verses 19–20 say that “every one of God’s promises is ‘Yes’ in Christ.” How can that truth encourage us to pursue relationships in the church, and even submit to spiritual leadership?
- How can we better discern when to speak and when to hold back—especially in conversations about someone else’s spiritual journey?
- How can we make our church more of a “web of relationships” and not just individual connections to leaders?

Where we want to “land the plane”

- God doesn’t call us to do it alone—or to manage one another’s journey. He calls us to pour into each other what He’s poured into us, to speak with honesty and clarity, and to walk alongside one another with grace. The goal is to support, encourage, and help each other stay grounded in Christ. Let’s be faithful in the part He’s given us, and trust Him with the rest.

Exhortation for the Week

- Focus on bringing strength and support to someone else’s spiritual journey, this week.

FOOTNOTES

1. **2 Corinthians 1:23–24**. Paul had earlier begun to explain his change of plans (v. 15). There he had mentioned his “message” (v. 18) in connection with his own integrity, which led to his digression in verses 19–22. He now returned to explain his altered plans. He understood that his changed plans had caused a problem in Corinth. This is evident from the strength of his declaration, I call God as my witness (cf. Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10). With a solemn oath (with God as the Judge) Paul staked his life on the truthfulness of his explanation which followed. It was out of consideration for the Corinthians, a desire to avoid disciplinary action (to spare you) that Paul had deferred his visit. Even though he had great authority as an apostle (2 Cor. 10:2–8; cf. 1 Cor. 5:4–5; 1 Tim. 1:20) Paul was reluctant to wield it. He did not lord it over their faith, that is, domineeringly take advantage of the fact that they came to faith in Christ through him. Dictatorial means can produce compliance but not the obedience that comes from faith which he sought. Authoritarian domination is often the manner of false apostles and the kingdom they serve (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15), but it was not the

way of Christ (Luke 22:25–27) nor of those who stand in His stead (1 Peter 5:3). Paul assured the Corinthians, We work with you (lit., “we are fellow workers”; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9); he did not work against them or over them. *David K. Lowery, “2 Corinthians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 557.*