



2 Corinthians
Authentic
faith

April - June 2024 | Trinity Church Golden Grove

As we work our way through 2 Corinthians my prayer is that it would motivate us to live authentically for Jesus. We see this coming out in a few keys ways in the letter:

- Maturity that comes through beholding Christ.
- Christ's love motivates us on mission and to live in community.
- Comfort is to be shared. There is a dynamic in which God comforts us so we can comfort others with the same comfort Christ gives us. This is living in the locker room and putting our arms around each other (Metaphorically and literally!)
- Generosity. Though the supreme example of Jesus in his life and death we are motivated to be generous towards the people of God. The grace and kindness of God transforms our vision of life that says we now get to be generous for the sake of Jesus so that others can know him and mature in the faith. Jesus' poverty is actually their source of riches and generosity!
- Real life examples of authentic faith. Paul's points to his own life is an example of being authentic as to defend himself against some of the rumours going around that he's not actually a Christian or committed to the gospel. Authentic faith doesn't cancel each other out but desires to see one another grow in love, hope, joy and maturity. You'll notice that Paul's low status (Notice the phrase *super-apostle*) is a reminder that true Christian leadership isn't about worldly status of self promotion. No! Paul reminds them

that it's about following Jesus who's the true king, and how his glory came through suffering.

Chapter 1-5 focus on the new creation that Jesus has worked in us as and how we keep maturing by beholding God's glory. Paul dances between the hope of a future glory and the life we live in bodies that suffer - he likes this to being a jar of clary. We are reminded that as frail people we point others to our forever God and that often, this is most perfectly work out in the trenches and challenges of life. Paul's own pride and love of the believers also comes out - he genuinely affectionate towards them and loves them dearly. Authentic faith is seen in the everyday of life as our theology guards us and holds us up.

In **chapters 6** and **7** Paul's ministry motives are revealed as having authentic affection for them. He was grieved by his letters to them in the past because it caused them pain. But, he's also thankful how the gospel is transforming them though them as it lead to Godly sorrow and repentance.

Chapter 8-9 begins a shift in the letter. Paul draws on the lengthy example of the Macedonian churches to motivate the Corinthians in generosity and consistency. He constantly points to Jesus' example, his work in us and though us as a motivation to look after the community of God's people.

Chapters 10 and 11 are Paul's reply to some who want to cancel him for not being a faithful Christian. His attitude and pedigree are exposed as honest, even if he boasts about himself. However, self exaltation isn't his style. Rather, he insists that if they only looked at his life, they'd have no need to believe the slander others say about him. They know him too well for that. His suffering and afflictions show his sincerity and authenticity to the gospel.

Chapter 12-13 give a more theological take on Paul's attitude. He's aware that God brings about a humbling of him through suffering. Still, he longs to see them mature, is anxious they do and that when he comes, he will find them strong in the faith. His final few words are the summary of the book as Paul longs to see them built up in the gospel.

Let's strive, by the grace of God, to be a church that has an authentic faith in Jesus.

Luke Dahlenburg

Behind The Scenes of 2 Corinthians

The church at Corinth was planted by Paul (Acts 18:14) in mid AD50. The soil this church grew in looked very unlikely to support life. Corinth was a seedy trade city. In fact, the ancient equivalent of the phrase, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” was: “Behaving like a Corinthian”. It was a place full of self-promotion and held the promise of becoming anything you want to be. Corinth also attracted famous sports stars and hosted the Isthmus games every 2 years. This was like the Olympics, but a little smaller. Aphrodite the Greek god of love had a temple on a hill overlooking the city and at any given time you could find one thousand female slaves serving as prostitutes. Retired Roman soldiers live here, along with Jews who were expelled from Rome under Claudius (AD49). It was a melting pot of culture, people and ambitions. Think big city, big dreams.

It looked like a place that would be hard to see God at work in, yet, Paul entered into this space knowing the gospel is well up to the task. And, the same gospel is also up to the task of sustaining the church. Given all this it's not surprising that life got complicated for the Christians living in a city all about status and sleaze. It's true that ministry and church is always messy, some places make it even more than others. Corinth was one of those places. So much so, that Paul wrote a number of letters to (all delivered by Titus). He loved this church dearly, but they also drove him nuts at times. You can see the letters and issues below:

Letter #	Year	Reference	Why	Book of the Bible
1	AD50	1 Corinthians 5:9	Sexual immorality in the church isn't acceptable	-
2	AD53	1 Corinthians	Deals with a number of messy issues	1 Corinthians
3	6 months later	2 Corinthians 2:1-4	A painful visit. Things were still a mess and their relationship was strained	-
4	AD55	2 Corinthians	Encourages them to have authentic faith - to stick with Jesus and him	2 Corinthians

One of the big differences from 1 and 2 Corinthians is the tone. Paul is writing to try to win over and back these people to the gospel of Jesus. He spends a large chunk of energy writing about living by faith in a broken world, how to embrace weakness and live with the hope of heaven. After all, Jesus is the truly great one, who suffered and died for them, and their way to an authentic life is found by following him, not having the best position in the city. Head to the **Bible Project** website and watch their book summary for more details, have a read of a commentary on 2 Corinthians from a former pastor from Trinity Church Adelaide (Paul Barnett) from the **Bible Speaks Today** series or by Gary Miller from Queensland in the **For You** series.



Series Outline

Date	Talk Title	Passage
7-Apr	Authentic Comfort	2 Corinthians 1:1-11
14-Apr	Authentic Ministry	2 Corinthians 1:12-2:13
21-Apr	Authentic Confidence	2 Corinthians 2:14-3:18
28-Apr	Authentic Hope	2 Corinthians 4:1-18
5-May	Authentic Mission	2 Corinthians 5:1-21
12-May (Mother's Day)	<i>What God Thinks Of Our Bodies</i>	TBC
19-May	Authentic Allegiance	2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1
26-May	Authentic Sorrow	2 Corinthians 7:2-16
2-Jun	Authentic Generosity	2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15
9-Jun	Authentic Boasting	2 Corinthians 10:1-18
16-Jun	Authentic Foolishness	2 Corinthians 11:1-12:13
23-Jun	Authentic Love	2 Corinthians 12:14-13:14

Songs

Each week of our series you'll hear one of these 3x songs, especially chosen as they reflect key themes and ideas in the book of 2 Corinthians.

Song	YouTube Link
Blessed Be Your Name <i>by</i> Matt Redman	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTpTQ4kBLxA
Build My Life <i>by</i> Housefires	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYMj09mLOTw
We Are One <i>by</i> Emu Music	https://youtu.be/sBKKZtpF9po

Community Groups

Our Community Groups will work through each passage before Sunday's talk. A good idea when looking at the text prior to Sunday's talk is to get your group to outline the passage and look for the big idea after having read the verses, and, to then use the *COMA* method of looking at the Bible. To be clear, the name *COMA* doesn't imply that is how you will feel at the end of the study! Instead, it stands for four simple questions to consider as we read a passage:

C: What is the context of this passage? So, we think about what Paul has already told us about Jesus, the details we're given what life for the Corinthians is like.

O: What do we need to observe in this passage? What are the details that stand out? What things does Paul seem to highlight? What is the big idea?

M: What does this passage mean? This might seem like the most obvious question and it's the one we want to jump to, but if we haven't looked closely at the passage in its context we'll get this one wrong. On the other hand, we could spend hours unpacking all the fascinating detail of the text but there's very little point to that if we're not then considering what God is saying to us through this. How did Paul structure this to get his point across.

A: How might we apply this passage to our lives? (or perhaps we should ask, how might we apply our lives to this passage) This can be quite broad: What does Paul want the Corinthians to know about Jesus and how does it shape their lives? How do we make the same application today?

COMA questions for the epistles ¹

Context

- What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?
- What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?
- What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one? Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage you are reading?

Observation

- Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text? Are there key connecting words (for, therefore, but, because) that indicate the logical flow of the passage?
- What is the main point or points? What supporting points does the author make?
- What surprises are there in the flow of the argument?

Meaning

- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach you about God?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

Application

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude you need to change?

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- What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus?

End Of Term Reflection

Having come to the end of our time in 2 Corinthians take a moment to reflect on our last few months in God's word.

- What has God been teaching you?
- How have you been encouraged or challenged to have an authentic faith? Either as a reminder or perhaps for the first time?
- How have you grown in Christ?
- What are you thankful to God for?
- What are some changes that you would like to make in light of what we have learned from 2 Corinthians? Aim for 1 or 2 that are specific enough that you can put them into action in the next few weeks.
- How have you seen God answering prayer in your group?
- Having seen more of who Jesus is, who is one person you want to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with? In addition to praying, what is one specific action that you can take towards this goal?

Community Group Questions

Gary Miller has formulated a number of questions for discussion in his commentate on 2 Corinthians. You'll find some of them below you can use as a group.

Passage	Questions
2 Corinthians 1:1-11	<p>Grace and peace are the twin marks of the local church, according to Paul. Why should the gospel produce these marks? How does that happen?</p> <p>How would you describe the kind of "comfort" which God promises to give us?</p> <p>Reflect on the fact that God is already committed to giving us whatever "comfort" we need to live for him together this week. What difference does this make? Where should we expect to find this "comfort"?</p> <p>How can our suffering encourage other people?</p> <p>Why does it make a difference that God will deliver us in the end?</p>
2 Corinthians 1:12-2:13	<p>The call to be like Christ is impossibly daunting—so how come it isn't depressing but exciting for Paul?</p> <p>Christians aren't the only people in the world who are dependable, but how does Christian dependability differ from other forms?</p> <p>What produces real love for our brothers and sisters? What might this look like in your context this week?</p> <p>What's the connection between practical care and the gospel?</p>
2 Corinthians 2:14-3:18	<p>How does God speak to us? What difference does this make to the way in which we do evangelism?</p> <p>If we are "incense-bearers", what are our responsibilities when it comes to evangelism?</p> <p>Do you really expect God to change people you know and love through the gospel? What does this passage say to you about that?</p> <p>What can we expect God to do in us and through us through the gospel? Is that reflected in the way in which we live together as God's people?</p>
2 Corinthians 4:1-18	<p>When was the last time you thanked God for his kindness to you in setting up your life the way it is just now? Spend some time doing that now.</p> <p>What is the best thing for you about being a Christian?</p> <p>Why is our weakness not something to be ashamed of?</p> <p>What makes keeping going so hard on the one hand and so important on the other?</p>
2 Corinthians 5:1-21	<p>Why is hope for the future such a powerful motivator? Does it work like that for you? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>Why is it so important that we proclaim—and live—a gospel of hope in our comfortable world?</p> <p>If we look at other people through the lens of the gospel, what difference will it make?</p> <p>Who do you need to start (or restart) loving with Christ's love as you pursue reconciliation?</p>

Passage	Questions
2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1	<p>Paul is very clear on the need to listen to God and do what he says right now, lest we “receive the grace of God in vain”. What might receiving the grace of God in vain look like for you?</p> <p>Why does getting the gospel across to people with clarity matter so much?</p> <p>What does God promise us as those who are in Christ? What can we expect life to be like?</p> <p>How should we relate to other Christians?</p>
2 Corinthians 7:2-16	<p>In which areas are you most likely to act in ways that don’t fit with the gospel or that lack integrity?</p> <p>Do you consider repentance to be a part of your life? How could you make it part of your daily walk as a Christian?</p> <p>Why do we settle for shallow apologies rather than the tears and joys of godly sorrow that brings repentance?</p>
2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15	<p>What stops us giving more generously?</p> <p>According to Paul, what is the ultimate reason for giving sacrificially?</p> <p>What does sacrificial giving look like?</p> <p>Giving, according to Paul, is both good for us and promotes God’s glory. How do these two work together?</p>
2 Corinthians 10:1-18	<p>How do you normally react when you are attacked? How is it possible for people like you and me to respond like Jesus?</p> <p>Why is it so hard to put our own hurt or reputation aside for the sake of the gospel?</p> <p>If we are “in Christ”, what difference does that make to the way in which we cope under pressure?</p> <p>Why is consistency such a big deal for followers of Jesus?</p> <p>What stands in the way of our living to please God?</p>
2 Corinthians 11:1-12:13	<p>One of the first steps to growing in godliness is facing the fact that we are not naturally wise, and so we need God’s help to live well. Have you embraced your own inner idiot?</p> <p>Why do we often push away the people who love us most?</p> <p>These chapters are deeply countercultural. How does your understanding of suffering differ from Paul’s? Why do you think that is?</p> <p>We are generally very keen to preserve and enhance our reputation. How does the gospel cut across that?</p>
2 Corinthians 12:14-13:14	<p>Love can never be content to let relationships with brothers and sisters die—why would any of us do that? Is there a relationship you need to ask God for the grace to lovingly pursue right now?</p> <p>If love builds, what is our primary responsibility to one another? How do you think we might carry this out?</p> <p>For Paul, loving the Corinthians meant challenging them to be godly. How does this fit with our understanding of love?</p>