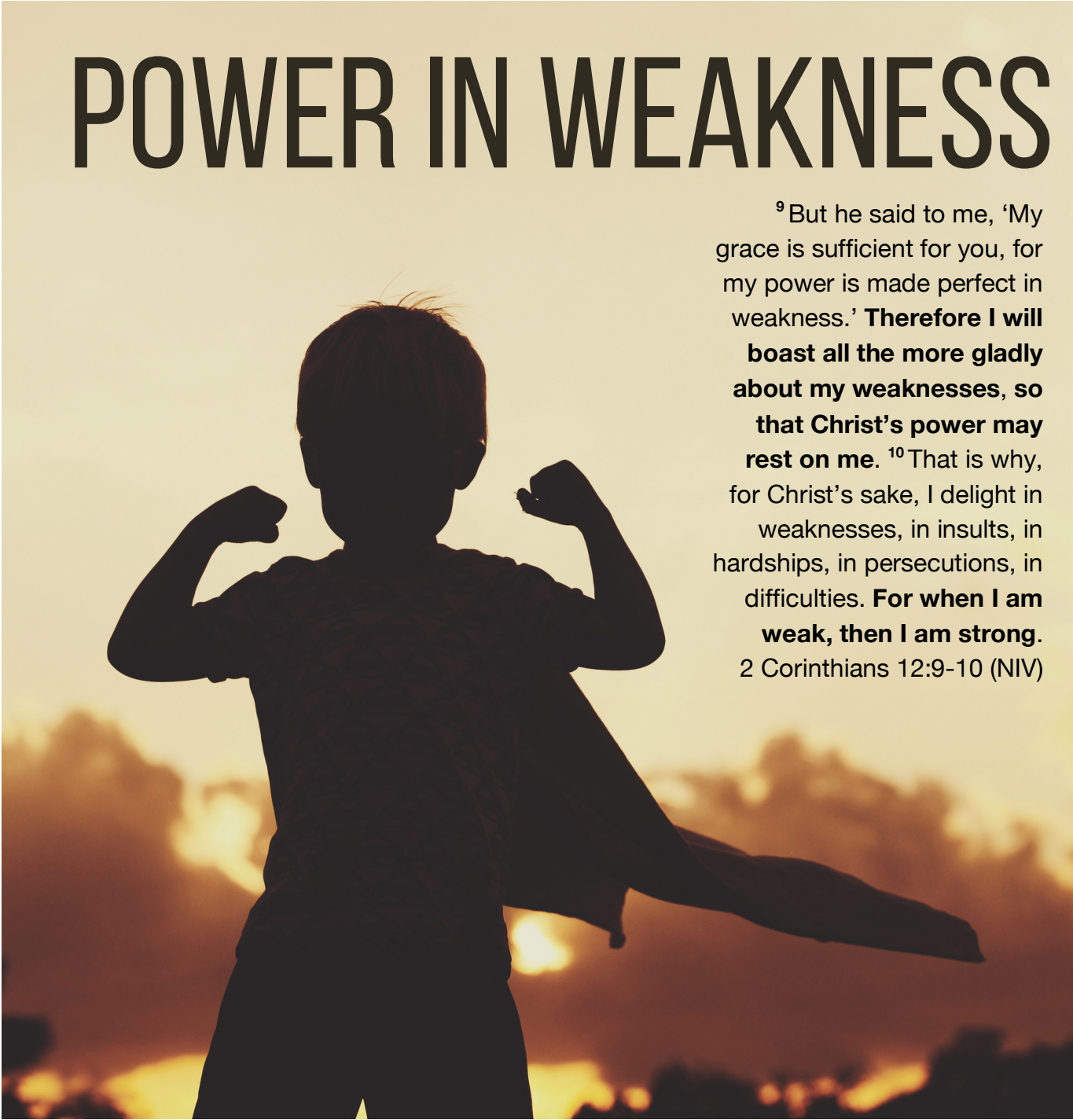


## 2 CORINTHIANS

# POWER IN WEAKNESS

A silhouette of a young child with a cape, flexing their muscles in a heroic pose. The child is set against a warm, golden sunset sky with soft clouds. The overall mood is one of empowerment and faith.

<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.** <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**  
2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV)

# 2 CORINTHIANS

## “Power in Weakness”

The Apostle Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians is an emotional letter written about seven years after establishing the church in Corinth (timeline on the next page). Paul expresses a range of emotions as he rejoices in developments in Corinth, while also responding to personal attacks on himself and his ministry.

Paul writes to prepare the church for what will be his final visit – when he plans to decisively deal with problems surrounding power and authority. We learn about the weakness of Paul and yet the power of God in Paul’s apostolic life, ministry and message. We see the power of God is “made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We won’t cover every verse of 2 Corinthians in these Bible studies, instead we’ll work through in bite-sized chunks. Here’s the plan: <sup>1</sup>

	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Title/Theme</b>
1	13:1-10	Introduction
2	1:1-2:11	Comfort in Suffering
3	2:12-4:18	Life in Death
4	5:1-6:10	The Power of Reconciliation
5	6:11-7:16	Repentance in Sorrow
6	8:1-9:15	Generosity in Poverty
7	10:1-11:33	Boasting in Christ
8	12:1-13:14	Power in Weakness

Growth Group is more than just a Bible Study. We also meet to pray and share our lives together. The prayer ideas at the start of each study are intended to reflect this.

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<sup>1</sup> These studies owe much to Paul Barnett’s commentary on the letter, “The Message of 2 Corinthians: Power in weakness”, in the ‘Bible Speaks Today’ series. The commentary is accessible and inexpensive if you want to grab a copy for some extra reading.



# Paul and the Corinthians

## Visits

## Letters

Paul established the Church at Corinth during his 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey in 50-52 AD (Acts 18:1-18)

50 AD



**Paul's first letter** to the Corinthians (referred to in 1 Cor 5:9). Written after Paul established the Church, but before the letter we now know as 1 Corinthians

53 AD

**1 Corinthians** between 53-55AD, while Paul was in Ephesus, during his third Missionary Journey.

55 AD

Paul refers to a second '**painful**' visit to the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:1, 13:2), after writing 1 Corinthians (55-56AD), during which he caused pain as he dealt with an emergency disciplinary problem. The Corinthians caused him pain as well.

After his second visit Paul wrote a **third letter**, referred to in 2 Cor 2:3-4 and 7:8-12. This letter was most likely a rebuke for wrongdoing on the part of some. It was intended to bring about repentance

Paul's promised **third visit** (2 Cor 13:1) 56 - 57AD, sometime after writing 2 Corinthians. Paul stays in Greece for three months (Acts 20:2-3)

**2 Corinthians** was written by Paul between 55-56AD to prepare the Corinthians for his upcoming visit

57 AD

*This is an attempt to reconstruct events based on what we find in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Acts. You may like to have a go yourself?*



# Introduction to 2 Corinthians

13:1-10

## Prayer

- Share some things that are happening in your life in the next couple of months. Pray for each other.
- Pray also for KPC Kids and Youth group.

As an introduction to Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians we'll start at the end, where the apostle gives his reason for writing. We will then scan the letter for the issues addressed, before coming back to the end of the letter.

## Read 2 Corinthians 13:1-10

1. Why does Paul say he is writing this letter?
2. Who gave Paul 'authority' over the Corinthians, and why was it given?

Paul is writing to prepare the Corinthians for his next visit – at which time he expects to exercise his authority. Let's scan the whole letter, to look into some of the history between Paul and the Corinthians, and see why Paul may need to exert authority.

3. Read these few scattered verses and note down issues there may have been in Corinth.

2:9-11 and 7:12

6:11-13 and 7:2

10:1-2, 10-11, and 11:4-6

12:14-18

There are significant issues which Paul intends to sort-out when he returns to Corinth. The church appears to have deserted Paul and started following 'super-apostles' (11:5). Paul's concern isn't that they have abandoned him personally, but that by deserting him, they have forsaken the truth of the gospel of Jesus.



## Now come back to 2 Corinthians 13:1-10<sup>2</sup>

4. a. What is Paul's warning to the Corinthians? (v2)  
  
b. What does Paul hope the outcome of his visit will be? What is his desire for the Corinthians (v7-10)
5. a. What is the Corinthians' demand of Paul? (v3)  
  
b. What explanation does Paul give in response? (v3-4)  
  
c. What test does Paul in turn challenge the Corinthians with? (v5-7)  
  
*d. How do we 'test' ourselves?*  
  
*e. Do you share Paul's humility and willingness to be 'weak'?*

In 2 Cor 2:3-4 and 7:8-12, Paul refers to a 'tearful' letter, most likely his third letter to the Church, written in response to those who wronged Paul and questioned his authority. This attitude is not new to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians (Paul's second letter) it's obvious that the Corinthians are dividing loyalty between human leaders, and questioning the authority and presence of Paul himself (see 1 Cor 1:12-17, 2:1-5, and 4:8-17).

Paul intended to visit Corinth to deal with issues that have arisen, including criticism of himself. These things were partly addressed in a previous letter (2 Cor 2:3-4, 7:8-12) and have their origins earlier than that. Paul hopes the outcome of his visit will be positive - his goal is the building up of the Corinthian Church. He doesn't mind if he is 'weak' because this points to the cross and is good for the Corinthians. Over the next 7 weeks we'll delve into the issues as Paul addresses them.

### Talk about it...

6. Do we deal with 'issues' in church with the same seriousness as Paul?
7. Are there issues we need to deal with, or to guard against?
8. How do you think that 'power in weakness' is shown in your life?

### Pray

Pray together for our church and our church leaders. Pray that we would display the truth of the gospel in our lives and in our fellowship.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul's quote (Deut. 19:15) is a clue to his intention to deal with matters of conflict. In Deuteronomy 'two or three witnesses' refer to different individuals. Paul is using this principle to say his third visit will be a 'third witness' against the Corinthians.



# Comfort in Suffering

1:1-2:11

## Prayer

- Write down the names of some of your neighbours (on either side, across the road, or over the back fence, or in the unit across the hall). Then pray together for each other's neighbours.
- Pray for some of the other Growth Groups.

1. In what ways do people suffer? Where do people typically look for comfort when they suffer?

Paul starts his letter by recounting his own suffering and the comfort he finds in Christ. He also describes the comfort his suffering can bring to others. As we'll see later in 2 Corinthians - some of Paul's suffering is caused by the Corinthians! But he draws comfort from them and seeks to build them up as he serves them. Ultimately Paul can only do what he does as an Apostle, because of the power of God in Christ.

## Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

2. Who is the ultimate source of all comfort? And to what end?
3. How do Paul's distress and comfort lead to comfort and salvation for the Corinthians?<sup>3</sup>
4. How did Paul suffer in Asia?
5. For what purpose does Paul say he suffered? (v9)
6. Who delivered him from his troubles?

## Think about it

7. How does Paul's attitude compare to *your* attitude in the face of suffering?
8. How can your attitude to suffering become more like Paul's?

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<sup>3</sup> Hint: how do suffering and comfort relate to Christ in v5?





Paul's integrity may have been called into question over his perceived indecisiveness. In the verses which follow Paul explains his change of mind, and his decision *not* to visit the Corinthians.

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4**

9. Why does Paul say he postponed his planned visit? (v1-2)
10. What was his purpose in writing the tearful letter? (v3-4)

**Think about it**

*Christians are united in Christ and ought to enjoy fellowship with one another. But the apostle's letter demonstrates some of the 'messiness' that sin introduces. Paul knew it was better for him to stay away, at this point, rather than be with the Corinthians! Yet, in the midst of the mess he is still motivated by love. Ask God to help you love fellow Christians, even when things are 'messy'!*

Paul wants to spare the Corinthians grief, and bring them joy, in turn being made joyful by them. He has been caused grief by a member of the Corinthian Church. His response reflects his desire for all the Corinthians.

**Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-11**

11. What is the result of this person's actions and how has the situation been dealt with?
12. How does Paul want the Church to treat the man now? Why?
13. How will the Corinthians express the obedience Paul asks for in verse 9?

**Think about it**

*Within the body of Christ there are times when discipline is required, and times when forgiveness is in order. Ask God for wisdom in knowing what is appropriate, and when.*

Paul has experienced great suffering and great comfort. His suffering has come through persecution from outsiders, as well as through grief caused by the church in Corinth! In all this Paul can say the suffering of Christ overflows to him, but the comfort of being forgiven by God in Christ is much greater than his suffering. It is because Paul knows this comfort that he can comfort others who also suffer for Christ.

14. How are we comforted by Christ? How can we extend that same comfort to others?

**Pray**

Thank God for the comfort that is ours in Christ. Pray that, even in our own suffering and in trials – we would comfort others.



## Life in Death

2:12-4:18

### Prayer

- Give members of your group a chance to share something they've learned or been reminded of in personal Bible reading, or in Growth Group, or at church. Then thank God for these things.
- Pray for people who are 'new-ish' with us at Morning Church and/or NightChurch.

In chapters 2-6 Paul begins a defence of his Apostleship and his ministry. This defence continues in earnest in chapter 10-13. Here in these earlier chapters Paul outlines his gospel ministry and shows why the power of his ministry is in God, not in himself.

1. Can life and death coexist? Can you think of examples from the natural world to support your answer?

### Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

2. How does Paul describe the effect of the Gospel as he travels and teaches?

### Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

3. What does Paul consider to be his 'recommendation' as a minister of the gospel?
4. Where does Paul's competence ultimately come from?
5. Paul says he is a minister of a New Covenant – a covenant of the Spirit. What does he say is the difference between the letter and the Spirit?

### Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

As we read the rest of chapter three, we see that the old covenant is the Mosaic Law, and the new covenant is the new life of those who believe in Christ and receive his Spirit.

6. Scan verses 7-18 and in two columns list and compare the characteristics of the old and new covenants.

Old Covenant	New Covenant





7. Looking back over Questions 1-6, do you think it is possible for both life and death to exist in a person who is a member of the new covenant?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6**

8. Paul again defends himself and asserts his honesty and transparency in presenting the Gospel of Jesus. What kind of accusations do you think he *may* be responding to?
9. What is the essence of Paul's message? Who ultimately reveals the truth of the Gospel?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18**

10. As we read these verses it seems Paul believes both life and death *can* exist in the believer. In what ways are both life and death at work in the life of Paul?
11. For what reason does the treasure of the Gospel of Christ reside in 'Jars of Clay'?
12. What is the hope that Christians can have, despite the fragile shells we live in? (v.13-15)
13. Why does Paul have hope despite
  - a. his present suffering, and
  - b. his mortality?

### **Talk about it**

14. In what ways do we experience the struggle between life and death as a Christian?
15. How can we cope with this struggle?

### **Think about it**

*When we suffer we are more keenly aware that 'outwardly we are wasting away'. In these times we need to remind each other that if our faith is in Jesus, then 'inwardly we are being renewed day by day'.*

*On the other hand, there are times when we get surprisingly comfortable in our jars of clay. When this happens we need to remind each other of what is temporary, and what is eternal.*

### **Pray**

Pray for each member of your Growth Group – and ask that you would each know life and hope in Jesus. If there are particular concerns, or struggles, pray for these things too.



# The Power of Reconciliation

5:1-6:10

## Prayer

- Pray for non-Christian friends and family and ask for opportunities to share the truth of the Gospel with them.
- Pray for RI teachers in our local schools and pray for more willing volunteers.

1. Someone comes to you and says "Why should I believe in God? What has he ever done for me?". How would you respond?

## Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Tents, houses, buildings, clothes, nakedness - it's a very mixed metaphor, but Paul is using it all to talk about the same thing.

2. According to Paul's mixed metaphor:
  - a. how are Christians currently clothed?
  - b. What clothes do we look forward to putting on?
3. How do we know we will one day put on our heavenly clothes?  
*(glance back to 2 Corinthians 1:18-22. How does this passage give similar encouragement?)*

In chapter 3-4 Paul described the struggle between life and death, and the hope of eternal glory which far outweighs the temporary troubles Christians face in this life. Paul has reiterated this hope, and now goes on to describe the basis of his hope, and his mission to share the good news of reconciliation.

## Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-16

4. What is the destiny of all people, and how does this motivate Paul to share the gospel? (v.10-11)
5. What truth ultimately compels Paul to share the Gospel? (v.14)
6. Why did Christ die? (v.15)
7. How does Christ's death and resurrection affect Paul's way of regarding people?



**Think about it**

8. *Do we regard ourselves and others from the right perspective, or are we worldly?*

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2**

9. What does it mean that God reconciled the world to himself in Christ? (v.18-19, 21)
10. How do we see Paul's urgency in passing on the message of reconciliation? (5:20-6:2)

Paul finishes this section of his letter with a great list of positives and negatives, strengths and difficulties, in his ministry. Yet he says he commends himself in *all* circumstances.

**Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10**

11. How do Paul's troubles and weaknesses commend his message of reconciliation?

**Think about it**

Paul knew the threat of having his earthly tent destroyed. However, because of his confidence and longing to be clothed in a heavenly dwelling, he wasn't disheartened by suffering, troubles, or weakness. Rather, he put his hope in being with the Lord and his energy into persuading people to be reconciled to God through Christ.

12. How can we overcome our troubles and weakness to share the message of reconciliation faithfully?
13. Talk again about how you might answer the question at the start of the study. Why would someone ask such a question, and how can you respond effectively?

**Pray**

Ask God to continue to transform our minds and hearts – so that we do not view people in a worldly way. Pray that God would help us overlook our 'weaknesses' and help us faithfully share the message of reconciliation.



## Repentance in Sorrow

6:11-7:16

### Prayer

- Share some challenges you are tackling at the moment – and pray for each other
- Pray for the immediate family of members of your group

1. Think of a time you have felt convicted of wrongdoing, or hurt by someone's rebuke. How did it make you feel and what effect did it produce?

Paul gives another about the problems between him and the Church at Corinth. He alludes again to the 'tearful' letter he wrote (2:2-4).

### Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-13, and 7:2-4

2. What is Paul's request of the Corinthians?
3. What might be the issue between Paul and the Corinthians, judging by his words here?

Despite the problems Paul's sounds quite positive about the relationship (in 7:4). Read on to find out why.

### Read 2 Corinthians 7:5-13a

4. What caused Paul to be comforted in Macedonia, and why was he encouraged?
5. What effect did Paul's letter have on the Corinthians, and what action did it lead to?
6. Describe in your own words, the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. (v.10) Can you describe the difference based on your own experience?
7. What was the purpose of Paul's 'tearful letter'? (v.12)

*At this point we get a clue to the reason for what Paul writes in 6:14-7:1. Go back and read this passage and the info in the box if you have time.*

### Read 2 Corinthians 7:13-16

8. Does Paul's encouragement at hearing Titus' report mean the Corinthians were innocent of all wrongdoing?

In 7:12 Paul alludes to the fact that the tearful letter had to do with wrongdoing by an individual. This individual could be the same person Paul talks about in 2:5. It is likely a number of Christians at Corinth sided with this individual in his opposition to, or his attack on, Paul. As Paul deals with this issue, he makes it clear in chapter 2 that this man's sin is even more damaging for the Church than it is for Paul. This may be a clue to the purpose of what Paul says in 6:14-7:1.

The Corinthians have previously shown willingness to associate with unbelievers in everything from Sexual behaviour (1Cor 5:1) to Feasts in Idol Temples (1Cor 8) to quarrelling over human leaders (1Cor 3). This permissive attitude may have led people to side with a particular individual in his opposition to Paul.

However, those who oppose Paul oppose the true Gospel. To oppose the Gospel and to be linked with unbelievers in this way excludes us from relationship with God. But to remain separate from this worldly influence puts us firmly on God's side of the argument.



9. Paul sent Titus to Corinth in the confidence that he would be received well. What did Titus experience on his visit?

Paul says that what he wrote in his letter to the Corinthians (rebuking them for wrongdoing) was true, but that he also had reason to boast in the Corinthians. Perhaps he has even more reason now that he can see the sorrow his letter caused has resulted in repentance on their part.

10. How do we usually respond when we're hurt by someone's rebuke, or when our sin and wrongdoing is exposed?

11. How can we make sure a justified rebuke results in repentance, even when we feel hurt by it?

### **Talk about it**

12. How should we go about correcting and rebuking one another in a godly manner?
13. If we hold a grudge against someone else in church, or if we are hurt by something they have done – what ought we do about it?
14. Does this topic/study raise any other issues that you would like to discuss?

### **Pray**

Ask God to give each of us the humility to change when we are correctly rebuked and admonished.



# Generosity in Poverty

8:1-9:15

## Prayer

- Thank God for his generous provision for us individually and as a church
- Ask God to give us generous hearts
- Pray for missionary work in our schools, on university campuses, and overseas

1. What motivates you to be generous? What hinders your generosity?

In chapter 8 - 9 Paul continues the positive vibe of the previous chapter - as he writes about the collection which the Corinthians have promised for the Christians in Jerusalem (1Cor 16:1-4). Paul expresses confidence that they *will* complete the collection, and he uses various methods to encourage them stick to their promise.

## Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

2. What makes the Macedonian's giving stand out?
3. What motivated them to give so generously?
4. In verse 8 and 9 Paul admits that he is comparing the Corinthians with the Macedonians in order to encourage the Corinthians to give generously. What does he use as the ultimate motivation?
5. How have Christians been made rich through Christ's 'poverty'?

## Talk about it

6. *What might be a similar 'collection' to the one Paul is discussing? How is it different to our obligation to provide for those who teach us, and to our personal commitment to support specific missionaries?*

## Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-15

7. The Corinthians have previously indicated their willingness to take part in the collection for the Christians in Jerusalem. It seems their initial enthusiasm may have waned. Paul says their willingness should be matched by their completion of the task. What is it that Paul says proves the acceptability of the offering?
8. What is Paul trying to achieve among the Christians, both the poor and the wealthy?



Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians of his plans to send Titus and two other men to receive the Corinthians' gift and transport it to Jerusalem. It is worth noting the way that the apostle requires these funds to be handled – everything is to be transparent and above board.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of their initial enthusiasm and how news of their enthusiasm motivated the Macedonians to action. He then tells the Corinthians what a shame it would be if their gift was not ready to be collected as promised. That could be embarrassing for Paul, for the Macedonians, and for the Corinthians!

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

9. What principles for giving does Paul lay down in verses 6-7?
10. What result should God's grace produce in us? (v8-9)
11. How has God provided for the Corinthians, and what is the purpose of his provision to them? (v11)
12. What will the Corinthians' generosity result in? (v12-14)
13. What do you think is the indescribable gift Paul refers to in verse 15?

### **Talk about it**

14. *Why is it that we are often reluctant to 'give' our time, our possessions and our wealth?*
15. *In what ways do you think we as Christians ought to be known for our generosity?*

### **Pray**

Thank God again for his generosity towards us – in giving His Son that we might have life. Pray that our gratitude would overflow in generosity, not just financial generosity, but servant-hearts as well.

#### **A Guide to giving**

Why not make some time to have a read of a 'guide to giving' and pray about how you can be considered and consistent in your financial support for church, missionaries, gospel ministry, those in need... and in your general attitude of generosity: [giving.kpc.org.au](http://giving.kpc.org.au)





# Boasting in Christ

10:1-11:33

## Prayer

- Share some things that are happening in your life now, or in the next couple of months. Pray for one another.
- Pray for other churches in Brisbane.

1. What do Aussies generally think of people who boast about themselves? Think of someone you know, who you would say is *full of themselves* (probably don't name them to your Growth Group!!) Are they good company? How do you feel around them?

From chapter 10 Paul enters the final phase of his letter, as he begins defending his apostleship again. Unlike the opening chapters Paul seems to be dealing specifically with false apostles and their influence on the Corinthian Church. His argument rests on who boasts the best, and what they boast in!!

## Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-11

2. Some in Corinth have been questioning Paul's authority and are trying to discredit him. In your own words, write down Paul's response to those who claim he is timid and unimpressive in person.
3. What is Paul's claim to authority based on? (v8)

## Read 2 Corinthians 10:12-17

4. On what basis do some commend themselves?
5. Where should we look for commendation? (v18)
6. Self-commendation amounts to boasting. How does Paul define the limits of *his* 'boasting'?

## Think about it

*It's not wrong to get excited about seeing people become Christians, or grow in their faith in Christ – is it? But there is a temptation to boast about the part we think we may have played. Rather than falling for that temptation, we ought to 'boast in the Lord' (v17). But what does it look like to 'boast in the Lord'?*

OK, almost time for some sarcasm and 'folly'. Paul invites us (v11) to put up with a little of his 'foolishness' – he is about to 'boast' in such a way that will make a mockery of those who commend themselves. But first...



### Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-6

7. What does Paul want for the Corinthians?
8. How have the Corinthians been deceived? (*See also 11:20*)
9. Where does the different teaching that deceives the Corinthians come from?

It seems that Paul is not as impressive a speaker as the 'super-apostles'. This issue is not completely new among the Christians at Corinth (*see side box*). It seems he is even criticized because he doesn't charge the Corinthians for his services, like the 'super-apostles' do!

### Read 2 Corinthians 11:12-15

10. How does Paul describe these 'super-apostles'?

OK, time for sarcasm and folly...

### Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-31

11. What will Paul boast in, if he must boast?
12. How might boasting in our weaknesses show that we are boasting in Christ? (Also refer to 2 Cor 4:7)
13. Should we do more of this kind of boasting?

### Talk about it

14. *What sort of church leaders do you think we are attracted to? Are we susceptible to the same temptation as the Corinthians? (v19-20)*
15. *Do you think it is possible to take the idea of 'power in weakness' too far, and appoint church leaders who are not suited to the task?*

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul defends his authority as one who preached "not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power". It seems this remains an issue for some at Corinth (2 Cor 10:10, 11:4-6), who reject the truth that Paul preaches because his speech is unimpressive. Instead they prefer the 'super apostles'. It's hard to be sure of these 'super apostles' identity, but they are probably Jews, trained in public speaking, who are intent on maintaining Jewish Christians under the Mosaic law, and bringing Gentile Christians under certain aspects of Jewish law.

### Pray

Ask God to help us serve him whole-heartedly without being concerned about what others think of us. Pray that we would boast in Jesus, not in ourselves.



# Power in Weakness

12:1-13:14

## Prayer

- Reflect back over 2 Corinthians and share some of the things you have learned or been reminded of. Thank God for these things.
  - Pray for each of the members of your Growth Group (those present and those absent today) – and ask that each one would continue to grow in their faith in Jesus as we look forward to His return. Pray that we would be living godly lives, making wise decisions, and growing in our knowledge of God.
1. In modern Australia culture, how might *Power* be displayed in weakness? Brainstorm some examples of cases where weakness is considered impressive, or a display of power. Did you think of many? Any? Why or why not?

It's rare in Aussie culture for any kind of weakness to be considered powerful. Yet Paul finished chapter 11 by claiming that if he had to boast, he would boast in his weakness. As he continues in chapter 12, we find Paul has good reason to boast in himself, if anyone does. But he has better reason to refrain from boasting.

## Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

2. In verses 2-4 Paul describes a vision he received from God. He speaks in the third person, perhaps to distance himself from the event being described, but verses 1, 5, and 7 indicate he is talking about himself. Do you think someone who received that vision might have reason to boast? Why or why not?
3. Why does Paul refrain from boasting about his vision, even though he would simply be telling the truth? (v6)
4. How does God help Paul refrain from boasting?
5. We don't know the exact nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh, but what lesson does Paul learn by receiving it?
6. Why will Paul boast in his weaknesses? (v9-10)

## Talk about it

7. How can the Power of God be displayed in *our* weakness?

Let's continue to think about how God's Power might be displayed in our weakness. We'll reflect back over some of what we have seen in 2 Corinthians. Have a look at these verses, and share thoughts you have.



1:3-7

4:7-12

7:8-11

8:8-9

In the rest of chapter 12 Paul continues to defend himself against the 'super-apostles'. Despite the way some in Corinth have questioned Paul's authority and despite the continuing sin, Paul's great desire is to build up the Church in Corinth. He wants them to be devoted to him for the sake of Christ. We see this desire reflected in chapter 13 - where we began these studies a number of weeks ago.

### **Read 2 Corinthians 13:1-4**

8. How does Paul intend to demonstrate the power of Christ when he visits Corinth? (v2-3)
9. How has Christ demonstrated power in weakness?
10. How does Paul emulate power in weakness?

### **Think about it**

11. *As Christians, in what ways do we hold on to our own power instead of God's?*
15. *How can we do more to let God's power be demonstrated in our weaknesses?*

### **Pray**

Thank God for the encouragement we have each received from reading 2 Corinthians together. Pray that each one of us would continue to be renewed in our trust in Jesus. Ask that we could demonstrate the power of God in our lives, as we live in these 'tents', these 'jars of clay' and as we long for the return of Jesus.

