

LEADER'S GUIDE

CROSSGRAIN

***A STUDY IN 2ND
CORINTHIANS***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** **Leader's Guide**

- 3** **Profile of a Disciple**
- 5** **Greetings!** | *2 Cor. 1:1-2*
- 7** **Competent to Comfort** | *2 Cor. 1:3-7*
- 9** **Good Theology for Bad Times** | *2 Cor. 1:8-11*
- 11** **Simply, Sincerely, and Supremely Yours** | *2 Cor. 1:12-14*
- 13** **The Rest of the Story** | *2 Cor. 1:15 – 2:4*
- 15** **The Power of Forgiving** | *2 Cor. 2:5-11*
- 17** **A Fragrance Like No Other** | *2 Cor. 2:12-17*
- 19** **Spirit Sufficient** | *2 Cor. 3:1-6*
- 21** **Uber Glory** | *2 Cor. 3:7-18*
- 23** **Christian Confidence Part 1** | *2 Cor. 4:1-6*
- 25** **Christian Confidence Part 2** | *2 Cor. 4:7-18*
- 27** **Christian Confidence Part 3** | *2 Cor. 5:1-10*
- 29** **Compelled by Love** | *2 Cor. 5:11-15*
- 31** **A New Take on People** | *2 Cor. 5:16-6:2*
- 33** **Heart Open Wide** | *2 Cor. 6:3-13*
- 35** **Clean It Up!** | *2 Cor. 6:14-7:1*
- 37** **Godly Sorrow vs. Worldly Sorrow** | *2 Cor. 7:2-16*
- 39** **The Grace of Giving** | *2 Cor. 8:1-15*
- 41** **The Laws of the Harvest** | *2 Cor. 8:16-9:15*
- 43** **Meek and Gentle Warrior** | *2 Cor. 10:1-18*
- 45** **Beating Fools at Their Own Game** | *2 Cor. 11:1-33*
- 47** **Strength in Weakness** | *2 Cor. 12:1-13*
- 49** **Third Time's a Charm** | *2 Cor. 12:14-13:14*

LEADER'S GUIDE

Thank you so much for choosing to serve as a Life Group leader. **A life group is a small community that seeks to LIVE, LOVE, and LEAD like Jesus through authentic relationships.** You're leading people to put their faith into action each week. God can and will use you in powerful ways as you lead your friends and neighbors into Christ-centered community.

Below are some reminders for leading your Life Group through this curriculum. A curriculum is a guide, not a strict template that must be followed to a tee. It is good to have structure and consistency, however make sure you prayerfully allow room for the Holy Spirit to lead each of your times together as a group. Don't forget to take regular breaks from this curriculum to go out and serve our community, have a neighborhood BBQ and invite friends, attend a concert or community event, etc.



WARM-UP

As you begin your life group, you have some options. Change what you do on a regular basis to keep things new.

1. **ASK.** Ask your group about last week's application (maybe review last week's conversation), then listen for how God has been at work in people's lives.
2. **ICEBREAKER.** This is a fun or sometimes serious question. It might relate to the passage you are about to discuss, or it might just be a way to open up conversation and learn something new about one another. Feel free to come up with your own! Give everyone a chance to engage, but don't let it take too long. It's just a warm up.
3. **PRAY.** Don't forget this part as you begin your time together. Prayer is powerful.



CONTEXT

In this section, you'll find a summary of each passage. Choose someone to read this section out loud or summarize it in their own words. Corinthians is a letter filled with God's words both for the Corinthian church and for our church today. It's important to remember the context within the whole letter and the context of the Corinthian church.

HELPFUL TIPS! Do not skip the warm-up or context sections. They are intentional so that everyone is on the same page and helps the discussion gradually become more serious.

continued on back...

LEADER'S GUIDE



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

In this section, you'll find questions to help your group discuss the passage. The questions are in no particular order so feel free jump around or ask different questions that better follow where your group is going. Remember, try to lead your group from head-questions (context) to heart-questions (emotions and faith), and then to feet-questions (application).

HELPFUL TIPS! Here are a few general questions that can be applied to any passage:

What stuck out to you from this passage?

What does this teach us about God? What does this teach us about people?

What one truth can you apply from what we've looked at today?



APPLICATION

These are extremely important questions for your group. They not only prompt your group members into action; they can also allow you to see into a person's heart in significant ways. There are two ways to ask life application questions: (a) use specific questions provided in the guide, or (b) form your own questions based on comments during the discussion time. Remember, this is where people put their faith in action!

HELPFUL TIPS! Don't be afraid of the "awkward silences." Let the seconds pass by in these times — some great comments often come out of silence.



WRAP-UP

As you close your time together, lead the members of your group to come to an action-based conclusion. What is a take-away that God could be putting on our heart? How can we put our faith into action? Encourage your group to write down their application, and then follow-up to ask how things went during the last week.

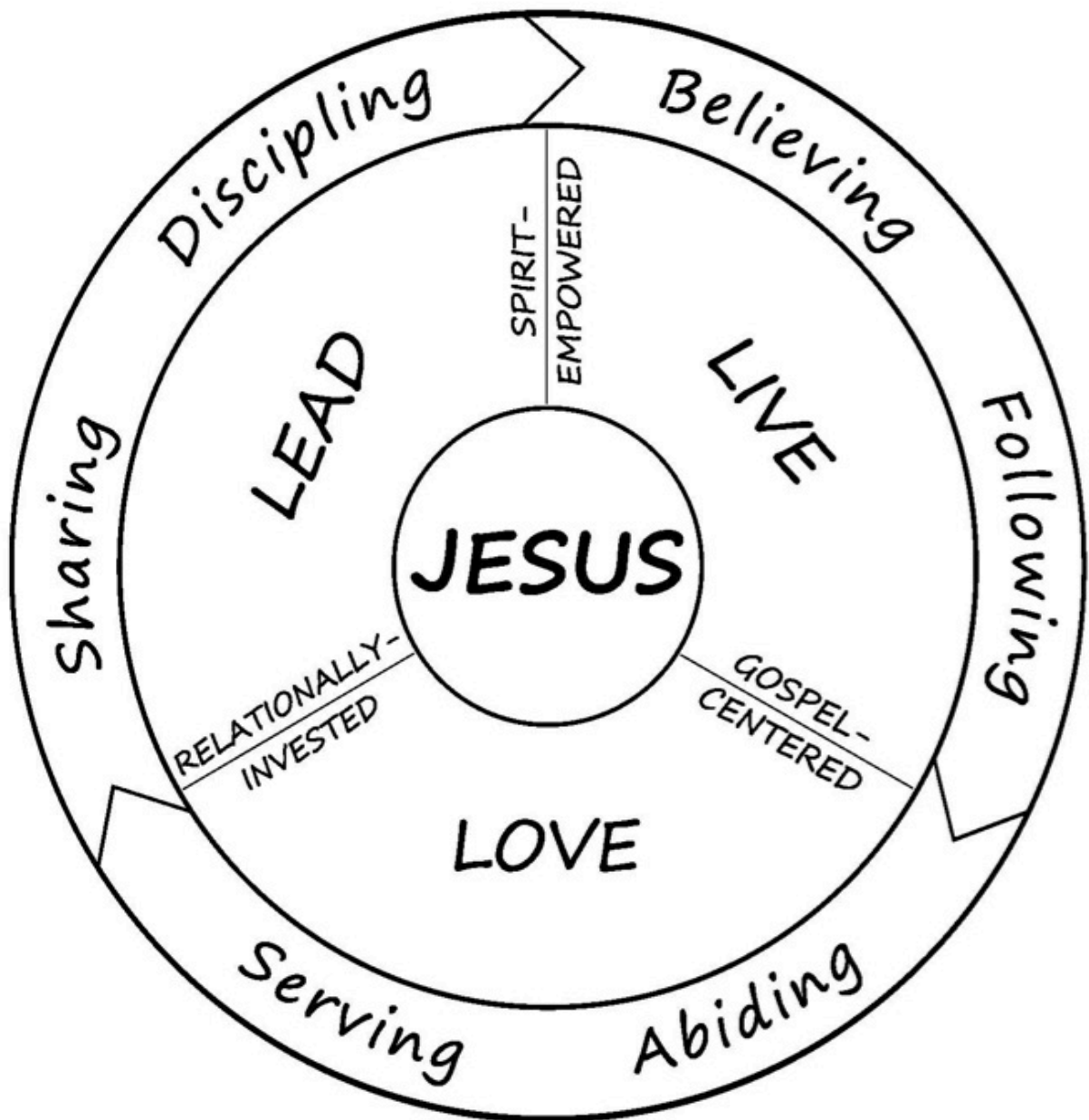
Conclude your group time with prayer. Don't be surprised if God leads your group to prayer as a member shares a deep truth, or personal insight and application. Let God's Spirit guide, follow His lead as your group moves from content to application to prayer.

HELPFUL TIPS! Manage your discussion time well to arrive at the application question(s) with at least 15 minutes of discussion time left. Application and prayer is intended to be the most meaningful time of the group meeting.

PROFILE OF A DISCIPLE

Our purpose as a church is to be disciples who make disciples. Disciples are spirit-empowered, gospel-centered, and relationally-invested as we believe, obey, abide, serve, share, and make disciples.

GOD'S GLORY



GREETINGS!

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-2



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** What would we like to do as a Life Group this year?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What was your favorite vacation? Did you visit a place, specific people, or both?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

2 Corinthians is a letter about relationships. It was written from the church founder, Paul, to a group that he dearly loved, the Corinthians Christians. Travel had created a painful separation. Communication was slow (pre-email, no Fed-Ex). Paul and his team had suffered greatly. The Corinthian church continued to struggle with painful internal issues and with false leaders referred to as the “false apostles” (11:13).

In this context of struggle, separation, and suffering, the book of 2 Corinthians was written. Paul begins with his characteristic hello, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). This hello pointed not to the immediate circumstances but to God, God’s grace and peace, God’s relationship with us.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Who are the characters Paul references in these opening verses?
- What do you know about Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian church from 1 Corinthians?
- If you were in Paul’s situation, what might you be feeling?
- If you were in the Corinthian church’s situation, what might you be feeling?
- Try to summarize the main point of these opening verses in one sentence.

continued on back...

GREETINGS!

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-2



APPLICATION

- How do I typically greet people when I'm going through a difficult time?
- What can I apply from Paul's example?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of the passage we have just shared, what is one way I can live differently?
2. How can we pray for one another, for our church, and for our community?

COMPETENT TO COMFORT

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What is your favorite kind of movie (action, romance, drama, comedy, etc.)? Do you have a favorite movie?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

If 1 Corinthians is a letter written by a weary pastor, 2 Corinthians is a letter penned by a protective leader. These first few verses give us a window into the context of the letter. Paul was jealous of his flock, angry at false leaders, passionate about their God-given mission, and ready to fight for their health as a church. Paul dearly loved the Corinthian church.

Paul and his team had suffered. The Corinthian church had suffered. Sometimes we deny our pain. But Paul confronts suffering head on, and shows God's purpose in our pain. God brings comfort to those who suffer, further using the comforted to extend His comfort to others who are suffering.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Who are all the people that experienced pain or suffering?
- How does God respond to our pain and suffering?
- What is God's purpose in comforting us?
- Try to summarize the main point of these verses in one sentence.

continued on back...

COMPETENT TO COMFORT

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7



APPLICATION

- How has God comforted you during the difficult times in your life?
- How have you comforted someone else through a difficult time in life?
- Is there someone you need to comfort this week?
- Do you need to receive God's comfort and the comfort of God's people today?



WRAP-UP

1. What is one way you can live out God's comfort in your life?
2. How can we actively pray about God's comfort in our lives and in our community?

GOOD THEOLOGY FOR BAD TIMES

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Have you had a near-death experience? -OR- Have you ever sat in the front-seat with a new teenage driver? What ran through your mind before and after?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul goes even deeper into the details of his team's pain. Life had become more than just difficult. "For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death" (1:8-9). And yet this despair was a bit like a successful surgery. Though scary and painful, the outcome was renewed life and even hope.

Hope has little meaning unless we can first admit our despair. Paul and his team admitted their despair, and yet still found hope and deliverance in God. And their response? Thankfulness through prayer.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- List all the verbs associated with God in this passage.
- What do we learn about people from these verses?
- List the emotions mentioned in this passage? Now dive in. What can you relate to?
- What do we learn about God from these verses?

continued on back...

GOOD THEOLOGY FOR BAD TIMES

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11



APPLICATION

- What are your deepest hopes in life (be specific)? When did these hopes begin?
- Which of these hopes are God centered?
- Any “me-centered” hopes that you need to let go of?



WRAP-UP

1. What is one thing you need to apply from our discussion today?
2. How can we “help each other by prayer” (1:11)?

SIMPLY, SINCERELY, AND SUPREMEYLY YOURS

2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What is one life accomplishment that gives you great joy?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul was proud of the Corinthian church. Yes, they were not perfect and had many problems, many rough edges. Still, he dearly loved them to the point of boasting. Like any good parent with their children, Paul boasted about their good qualities while loving them enough to correct, to extend forgiveness, to protect.

How did Paul see through the problems and into their hearts? What created this kind of loving perspective? Very strong grace. Just how does strong grace impact our relational eyesight? Let's explore that together, letting God's Word and God's Spirit guide our conversation and lead us to be more like Jesus.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Read the passage. What stands out to you from these verses?
- How does the context of the Corinthian church relate to our context?
- Try to summarize the main point of these verses in one sentence.

continued on back...

SIMPLY, SINCERELY, AND SUPREMEY YOURS

2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14



APPLICATION

- On the day of the Lord Jesus, what do you want boast about?
- Paul talks about living in “simplicity, godly sincerity, the grace of God” (vs. 12). Give an example of someone you think lives this way.
- Is there anything in your life that keeps you from living in simplicity, godly sincerity, or God’s grace?



WRAP-UP

1. Based on what we’ve talked about today, choose one thing you would like to apply to your life, write it down, and share with the group.
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for one another? For our church family? For our community?

THE REST OF THE STORY

2 CORINTHIANS 1:15 – 2:4



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** If you could speak any language fluently without studying, which would you choose?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Not only were Paul and his team separated from the Corinthian church, but this distance and the slow pace of communication had led to some deep misunderstandings. Paul and his team were proud of the Corinthians, and yet the Corinthian church didn't feel this. Paul and his team loved the Corinthians, and yet the Corinthians didn't feel this either. So Paul wrote again.

In fact, 2nd Corinthians was probably the fourth in a series of letters, 1 Corinthians being the first and a second and third letter sent before the 2 Corinthians letter (1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:3-9, 7:8-13). Solving a conflict is never easy, and solving one through written communication is even harder. As Paul explains his thoughts and his actions with "God to witness against me" (2 Cor. 1:23), let's listen, learn, and apply this to our lives.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What appears to be the misunderstanding between Paul and the Corinthian church?
- What does Paul say about God's nature? About the identity of believers?
- Re-read these verses and summarize the tone of Paul's words.

continued on back...

THE REST OF THE STORY

2 CORINTHIANS 1:15 - 2:4



APPLICATION

- If you were the Corinthian church, how would you have responded to this letter?
- Do you respond to conflict differently at work or school than at home?
- How would your family say you typically respond to a conflict?
- How did your parents deal with conflict?
- Is there anyone God is putting on your heart, someone with whom you need to resolve a conflict this week?



WRAP-UP

1. Based on our discussion, choose one thing you would like to apply to the way you handle conflict.
2. Is there anything in relation to last week's prayer requests that you would like to share?

THE POWER OF FORGIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** When you were a kid, what was your least favorite thing you “had to do” (i.e. certain chores, expectations, piano lessons, etc.)? Are you glad now you had to do those things?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Resolving a conflict often takes more than just mutual understanding. Resolution normally requires forgiveness. Forgiveness is difficult. Forgiveness is good. Forgiveness is powerful. And forgiveness “outwits” our opponent, Satan.

This is a short yet powerful section of verses. We are in a spiritual battle. So let’s dig in and explore, allowing God’s Word and God’s Spirit to guide our conversation together.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What was Paul’s motivation for writing about forgiveness?
- What does forgiveness require of each person involved?

TAKE A DETOUR! Make this passage personal by choosing someone to represent (a) Corinthian church, (b) the brother needing forgiveness and restoration, (c) Paul. Now have “Paul” read the passage and look at each person as they read the applicable verses. Did you notice anything new as you watched this story be acted out?

continued on back...

THE POWER OF FORGIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11



APPLICATION

- Have you ever been in Paul's situation? In the Corinthian church's situation? In the situation of the brother needing forgiveness?
- Is there anyone in your life right now that you need to forgive? Is there anyone in your life that you need to ask for forgiveness?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for one another, for our church, for our community?

A FRAGRANCE LIKE NO OTHER

2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-17



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What is your favorite potluck food? Snack food? Hot drink?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

After opening this letter with a greeting, a clarification, and a plea for forgiveness, Paul focuses on their identity as a church. “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:15). This identity, our “fragrance” as a church comes from our life in Christ and the truth of God’s Word.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Based on what you have learned so far in 2 Corinthians, how does this “smell” analogy apply to the Corinthian church?
- How does Paul use the analogy of a sense of smell for the church?
- What does Paul say about God? ...about people?
- If salvation had a smell, what would it be?

continued on back...

A FRAGRANCE LIKE NO OTHER

2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-17



APPLICATION

- If people in Eugene/Springfield were to describe our church, what would our “aroma” be?
- If someone were to describe our Life Group, what would our “aroma” be?
- If friends were to describe your actions and attitudes this week, what would your “aroma” be?



WRAP-UP

1. Based on what we’ve talked about today, what is one way you would like to improve your aroma or fragrance?
2. Is there anything in relation to last week’s prayer requests (forgiveness) that you would like to share?

SPIRIT SUFFICIENT

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** If you needed letters of recommendation, who would you ask to write them?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Second Corinthians is a letter that contrasts the church “founders” - Paul and his team – with the church “robbers” called the “false apostles” (11:13). The false leaders flaunted resumes and letters of recommendation (3:1), but their fruit was bad.

In contrast, Paul and his team wanted to flaunt nothing but their sufficiency in Christ. Spiritual leadership and authority does not rely on the quality of a resume but rather the quality of one’s relationships in Christ. For Paul and his team, the Corinthian church was the living recommendation for the good work God had done and continued to do through them.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- How does Paul describe the Corinthian church? ...describe his team? ...describe Christ?
- Why might one group of leaders have depended on their recommendation letters (vs. 1)?
- What did Paul depend on?
- Try to summarize the main point of these verses in one sentence.

continued on back...

SPIRIT SUFFICIENT

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6



APPLICATION

- Who can you point to as “living letters of recommendation” for your life?
- How has God’s Spirit spoken to your heart through this passage?
- Is there anything God’s Spirit is spurring you to change in your life?

TAKE A DETOUR! Evaluate your purpose and goals as a Life Group. Let’s remind ourselves, what is our purpose as a Life Group? as a church? How do we measure growth in our Life Group? Are we becoming and/or doing in these things?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of our conversation, what are some ways we could pray for one another? We could pray for you? For our church family?

UBER GLORY

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Would you describe yourself as a “rule-breaker” or “rule-follower”? Share a fun example for your answer.
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Read and re-read these verses. They are key to understanding Paul’s message contrasting legalism and grace, condemnation and righteousness (3:9). Paul uses symbolism (tablets of stone, letters) to refer back to the old testament story about the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20). The old covenant was veiled. In the new covenant, Christ removed the veil so that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord” can be transformed day by day.

Our hope and joy is that the Holy Spirit would use His word and His community to transform each member week by week into His image.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Paul uses the word “glory” twelve times in this passage. To what is he referring?
- The concepts of “law”, “grace”, and “freedom” are complex yet profound. How would you explain them to an elementary school student?
- “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” What does this verse mean? How does this apply to the context of 2 Corinthians?
- Try to summarize the main point of these verses in one sentence.

continued on back...

UBER GLORY

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18



APPLICATION

- Share one way God has transformed your life in the past year.
- What is one thing you are hopeful – and willing – to let God’s Spirit transform in the coming year?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week’s prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 1

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6



WARM-UP

- 1. ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
- 2. ICEBREAKER.** Which kind of “present receiver” are you?
 - I love surprise presents!
 - I love to make lists of things people could get me and let them choose.
 - I make a list, but there’s always one thing I really want, and I secretly hope they guess correctly.
 - I buy my own presents and act like someone else sent them to me!
 - Presents are a waste of time, bah humbug!
- 3. PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul continues to build on the themes in chapter three about condemnation, righteousness, freedom through the analogies of veils, light, and dark. The veil is a reference back to the old testament veil, the veil Moses wore over his face (Exodus 34:35), and the veil that divided the temple into the place of worship and the Holy of Holies (Ex. 30:10, Heb. 9:7).

Veils had a good purpose, like the wrapping paper on a presents, keeping something good covered or separate until the right time. But once revealed, the goodness of the gift shines like light in the darkness.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Read back through chapters 3 and 4:1-6 together.
- Is there anything that confuses you?
- Is there anything new that stands out to you?
- What do these verses teach us about people? ...about the gospel? ...about God’s character?

continued on back...

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 1

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6



APPLICATION

- Would you describe your life as a “light” or “veil” in your relationships at home? neighborhood? work?
- When did God “unveil” the gospel in your life? Would you be willing to share your story with our group?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 2

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** What do you remember from last week's discussion?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** If you had to flee from your house in 60 seconds, what would you grab on your way out?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

In these verses, Paul ties together the themes of suffering (chapters 1-2) and the gospel (chapters 3-4). Our earthly bodies serve an eternal purpose. We experience affliction, aging, even death, and yet all of these allow that the “life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (4:11). Paul is encouraging the Corinthian church to lift their eyes from the momentary to the eternal, from the seen to the unseen, from the transient to the eternal.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Think about the imagery “treasure in jars of clay”? What does this mean?
- What was God doing in Paul's life and the lives of the Corinthian church?
- How was Paul responding? Summarize the heart of Paul's words in one sentence.
- What are the “unseen” and “eternal” things in life? How can we encourage each other to focus on these things?

continued on back...

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 2

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-18



APPLICATION

- How could you apply this passage in the hard times of life? ...in the good times of life?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week's prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 3

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What was your parents' discipline style? (For parents) Did you copy or change their style with your kids?
 - My parents used more rewards than consequences.
 - My parents used more consequences than rewards.
 - My parents believed children should learn from their own choices.
 - My parents re-defined the word "strict".
 - My parents played favorites, ...and I was their favorite, ...and my sibling was their favorite.
 - Discipline, what discipline?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Verses and chapter breaks were not part of the original Bible text. With that in mind, the first 10 verses of chapter 5 are really a continuation of chapter 4, not a new thought. Paul is continuing on with the theme of where and in whom we place our confidence. "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (vs. 5). True to Paul's writing style, he gives hope while speaking truth. "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (vs. 10).

LEADER TIP! Remember, your goal is to lead each member in the group to discover one thing they can apply or obey, truth they can put into practice this week. God's word is life transforming, so be bold in guiding your group toward faith in action!

continued on back...

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE PART 3

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- “We live by faith and not by sight.” How is faith different than an ostrich sticking its head in the sand?
- What has God prepared for us? In what way does the Holy Spirit serve as a guarantee that this will happen?
- What does Paul mean when he refers to us being “unclothed” in verse 4? Is this clear or confusing to you?
- According to verse 9, what should our goal be? (after people answer) Why should that be our goal?
- When we appear before the judgement seat, what will the standard be for whether they were good or bad? Does this differ from the standards you use when evaluating your actions?



APPLICATION

- Choose one question from below and have each person write down their answer, then share with the group.
 - How would your life be different this week if you really “lived by faith and not by sight”? (Share at least one example of something that would be different)
 - If you knew that you would appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ in one week, how would you live your life differently this week?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week’s prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

COMPELLED BY LOVE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-15



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week? What do you remember from our discussion last week about standing before the Judgement Seat of Christ?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Finish this sentence: The best gift I ever received was _____. Why?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

This passage gives us insight into Paul's motivation for ministry. First, he reminds the Corinthians that there is a coming day when we will stand before God at his judgment seat. This is a certain fact that should motivate us to act not only for ourselves but also for our family, friends, and co-workers. Paul then continues to say he was willing to do whatever it took to give everyone an opportunity to hear the good news that Christ died for him or her. Because of the good news, everyone is able to receive new life.

HELPFUL TIP! You might want to consider replacing your initial scripture reading with a personal paraphrase, or reading the passage out of a different translation like *The Message*.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What stands out to you in these verses? Does anything confuse you?
- What does it mean to "Fear the Lord"? How might an experience with an abusive earthly father make understanding this concept difficult?
- What does Paul mean when he says he is giving the people of Corinth a reason to be proud?
- In this passage, what things has Christ done for everyone?

continued on back...

COMPELLED BY LOVE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-15



APPLICATION

- Choose one question. Focus on one truth each person can apply this week.
 - Would your life be different if you wholeheartedly followed the description in vs. 15 and no longer lived for yourself but for God? Write down one way you could apply what you have learned this week.
 - How would you treat your children, spouse and co-workers differently if you could make every decision guided by Christ's love? Choose one relationship to focus on this week, share with the group.



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week's prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

LEADER TIP! Next week's passage is an interesting one where our responsibility is compared to that of an ambassador. Challenge your group to research what an ambassador is today and compare to Paul's day to gain a better understanding of what Paul was saying.

A NEW TAKE ON PEOPLE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-6:2



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Did you ever make a major move (home, school, work)? What changed and what stayed the same?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul tells us that as a believer we should look at people's hearts, as God does, and not on the outward appearance. We received a fresh start, a new life. In turn, God wants us to share this life transforming power with everyone around us.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What is the message of reconciliation?
- What does it mean to be a new creation?
- In verse 20, who does the "we" refer to?

TAKE A DETOUR! To illustrate what an ambassador is, consider having a person "tell their story" in 3 minutes, (or) have a person lead the group through a basic understanding of what it means to be born again (John 3:16) using very simple language that even a child could understand.

continued on back...

A NEW TAKE ON PEOPLE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-6:2



APPLICATION

- (for believers) You have been appointed as an ambassador of Jesus your king. How are you doing?
- In practical terms, how do you fulfill your role as a person who brings reconciliation?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week's prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

HEART OPEN WIDE

2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-13



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** If you had to go back and live in the middle ages, what one invention would you want to take with you?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

The chapter break at the beginning of chapter 6 makes this seem like a new thought, but really it is continuing to build on last week's passage. Paul is asking the Corinthians to compare the results of the ministry, not just the "credentials" that leaders present. When they do this, he is confident that the Corinthians will finally open their hearts to him and his message for them.

TAKE A DETOUR! Imagine the apostle Paul applying for a pastoral opening at your church. How does Paul's presentation of his ministry credentials (verse 4— we commend ourselves in every way...) align with or differ from what you would expect of a potential pastor?



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- In what ways(s) did Paul go the "extra mile" in how he lived and conducted his ministry?
- In what sense was Paul poor? If he was poor, how did he make many rich?
- What did Paul mean when he said the Corinthians were restricting/withholding their affection? Why did Paul want them to open their hearts to him?
- How should we be expressing our affection to our leaders?

continued on back...

HEART OPEN WIDE

2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-13



APPLICATION

- Who are your spiritual “parents”? Have you told them lately how much you appreciate them?
- Who are you enriching with your life? If you have trouble answering, whose life could you enrich this week?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week’s prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

CLEAN IT UP!

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** If someone walked through your home tonight, what would they think was most important to you and your family?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

The context of this passage is the Old Testament temple along with the prophet Isaiah. The temple was the physical object lesson for the people of Israel that God is holy, that God dwelt with His people, and that they were to be set apart.

Paul is quoting the prophet Isaiah where God is promising a special relationship with his people based on his great power. Isaiah's message was directed to the nation of Israel. Paul is saying that this also applies to Gentiles who are born again. It is because of this special relationship that God asks us to live differently than those who do not know Him.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Paul does not specify how to apply “unequally yoked” (vs. 14). Would you apply this to:
 - (a) business
 - (b) friendships
 - (c) marriage
 - (d) politics
 - (e) none of the above
 - (f) all of the above
 - (g) I'm so confused I skip over this passage

continued on back...

CLEAN IT UP!

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1



DISCOVERY CONTINUED

- What does it mean when it says we are a temple of the living God?
- How would a partnership with unbelievers connect to the Temple of God and idols?
- Why is it significant that the Lord Almighty calls us his sons and daughters? (i.e. Out of the many names of God in the Bible, why might this one have been chosen?)
- How might this passage read for a person who grew up with an abusive father?
- What does it mean when God says he will be our God and we will be his people?



APPLICATION

- How does this passage apply if one is already in a partnership with a non-believer?
- Would you live your life differently this week if you lived as the temple of the living God?
- In light of this passage, is there anything in your life that you need to change this week?



WRAP-UP

1. Is there anything in relation to last week's prayer requests that you would like to share?
2. In light of the passage we have just shared, what are some ways we could pray for you? What are some of the ways we could pray for our church family?

GODLY SORROW VS. WORLDLY SORROW

2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** When have you been confronted by someone in a way that was helpful to you?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

In 2 Corinthians 6:3-13, Paul had opened his heart wide open to them and so he calls on them to reciprocate. In this passage he again calls on them to make room in their hearts and talks about the comfort and joy he experiences in ministry.

In discussing the Corinthians' response to him, he discusses "godly grief/sorrow" and "worldly grief/sorrow" and how they are different. And in God's way, godly grief/sorrow is connected to God's comfort. These are great and profound truths for our lives.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What stuck out to you from this passage?
- What are the sources for Paul's comfort and joy?
- In vss. 8-13, what are the differences between godly grief/sorrow and worldly grief/sorrow? What does each one produce?
- What do you learn about confronting others in vss. 2-4 and vss. 13-16?
- In a confrontation, what approaches are more likely to lead to responses of: (a) worldly grief/sorrow, (b) godly grief/sorrow?

continued on back...

GODLY SORROW VS. WORLDLY SORROW

2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16



APPLICATION

- When have you experienced God's comfort in the past? What means has He used to comfort you?
- What can you apply in your relationships from Paul's example of confronting and experiencing comfort?
- Who do you know that needs to experience God's comfort and how could you be God's tool?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of this passage, how will we live differently?
2. How would you like the group to pray for you? Who would you like to pray for in our group this week?

THE GRACE OF GIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Who is the most generous person you know? What do they do?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

About a year before Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, he had encouraged the Gentile churches to begin collecting an offering for the poor in Jerusalem—see 1 Cor. 16:1-4. However, the collection had stalled with the Corinthians' falling out with Paul.

Now that the Corinthians had repented, Paul writes them again (2 Cor. 8-9) to give generously to the poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. To encourage them, Paul gives examples of amazing generosity: the very poor Macedonian churches who gave in joy, and their own Savior Jesus who gave up everything for them.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What stuck out to you from this passage?
- What does this teach us about God? What does this teach us about people?
- What principles for giving do you find in this passage?
- In vss. 6-8, what connection does Paul make between giving and the genuineness of one's love?
- Paul never mentions money specifically. What terms does he use? Why might he have done this?

continued on back...

THE GRACE OF GIVING

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15



APPLICATION

- In what specific ways have you experienced God being gracious to you?
- What gifts has God given you to serve Him and others? How are you using those gifts?
- If generosity reflects one's heart and not one's pocketbook, what does your giving say about your heart?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of this passage, how will we live differently?
2. How would you like the group to pray for you? Who would you like to pray for in our group this week?

THE LAWS OF THE HARVEST

2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:15



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Share a time when you experienced great joy in giving. What made it so enjoyable?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

In last week's study (8:1-15), Paul encouraged the Corinthians to complete their giving to the poverty-stricken church in Jerusalem. In 8:16-9:15, Paul discusses his plan to send a 3-man delegation to Corinth to assist the Corinthians with the collection and then gives more principles for how the Corinthians are to give. True gifts must be an expression of "generosity" or "blessing" rather than being grudgingly given by greedy hearts.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- In 8:16-24, Paul takes steps to avoid any suspicion of dishonesty or self-interest in the fundraising. What can we learn from this example?
- Choose a principle for generous giving in 9:1-15. How would this principle apply to the church in Corinth? How would it apply today?
- How does the metaphor of sowing and reaping apply to our giving?
- What picture comes to your mind as you think of God loving a cheerful giver?

continued on back...

THE LAWS OF THE HARVEST

2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-9:15



APPLICATION

- What benefits from God have you experienced because of your giving?
- If you are a Christian, what does your giving tell people about your God?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of this passage, how will we live differently?
2. How would you like the group to pray for you? Who would you like to pray for in our group this week?

MEEK AND GENTLE WARRIOR

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Would you describe yourself as more bold-confident or meek-gentle? (You can be both but which trait do you think is stronger?)
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul called on the Corinthians in chapters 8-9 to complete their collection for the Jerusalem church as an expression of their faith and love. In chapter 10, Paul makes the point he can be meek and gentle, and also blunt and forceful.

In order to encourage the faithful and confront “false apostles,” Paul points the Corinthian church to their identity in Christ and to their battle against spiritual strongholds. He reminds them of strong humility that confronts lofty opinions raised against God and builds up the body of Christ. Strong humility, this is raw Christianity in action.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- What stuck out to you from this passage?
- What does this teach us about God? What does this teach us about people?
- What is Paul’s strategy in spiritual warfare? (vss. 3-6) What are the “strongholds... arguments...lofty opinions” that are being destroyed?
- What does it mean in vs. 5 to “take every thought captive to obey Christ?”
- In vss. 7-18, what does Paul say about boasting?

continued on back...

MEEK AND GENTLE WARRIOR

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18



APPLICATION

- What has God done in your life that you can “boast” about? Who could you share this with this week?
- In what way(s) do I experience being in a spiritual war? What weapons am I using?
- How are you doing as a bold and meek warrior?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of this passage, how will we live differently?
2. How would you like the group to pray for you? Who would you like to pray for in our group this week?

BEATING FOOLS AT THEIR OWN GAME

2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-33



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Did anyone do their challenge/application from last week?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** What is your family's favorite *free* activity?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

From Satan's lies in the garden and in all times since, there have always been false prophets who have infiltrated the teachings of God and tried to subvert His plan with their own self-centered agendas. Corinth was a vibrant city and a place with divergent thinking brought by eloquent and gifted orators who confused the people with their philosophies. Sound familiar to today's times? These philosophers were valued in part by how much of a fee they could command. So when Paul came and asked for nothing except their time to listen and learn, they accused him of being a false teacher. Paul confounded their foolish argument by showing how "free" was indeed a fair price to receive God's truth. With his own life, Paul showed them Jesus-followers are to serve others, bringing people to faith and asking nothing but their obedience to God for their salvation.



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Often times the more we pay for something (price), the more we believe we'll get (value). What are some examples of paying and expecting more?
- Follow along as two people read: 1st person reads 2 Cor. 11:1-16, 2nd person reads 2 Cor. 11:17-33
 - In vs. 1-16, what are the key points in Paul's argument?
 - In vs. 17-33, how do Paul's sufferings support his position and beat the foolish teachers at their own game?
- What is Paul saying about the "price" and "value" of the gospel?
- Do you know anyone who has suffered significantly for the cause of Christ?

continued on back...

BEATING FOOLS AT THEIR OWN GAME

2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-33



APPLICATION

- Paul transformed his life from one who led the persecution of *The Way* (a.k.a. Christians), to one who led the effort to bring the Gospel to all who he connected with. Take a minute or two of silence and list some ways you've influenced others around you about the hope you have in Christ.
- Who is the most difficult person for you to reach? Who is someone closest to you that you would like to reach? Decide on one thing you could do to reach out to either person. Plan to tell us next week how it went.



WRAP-UP

1. Each group member shares who they picked and what they plan to do to.
2. Pray & close.

HELPUFL HINT! Don't try to solve everyone's struggle. Let prayer, the Holy Spirit, and time do their work and see what happens over the next week.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-13



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Last week you thought of a person you'd like to reach out to, either someone close to you or someone difficult for you. How did it go?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Do you have a first date – or first kiss – story? Who asked/kissed who, and how did it go?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

Paul's life changed 180 degrees from his prior position as a Jewish Pharisee. Virtually all he was and everything he thought was his calling turned completely around. Instead of being a big shot Jewish leader, and a persecutor of *The Way* (the name used for Christians), he became a lowly servant actually proclaiming *The Way* through Christ.

As part of his spiritual journey, Paul experienced both visions and difficult struggles. The Lord gave Paul some kind of bodily affliction he called "a thorn in my flesh." He pleaded with God to remove it, presumably so he could be more effective in serving. Whatever it was, he felt it made him weaker. God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- Follow along as two people read: 1st person reads 2 Cor. 12:1-6, 2nd person reads 2 Cor. 12:7-13.
- What stands out to you in this passage? Does anything confuse you?
- What do we learn about God in these verses?
- What do we learn about people in these verses?
- In vss. 1-6 Paul describes a visit to heaven by someone he knew. When you hear these verses, how does this change/confirm how you view heaven?

continued on back...

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-13



DISCOVERY CONTINUED

- Paul described an affliction he was given to keep him from being conceited. In what ways might he be tempted to be conceited by having the knowledge of this man’s “third-heaven” experience?
- What does that conceit look like to others?



APPLICATION

- How does our view of heaven impact the way we live each day? Is it impacting your life today?
- Do you feel that you have a weakness or affliction that keeps you from proclaiming Christ? Take a minute or two of silence and list what barriers or weaknesses you think you have.
- How might the Holy Spirit work in and through you to turn that weakness into a strength?



WRAP-UP

1. In light of this passage, how will we live differently?
2. How would you like the group to pray for you? Who would you like to pray for in our group this week?

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-13:14



WARM-UP

1. **ASK.** Last week you thought of a person you'd like to reach out to either someone close to you or someone difficult for you. How did it go?
2. **ICEBREAKER.** Do you prefer spring, summer, fall, or winter? Why is this season your favorite?
3. **PRAY.** Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts and minds as you study this passage.



CONTEXT

This letter preceded Paul's third visit to the church, and he concludes with both comfort and concern for the Corinthian church. His letter was a warning to those who needed to repent, and an encouragement to those who were faithfully following Christ. "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. ...I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced" (2 Cor. 12:15, 21).

Paul continues with the theme of our weakness and God's strength. Rather than a battle between good and bad people, the reality is that every believer needs daily to examine their hearts (2 Cor. 13:5) and receive God's restoration (2 Cor. 13:9). As we receive from God, we give to one another. This is Paul's benediction. "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).



DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

- As you read through these verses, what stands out to you and why?
- Identify key verses that capture the main thought in these chapters.
- Have you ever corrected a friend who was sinning? Have you been corrected by a friend? Did it lead to restoration or greater conflict?
- Read the closing verses out loud: "Finally brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." How are we living these things out in our group?

continued on back...

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-13:14



APPLICATION

- In light of the passage, how will we live differently? Choose one thought from the discussion. Write it down and share with the group.



WRAP-UP

1. This is the last lesson in this curriculum. Where does our group want to go from here?
2. How can we pray for each other?