

## Worksheet 1: Overview of 2 Corinthians

### Major Themes

*Read through the entire letter in one sitting and then answer the next few questions.*

1. Why was this letter written? (Is the author addressing problems? Is his tone encouraging or confrontational? Does the author seem to have a primary purpose?)

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2. What do you see as the primary themes of this letter? (If you can't decide on one, identify two or three prominent themes.)

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3. What topics from the text are you excited about discussing in the next 2 weeks?

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4. What questions do you have after reading through this book?

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## Outline of 2 Corinthians<sup>1</sup>

- I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-11)
  - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
  - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-7)
  - C. Explanation of Paul's Thanksgiving (1:8-11)
- II. PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CORINTHIANS (1:12-2:11)
  - A. Paul's Pure Conduct (1:12-14)
  - B. Paul's Change in Plans (1:15-22)
  - C. The Reason for the Change in Plans (1:23-2:4)
  - D. Forgiveness to the Repentant Sinner (2:5—11)
- III. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY (2:12-7:16)
  - A. Paul's Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12-17)
  - B. Paul's Letters of Recommendation (3:1—3)
  - C. Paul's Competence (3:4-6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7-18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1-6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7-18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1-10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3-13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14-7:1)
  - K. Paul's Final Defense (7:2—16)
- IV. THE COLLECTION FOR THE BELIEVERS IN JERUSALEM (8:1-9:15)
  - A. Example of the Churches in Macedonia (8:1—7)
  - B. Examples of Christ's Sacrifice and the Old Testament (8:8—15)
  - C. Administration of the Offering (8:16-24)
  - D. Importance of Having the Offering Ready (9:1-5)
  - E. Principles Motivating Generous Giving (9:6-15)
- V. PAUL'S RENEWED DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP (10:1-13:4)
  - A. The Tone of Paul's Appeal (10:1-11)
  - B. Divine Commendation of Paul's Ministry (10:12—18)
  - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1-15)
  - D. Paul's Sufferings (11:16-33)
  - E. Paul's Visions and Revelations (12:1—10)
  - F. Paul's Miracles (12:11-13)
  - G. Paul's Final Defense (12:14-13:4)
- VI. FINAL EXHORTATIONS (13:5-12)
- VII. CLOSING (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

## Worksheet #2: 2 Corinthians 1:1–2:11

### Introduction:

In the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul again writes to the church at Corinth, though some time after the writing of 1 Corinthians. During the period of time between the writing of these two epistles, it appears that at least some of the Corinthians had begun to question Paul's authority and personal character.

As Paul opens this letter to the Corinthian church, he begins by affirming his apostolic authority (1:1–2) and then proceeds to offer a thanksgiving prayer in 1:3–11 that compresses many of the themes found in chapters 1–7. Immediately after the opening formalities, Paul launches into an unusually personal section where he defends himself against the charges of his critics (1:12–2:11). From Paul's statements in this section, we can glean that the Corinthians apparently questioned his character (1:12–14), possibly due to some change in the apostle's travel plans (1:15–2:4). Additionally, it appears that there is ongoing disagreement regarding the restoration of a certain individual from the Corinthian church who apparently had been disciplined, but is now repentant (2:5–11). Although some have identified this individual with the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5, that identification is somewhat dubious since the individual is not specifically identified in this passage.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

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  - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3–7)
  - C. Explanation of Paul's Thanksgiving (1:8–11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
  - A. Paul's Pure Conduct (1:12–14)
  - B. Paul's Change in Plans (1:15–22)
  - C. The Reason for the Change in Plans (1:23–2:4)
  - D. Forgiveness to the Repentant Sinner (2:5–11)
- III. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
  - A. Paul's Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul's Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul's Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul's Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Notice how Paul affirms his apostolic status in 1:1, “an apostle of Jesus Christ *by the will of God*” (emphasis added). Compare Acts 9:15. Why might Paul be emphasizing this aspect of his calling here?  

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2. Explain how Paul can say that his “consolation” can abound in the same measure as his “sufferings” do in 1:5. How does the relationship between these two experiences explain vv. 3–4?  

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3. Notice the way that Paul alternates between “us” and “you” in 1:3–7. What does Paul share with his audience in 1:7? What is his goal for them?  

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4. Apparently the Corinthians were already aware of the perilous situation Paul describes in 1:8–11. To whom does Paul credit his deliverance (1:10)?  

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5. To what witness does Paul appeal in his response to the Corinthians’ personal attacks (1:12)? Why is it important for Paul’s writings to clearly express his beliefs and motivations (1:13–14)?  

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6. In 1:15–17, Paul describes a change of travel plans and notes some complaints that these reflected weakness in his own character. To what witness does Paul appeal in v. 18 when he claims that his character remains blameless?  

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7. To whom does Paul credit true stability, and to what extent does that stability exist (1:21–22)?  

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8. What is the goal of church discipline, as described in 2:6–7?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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## Worksheet #3: 2 Corinthians 2:12–3:18

### Introduction:

In this passage, Paul launches into an extended defense of his own ministry that continues until 7:16. He begins by briefly mentioning his ministry in Troas and Macedonia, and then defends his apostolic ministry as the divinely-ordained means by which the word of God is spread as “the fragrance of Christ” in the world (2:12–17). In 3:1–3, Paul argues that rather than needing written letters of commendation, his ministry is commended by the work of God in the Corinthians’ hearts. This work in their hearts, Paul argues in 3:4–6, is carried out through the sufficient work of God in them, and thus needs no other human validation. The work of God is carried out through the ministry of the new covenant, which is revealed in Christ and surpasses the old covenant in glory, resulting in the progressive sanctification of believers in Christ (3:7–18).

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1-11)
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  - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-7)
  - C. Explanation of Paul’s Thanksgiving (1:8-11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12-2:11)
  - A. Paul’s Pure Conduct (1:12-14)
  - B. Paul’s Change in Plans (1:15-22)
  - C. The Reason for the Change in Plans (1:23-2:4)
  - D. Forgiveness to the Repentant Sinner (2:5–11)
- III. **Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12-7:16)**
  - A. Paul’s Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12-17)**
  - B. Paul’s Letters of Recommendation (3:1-3)**
  - C. Paul’s Competence (3:4-6)**
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7-18)**
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1-6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7-18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1-10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul’s Sufferings (6:3-13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul’s Opponents (6:14-7:1)
  - K. Paul’s Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)
- V. Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1-13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5-12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What does Paul mean by saying that God “always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2:14)?

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2. How does Paul distinguish between those who are “peddling the Word of God” and those who proclaim it in “sincerity” (2:17)?

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3. In what ways were the Corinthians themselves “an epistle of Christ” (3:3)?

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4. On what basis does Paul claim that the Corinthians were “an epistle of Christ” (3:4–5)?

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5. In 3:7–18, Paul contrasts the old covenant under Moses (Exod. 34:29–35) with the new covenant in Christ (Jer. 31:31–34). How does Paul demonstrate the glory of the old covenant, and how does that compare with the glory of the new (3:7–11)?

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6. What analogy does Paul draw when he compares Moses’ use of a veil (3:12–13; cf. Exod. 34:29–35) with the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament (3:14–15)? How does this compare with the experience of a believer (3:16)?

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7. Based on 3:16–17, what does it mean to “behold ... the glory of the Lord” with an “unveiled face” (3:18)?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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## Worksheet #4: 2 Corinthians 4:1–18

**Introduction:** In this chapter, Paul resumes his train of thought from where he left off in 3:6. In 3:7–18, Paul has described the differences between ministry under the old and new covenants. In 4:1–6, he explains that because he is a competent minister under the new covenant, he therefore remains unrelenting in his clear proclamation of the gospel message. Although his presentation is clear, this does not mean that it is universally understood, for it is “veiled to those who are perishing” (4:3) through the blinding efforts of the “god of this age” (4:4). Despite this, Paul remains motivated to present the message of Christ because doing so is commanded by the God who is able to shine light into believer’s hearts (4:6).

In 4:7–18, Paul describes apostolic ministry using a variety of vivid paradoxes. Commenting on this passage, Murray Harris suggests that “no person was ever more aware of the paradoxical nature of Christianity than Paul. And perhaps none of his Epistles contains more paradoxes than 2 Corinthians.”<sup>1</sup> Paul’s use of paradox is especially frequent in 4:7–12, where he strings together a number of contrasting ideas to describe the inherent tension of faithful ministry through suffering. In 4:13–15, Paul explains why he is motivated to continue to speak for God despite inevitable suffering. His ultimate goal is that as grace “spreads through many,” many give thanks, heaping up glory for God (4:15). Paul then summarizes how he continues to minister while suffering in 4:16–18, explaining that the eternal glory for which he labors far outweighs the affliction he must endure in the present.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>2</sup> (current passage in bold):

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- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. **Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)**
  - A. Paul’s Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul’s Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul’s Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. **The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)**
  - F. **Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)**
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul’s Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul’s Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul’s Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians, vol. 10, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1976), 342.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What are “the hidden things of shame” that Paul says he has renounced in 4:2? Does 2:17 help you understand this phrase? Explain.  

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2. Is there any sense in which Paul’s gospel is veiled (4:3–4)? If so, how is this true? Be able to defend your answer from the text.  

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3. What does it mean that Christ is “the image of God” (4:4)?  

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4. When Paul says that he has “this treasure in earthen vessels,” what is the “treasure” and what are the “earthen vessels” (4:7)?  

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5. How can it be possible for Paul to remain buoyant under such difficult circumstances (4:8–10)? Although they certainly can be influential, should Christians allow external circumstances to determine their perspective and moods?  

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6. What does it mean for “those who live” to be “delivered to death for Jesus’ sake,” and how does that produce the result that “the life of Jesus” is “manifested in our mortal flesh” (4:11)?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

7. If true belief leads to and produces speech (4:13), what does your speech tell you about your belief?  

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8. If Paul described his experiences as a “light affliction, which is but for a moment” (4:17), how does that place our own experiences into perspective?  

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9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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## Worksheet #5: 2 Corinthians 5:1–6:2

### Introduction:

Paul's focus in 5:1–10 builds directly on his remarks about life after death at the end of chapter four. Since we know that believers in Christ will enjoy eternal life after death (5:1), believers go through daily existence “groaning” from desire for their heavenly home (5:2–4). This expectation is certain, because we have the Spirit “as a guarantee” (5:5). Paul builds on this certainty with a note of confidence in 5:6–8. Since he is so confident that after death he will be “present with the Lord” (5:8), he makes it his purpose to do things that would please the Lord, motivated by the coming judgment (5:9–10).

In 5:11–6:2, Paul returns again to a defense of his ministry, but only indirectly as he defers final judgment to the authoritative evaluation of God. He explains that it is because of his overriding desire to be “well pleasing” (5:9) to God at the judgment that he carries on in his ministry of “persuad[ing] men” (5:11). Because Christ died for all, life that is united with Christ should be carried out in service to others (5:14–15). Life in Christ transforms everything for Paul, so that he now evaluates both Christ and other people through a different lens than he had before (5:16–17). Not only that, but Paul has been reconciled to God through Christ and given a ministry of reconciliation that drives him to proclaim the gospel message throughout the world (5:18–19) as an ambassador (5:20). In fulfillment of this ministry of reconciliation, Paul calls the Corinthians to be reconciled to God so they will not “receive the grace of God in vain” (6:1).

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  - A. Paul's Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul's Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul's Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)**
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)**
  - I. Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul's Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What is Paul describing as “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (5:1)? Consider the context of 5:1–4 in your response.  

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2. How does the Spirit serve as a “guarantee” (5:5), and what is it that he guarantees for us? What does Eph. 1:14 contribute to your understanding of this text?  

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3. Why is it necessary for Paul to point out both the assurance granted through the Spirit (5:8) and the warning implied by the future judgment (5:10)?  

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4. Based on Paul’s language in 5:11, do you think he was dismayed by the complaints of his critics?  

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5. Why is it important for Paul to avoid commending himself (5:12)? How does he undercut his critics by inviting them to boast on his behalf (5:12)?  

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6. Reflect on this phrase from 5:14–15: “that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Explain how each part of this passage relates to the others.  

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7. In 5:17, Paul describes an event which we call “regeneration,” the transformation of those in Christ into a “new creature.” What are the “old” things that pass away and the things that become “new” as a result of regeneration?  

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8. Why does Paul implore the Corinthians to be reconciled to *God* rather than to himself (5:20)?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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## Worksheet #6: 2 Corinthians 6:3–7:16

### Summary:

Throughout Paul's extended self-defense in 2 Cor. 2:12–7:16, he frequently mentions his experience of physical suffering. This theme recurs in 6:3–13, where he lists his experiences and describes the character traits that they reveal. Once again, he points out the highly paradoxical nature of faithful ministry in 6:8–10. Then, in 6:11–13, Paul appeals directly and urgently to the Corinthians to deal frankly with him.

Then, in 6:14–7:1, we find a section of 2 Corinthians that, at first, seems difficult to fit within the flow of Paul's argument. Probably another of Paul's frequent digressions, this section addresses a severe problem that would have inhibited the open, frank relationship that Paul describes in 6:11–13 and 7:2–4. In this section, Paul abruptly challenges the Corinthians to avoid entanglement with pagan practices.

Second Corinthians 7:2–16 brings Paul's initial self-defense to a close. In 7:2–4, he ends the "great digression" that began in 2:14 with another direct appeal to the Corinthians' consciences. Then, in 7:5–7, he refers back to the travelogue in 2:12–13 to explain how God had encouraged him through the arrival and report of Titus. Apparently Paul had sent Titus on ahead to Corinth with what is known as the "severe letter," and Titus had returned with the good news that genuine repentance had taken place (7:8–13).

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

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  - C. Paul's Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. **Catalog of Paul's Sufferings (6:3–13)**
  - J. **Call to Separate from Paul's Opponents (6:14–7:1)**
  - K. **Paul's Final Defense (7:2–16)**
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Why was it important for Paul to avoid giving offense (6:3)?

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2. How do the outward circumstances of 6:4–5 reveal the inward qualities of 6:6–7?

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3. Paul rarely addresses his audience by name as he does in 6:11. Other examples of this include Gal. 3:1 and Phil. 4:15. Based on these cross-references, what is always true when Paul does address his audience by name?

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4. What is the basis for Paul's command that believers not be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (6:14–16)?

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5. In 7:1, Paul refers back to the Old Testament quotations in 6:16–17 with the phrase "these promises." How do the OT quotations of 6:16–17 support the command in 7:1 to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit"?

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6. What is it that Paul seems to desire from the Corinthians in 7:2–4?

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7. Compare and contrast godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (7:10).

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8. What was Paul's purpose for the severe letter (7:12–13)?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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## Worksheet #7: 2 Corinthians 8:1–24

**Summary:** In chapters 8 and 9, Paul writes to the Corinthians about the collection for the poor in Jerusalem that he had described previously in 1 Cor. 16:1–4. Commentator David Garland introduces these two chapters as follows:

Cranfield comments, “The Church’s need of money is a matter which it is difficult to handle with graciousness, sensitiveness and dignity.” Paul handles the issue deftly, and his lengthy discussion shows how important planning and administration are to the success of any ministry.... The Jerusalem project offers the Corinthians the chance to participate in something greater than themselves. Generosity is not something innate to human beings. Seneca recognized that people needed to be taught how to give, receive, and return willingly. This is no less true of Christians, and in these two chapters Paul shows why and how the Corinthian Christians should contribute to this fund.<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 8, Paul begins by demonstrating that contributions from the Corinthians are necessary. He does this by citing the positive example of the Macedonians, who were generous despite their poverty and trial (8:1–7). Then, in 8:8–15, Paul describes the sacrifice of Christ as the ultimate example of generosity. In 8:16–24, he commends the efforts of Titus in administering the collection.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>2</sup> (current passage in bold):

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- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
  - A. Paul’s Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul’s Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul’s Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul’s Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul’s Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul’s Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. **The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)**
  - A. **Example of the Churches in Macedonia (8:1–7)**
  - B. **Examples of Christ’s Sacrifice and the Old Testament (8:8–15)**
  - C. **Administration of the Offering (8:16–24)**
  - D. Importance of Having the Offering Ready (9:1–5)
  - E. Principles Motivating Generous Giving (9:6–15)
- V. Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

<sup>1</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 364.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Paul's reference to the "great trial of affliction" (8:2) in Macedonia likely refers to the persecution described in 1 Thess. 1:6 and 2:14. Why is it significant for Paul that these Macedonian believers contributed to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem?

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2. What might Paul mean by saying that the Macedonians "first gave themselves to the Lord" in 8:5?

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3. Why does Paul believe the Corinthians should contribute to the collection (8:7)?

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4. What does it mean for Paul to be "testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others" (8:8)?

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5. Is Paul saying that wealthy Christians should give *all* of their wealth to needy Christians, to the impoverishment of the giver (8:13)? Why?

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6. How does the account in Exod. 16:13–36 support Paul's point in 8:13–15? What are the implications for both wealthy and poor believers?

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7. Why is it important for Paul to provide this "letter of commendation" for Titus in 8:16–24?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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## Worksheet #8: 2 Corinthians 9:1–15

**Summary:** In chapter 9, Paul wraps up his discussion of the collection by attending to administrative details. In verses 1–5, he gives instructions to facilitate the gathering of funds prior to Paul’s arrival in Corinth. Then, in verses 6–15, he provides instruction on the theology of giving, observing that the God who makes grace abound is more than capable of providing financially for his children (9:8). In 9:12–14, he reminds the Corinthians that their generosity towards the ministry does not merely supply the temporal needs of the Judean believers, but that their generosity itself adds to the glory of God.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
  - A. Paul’s Ministry in Troas and Macedonia (2:12–17)
  - B. Paul’s Letters of Recommendation (3:1–3)
  - C. Paul’s Competence (3:4–6)
  - D. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7–18)
  - E. The Unveiled Truth (4:1–6)
  - F. Treasure in Clay Jars (4:7–18)
  - G. The Coming Resurrection (5:1–10)
  - H. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11–6:2)
  - I. Catalog of Paul’s Sufferings (6:3–13)
  - J. Call to Separate from Paul’s Opponents (6:14–7:1)
  - K. Paul’s Final Defense (7:2–16)
- IV. **The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)**
  - A. Example of the Churches in Macedonia (8:1–7)
  - B. Examples of Christ’s Sacrifice and the Old Testament (8:8–15)
  - C. Administration of the Offering (8:16–24)
  - D. Importance of Having the Offering Ready (9:1–5)**
  - E. Principles Motivating Generous Giving (9:6–15)**
- V. Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.

1. Why does Paul say that it is “superfluous” (or “unnecessary”) for him to write to the Corinthians regarding the collection in 9:1?  

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2. If the Achaians were ready (Corinth was part of the Achaian region; 9:2), why did Paul find it necessary to “send the brethren” (9:3–4)?  

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3. The word translated “generous gift” in 9:5–6 is the word *eulogia* (“blessing”) from which we get our English word “eulogy.” In what ways can a monetary gift be described as a “blessing”?  

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4. In what sense will givers “reap” in accordance with their generosity (9:6)?  

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5. Does 9:7 allow believers to choose not to give, if they so “purpose in [their] heart[s]”?  

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6. Does 9:8–11 mean that all Christians will become rich financially? What does it promise instead?  

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7. What is the significance of financial gifts to the work of the ministry, based on 9:12–15?  

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**Application:** Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.

8. Are you giving to the local church in a way that reflects the teaching of this passage? Would other people agree with your answer if they examined your monthly budget?  

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9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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## Worksheet #9: 2 Corinthians 10:1–18

**Summary:** After Paul's warm rejoicing over the Corinthians' repentance in 7:8–13 and his appeal for the collection of funds in chs. 8–9, it may come as a surprise to find Paul again in self-defense mode in chs. 10–13. In these chapters, he responds to his Corinthian critics in such strong tones that David Garland notes that Paul "pulls out all stops in trying to rally the Corinthians to his point of view and to reject these false teachers who have beguiled and badgered them."<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 10, Paul responds to criticisms that his ministry is "according to the flesh" (10:3) and that his "weak" physical appearance and "contemptible" speech do not correspond to his "weighty and powerful" letters (10:10). Paul responds by observing that his critics criticize his ministry in order to commend themselves (10:12). Rather than boasting, Paul focuses on preaching the gospel and laboring for the growth of others (10:15–16), confident that the Lord will commend his efforts even if others do not (10:17–18).

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>2</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. **Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)**
  - A. **The Tone of Paul's Appeal (10:1–11)**
  - B. **Divine Commendation of Paul's Ministry (10:12–18)**
  - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1–15)
  - D. Paul's Sufferings (11:16–33)
  - E. Paul's Visions and Revelations (12:1–10)
  - F. Paul's Miracles (12:11–13)
  - G. Paul's Final Defense (12:14–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians, vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 418.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What is Paul's goal for his next visit with the Corinthians, as stated in 10:1–2?

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2. What does Paul mean when he admits that “we walk in the flesh” (10:3)? How is this different from “war[ring] according to the flesh” (10:3)?

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3. What does Paul identify as the purpose of his apostolic authority in 10:8? How does this undermine the accusations of his critics?

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4. What is Paul guaranteeing in 10:11? How does this undercut the criticism he quotes in 10:10?

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5. How does Paul distinguish between his opponents (in 10:12) and himself (in 10:13)?

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6. Why does Paul have authority over the Corinthians (10:14)?

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7. If Paul is only concerned with God's approval (10:18), why does he defend his ministry to the Corinthians in this letter?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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## Worksheet #10: 2 Corinthians 11:1–33

**Summary:** In chapter 11, Paul warns the Corinthians that they stand in imminent danger. He denounces his opponents, arguing that their purpose is to lead the Corinthian church astray from the true gospel of Christ (11:3). He then reminds them that he labored among them without asking for financial support (11:5–11), and asserts that he will continue his ministry to disrupt the efforts of his opponents (11:12–15).

Following this warning against the dangers of the false teachers, Paul gives a catalogue of sufferings that serves as his apostolic *curriculum vitae* in 11:16–33. The false teachers had boasted about the authenticity of their ministry and teaching, but none of them could claim to have endured more suffering for their teaching than Paul had for the gospel message.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. **Paul's Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)**
  - A. The Tone of Paul's Appeal (10:1–11)
  - B. Divine Commendation of Paul's Ministry (10:12–18)
  - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1–15)**
  - D. Paul's Sufferings (11:16–33)**
  - E. Paul's Visions and Revelations (12:1–10)
  - F. Paul's Miracles (12:11–13)
  - G. Paul's Final Defense (12:14–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What right does Paul have to claim that he has “betrothed” the Corinthian church to Christ, as though he were their father (11:2)?

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2. What threat does Paul fear that might “corrupt” the Corinthians’ minds (11:3), and what could be the disastrous result (11:4)?

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3. What could Paul mean that he is “untrained in speech, [but] not in knowledge” (11:6)?

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4. What is Paul’s motivation for continuing in his apostolic ministry, according to 11:12?

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5. If Paul’s opponents are “deceitful workers” (11:13) and are Satan’s ministers (11:14), in what sense(s) will their end be “according to their works” (11:14)?

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6. What does Paul’s statement, “what I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly” (11:17) tell us about Paul’s tone in 11:16–21?

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7. What is the one distinction does Paul draw between his opponents and himself (11:23), and why is this significant?

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8. What does Paul seem to consider most significant in his list of burdens and sufferings (11:23b–30)?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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## Worksheet #11: 2 Corinthians 12:1–13

**Summary:** Paul begins chapter 12 by describing two personal experiences which he mentions nowhere else in his epistles. He desires to undermine his opponents by employing the same rhetorical devices that they had used among the Corinthians with seductive effect. This seems to be the main reason why he claims that boasting is not profitable (12:1, 6). In the first paragraph (12:1–6), he describes a vision which he had “fourteen years ago” of “the third heaven” (12:2). Then in 12:7–10, he describes his resultant experience of the “thorn in the flesh” that he received “lest I be exalted above measure” (12:7). All of this is to drive toward the central point that, contrary to the practices of his opponents, Paul made it a practice to boast in his “infirmities” and weakness rather than in his own glory and achievements (12:10). With this in mind, Paul descends from his boastings in 12:11, reminding the Corinthians that they should have recognized that his ministry among them was genuine.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. **Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)**
  - A. The Tone of Paul’s Appeal (10:1–11)
  - B. Divine Commendation of Paul’s Ministry (10:12–18)
  - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1–15)
  - D. Paul’s Sufferings (11:16–33)
  - E. **Paul’s Visions and Revelations (12:1–10)**
  - F. **Paul’s Miracles (12:11–13)**
  - G. Paul’s Final Defense (12:14–13:4)
- VI. Final Exhortations (13:5–12)
- VII. Closing (13:13)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. In describing his vision, Paul says that this experience occurred “fourteen years ago” (12:2). Apparently, the Corinthians had not heard of this vision before. What does this tell us about Paul’s main focus in his preaching?  

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2. Why does Paul only refer to himself indirectly (12:2–5) when describing his vision of the third heaven?  

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3. What does Paul see as the primary effect of boasting (12:6)?  

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4. Why does Paul not tell us what the “thorn in the flesh” was, aside from describing it as “a messenger of Satan to buffet me” (12:7)?  

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5. What is the lesson that Paul received from the Lord in response to his prayers regarding the thorn in the flesh (12:9)? How do we see this truth expressed in Paul’s approach to ministry throughout the book of 2 Corinthians?  

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6. What is Paul’s attitude toward weakness (12:10)? How does this contrast with a “martyr’s complex,” whereby Christians pursue failure and difficulty as their chief end?  

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7. How does Paul evaluate himself compared to the other apostles (12:10)?  

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8. What is the one difference between Paul’s ministry in Corinth and his ministry among other churches (12:13)?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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## Worksheet #12: 2 Corinthians 12:14–13:13

### Summary:

As Paul closes the book of 2 Corinthians, he reemphasizes that he and his associates did not take advantage of the Corinthians in their ministry among them (12:17). Confident that his assessment of the church at Corinth will hold up to thorough examination, Paul looks forward to his upcoming visit with the Corinthians as a time when all his claims will be verified by others (13:1) and during which he will again minister to their needs (12:14–15).

In his concluding exhortations, Paul issues stern warnings to the Corinthians: they are to “examine,” “test,” and “know” themselves to determine whether “Jesus Christ is in you” or they are “disqualified” (13:5). Paul is concerned that the Corinthians become “complete” (13:9, 11). He desires that their conduct would evidence that their hearts had been filled with the “grace” of Christ Jesus, the “love” of the Father, and the “fellowship” of the Holy Spirit (13:14), Trinitarian graces that the Corinthian church sorely lacked.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>1</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1–11)
- II. Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12–2:11)
- III. Paul’s Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
- IV. The Collection for the Believers in Jerusalem (8:1–9:15)
- V. **Paul’s Renewed Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–13:4)**
  - A. The Tone of Paul’s Appeal (10:1–11)
  - B. Divine Commendation of Paul’s Ministry (10:12–18)
  - C. Danger of the False Apostles (11:1–15)
  - D. Paul’s Sufferings (11:16–33)
  - E. Paul’s Visions and Revelations (12:1–10)
  - F. Paul’s Miracles (12:11–13)
  - G. **Paul’s Final Defense (12:14–13:4)**
- VI. **Final Exhortations (13:5–12)**
- VII. **Closing (13:13)**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 484.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. What goal does Paul likely have in mind when he says, “I do not seek yours, but you” (12:14)? How does the context help you answer this question?

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2. How does Paul respond to the accusation that he had craftily “caught [the Corinthians] by cunning” (12:16)?

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3. If Paul is “speak[ing] before God in Christ,” what is his claim in 12:19–21?

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4. How does Paul intend for the Corinthians to react to his warnings in 13:1–2?

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5. What is Paul’s point by portraying Christ as both “crucified in weakness” and alive “by the power of God” (13:4)?

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6. Is Paul certain that all those affiliated with the church at Corinth are believers in Christ (13:5)? How does his confidence in his own qualifications (13:6) relate to his command that the Corinthians examine themselves?

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7. How would it be possible for Paul to “seem disqualified” by the Corinthians’ conduct (13:8)?

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8. What motivates Paul’s stern warnings in this passage (13:9–10)?

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

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