

Small Group Materials (2 Corinthians 1:12-22)

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read the passage out loud as a group. Option: Give the group 5 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

This Week's Passage

Scripture Reference

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

New International Version (NIV--2011)

¹² Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. ¹³ For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, ¹⁴ as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁵ Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. ¹⁶ I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

¹⁸ But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. ²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Discussion

Ask the Group: What about this passage stood out to you?

Leaders' Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the "observation" level.

Ask the Group: What is Paul's boast in verses 12-14?

Possible Answer: Paul is boasting in the characteristics that he has through God's grace. Some of these characteristics mentioned are holiness, sincerity, and clear writing.

- Why is it important that Paul boasts in these things?

Possible Answer: Paul boasts in these things so that his audience will see him as someone who is humbly and honestly doing his best to follow Christ. This gives him credibility with his audience before he writes about how he changes his mind in verses 15-17.

Ask the Group: In verses 15-17, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had originally planned to visit them twice but changed his mind. Why, after proving his credibility in the previous section, does he remind the Corinthians that he did not meet their expectations?

Possible Answer: Even as Paul tries to humbly follow Christ, he wants to let people know that because he is human, he is unable to do everything he would like to do. As a result, he is not able to live up to everyone's expectations.

Ask the Group: Despite failing to meet the Corinthians' expectations, why does Paul say they should still listen to his message?

Possible Answer: They should listen because it's not Paul's message, but God's message. Leaders note: If your group doesn't seem to be coming to this conclusion you can point them to verses 18-19 where it says "in him, it has always been yes."

Ask the Group: Looking at verse 20, why is God to be glorified?

Possible Answer: He deserves to be glorified because He has made many promises and Christ has fulfilled them all. This is in contrast to Paul and all other men who will always let others down at some point.

Ask the Group: What promises has God made that Christ has fulfilled?

Leaders note: This question is intended to get the group looking at how Christ has fulfilled Old Testament promises/prophecies (if there is time and the leader feels comfortable discussing this).

Possible references for guidance include: Isaiah 9:6-7 - There would be a son who would be called God; Jeremiah 23:5 - The Messiah would be a descendant of King David; Matthew 5:17 - Jesus says that he has come to fulfill the law

Ask the Group: Paul says in verses 21-22 that those who "stand firm in Christ" have been anointed, have a seal of ownership on them, and have the Spirit in their hearts. What do each of these three things mean for those who follow Christ?

Possible Answers:

Anointed – set apart for God. (See 1 Sam. 16:1-13; Isa. 1:1-3; Acts 10:37-38; etc.)

Seal of ownership – we belong to God and are not our own. (In biblical times, seals were placed on important documents, providing them with the authority and ownership of that person. See Neh. 9:37-38; Esther 3:11-13; Jer. 32:43-44; etc.)

Spirit in our Hearts – guarantees we will spend eternity with Christ and serves as guidance and counsel while we are still here on earth. (See Rom. 5:1-5; Gal. 4:1-7; etc.)

Application

Ask the Group (small or large): In what areas of your life do you struggle to follow Christ because of what other people expect from you?

- How can you take steps towards obedience to Christ in those areas this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): This week, what does it look like for you to live as someone who has been set apart for God (anointed), belongs to God (seal of ownership), and has a guarantee of Christ's promises (Spirit in our heart)?

Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out during the week to encourage your group.

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

Ask the Group (small or large): How has this week's study changed the way you view comfort, strength, and encouragement?

- How will you depend on God this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): How has this passage affected your view of prayer?

- How will your prayer life change this week?