

**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 Cor. 6:3-13 (NIV—2011)*

3 We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. 4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. 12 We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. 13 As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

**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 down a specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the “observation” level.*

**Ask the Group:** Paul uses the phrase “stumbling block” in vs. 3. This phrase can also be translated as “obstacle,” “barrier,” or “obstruction.” What are some barriers that you have encountered on your spiritual journey?

*Leaders' Note: This question is designed to encourage conversation and to allow the group to explore the idea of a stumbling block.*

*Possible Answers: Ignorance, Christians not living out the Gospel.*

- Were any of them put in your way, and if so, how?

*Leaders' Note: This question is designed to allow members of the group to further explore stumbling blocks in their lives.*

*Possible Answers: Answers are dependent on the life experiences of your group members.*

- Paul's motivation for not putting a stumbling block in the way of the Corinthians was so that his ministry might not be discredited. Why would this be a good motivation for Paul?

*Possible Answers: Paul's care for the Corinthian Christians; his desire to see more people come to know Jesus.*

**Ask the Group:** In vs. 4, Paul bases his actions on being a Servant of God. Why would being a servant of God be a good basis for Paul's actions?

*Possible Answers: It highlights his relationship with God over or against rote actions. It shows an overflow of the gospel.*

**Read to the Group:** In vv. 4c-5 Paul states nine ways that he demonstrated great endurance. Some of the ways he demonstrates endurance were thrust upon him (e.g. beatings, imprisonments, riots) while others Paul took upon himself (e.g. hard work) and still others are ambiguous (e.g. sleepless nights, hunger.)

**Ask the Group:** How do the different ways that Paul demonstrated endurance show his commitment to God, the Corinthians, and his mission?

*Possible Answers: He is willing to sacrifice for them, endanger himself, forego ease.*

- What might we endure today so that others may come to know Christ?

*Leaders' Note: It is hoped that this might get the conversation to a more tactile level.*

*Possible Answers: Risking rejection from others by bringing a biblical viewpoint into the conversation, willing to go out of our way to talk to those that we might not normally talk to, willing to spend an evening writing small group material instead of staring at Facebook.*

**Ask the Group:** In vv. 6-7b Paul states eight graces of the Holy Spirit for ministry. How do the items in this list enable Paul to endure the items listed in verses 4b-5?

*Possible Answers: Supernatural support, the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself through fruit e.g. patience, kindness.*

- How do we rely on these same graces today?

*Leaders' Note: It is hoped that this might get the conversation to a more tactile level.*

*Answers should be similar to those for how Paul was enabled.*

**Ask the Group:** In vv. 8c-10 Paul states how he was misunderstood. Read through this list; how would you feel if you were in Paul's shoes?

*Possible Answers: Angry, betrayed, wronged, misunderstood, conflicted.*

- How do these misperceptions about Paul make his reliance on God more impactful to the Corinthians and to us?

*Possible Answers: It helps us to understand what his reliance on God meant; it shows what relying on God can do.*

**Ask the Group:** Paul commends himself to the Corinthians both by his efforts and his reliance on God. Looking back at Paul's actions in vv. 4-10, which actions stem from his efforts, which from his reliance on God, and which from a combination of the two?

*Leaders' Note: There is great latitude in how these items are arranged. For instance, is 'great endurance' an action of Paul's efforts, a reliance on God, or both? While both is the most logical answer, it could be based on his efforts.*

- What implications does this have for us as we try to balance our reliance on God and our efforts?

*Leaders' Note: This question highlights the need for our hard work and our reliance on God.*

**Ask the Group:** In vv. 11-12, Paul is both bold and gentle in his approach to the Corinthians. In what ways is he bold?

*Possible Answers: He opens himself up (he is vulnerable,); he gives a direct command 'open wide your hearts'; he calls them out 'you are withholding your affection from us.'*

- In what ways is he gentle?

*Possible Answers: He appeals to the Corinthians; he assures them of his affection; he speaks to them as his children; he is vulnerable.*

- How can this inform our dealings with others?

*Possible Answers: We see Paul modeling putting himself out and inviting others into relationship. He shows his reliance on God in this.*

### **Application**

**Ask the Group (small or large):** In Paul's listing of what he endured; he gives a picture of what he was willing to go through for the sake of the Gospel. What are you willing to go through so that others may come to know Jesus?

**Ask the Group (small or large):** Paul modeled a godly approach to others in this passage. How will you allow Paul's approach to the Corinthians shape how you relate to others this week?

*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 does your life reflect that you are a new creation in Christ?

**Ask the Group (small or large):** We are all in need of continual reconciliation. (vs. 21). Are there any areas of sin in your life that you need to allow Christ to "be the sin" for?