

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 13:1-14 (NIV)

¹ This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." ² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, ³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. ¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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.

Tell the Group: In verse 1 Paul quotes Deuteronomy 19:15. *Read Deuteronomy 19:15-21 with the group for context.*

Deuteronomy 19:15-21

New International Version (NIV)

15 One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

16 If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, **17** the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. **18** The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, **19** then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. **20** The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. **21** Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Ask the Group: What is the significance of Paul choosing this passage to begin his final warning to the church of Corinth?

Possible Answer: Paul begins with this reference to remind the church of Corinth of the biblical way to accuse someone. Paul calls attention to this because the church was slandering him behind his back and was not following this process. The reference also gives warning of the consequence of bearing false witness. Since Paul is coming in person, the Corinthians will have the opportunity to resolve this conflict according to the legal requirement and to put an end to their false accusations.

Ask the Group: The words “weakness” and “power/strong” are contrasted four different times in verses 3, 4, and 9. In verse 4 how do we see these seemingly opposite traits exemplified in Christ’s life?

Possible Answer: In Christ’s death he humbled himself and became weak, while He demonstrated the power of God in His resurrection.

- **Ask the Group:** How does Paul suggest Christ’s example should affect the way that Paul and the Corinthians should live?

Possible Answer: As Paul and the Corinthians humble themselves and recognize their weakness, God’s power grows in their lives.

Ask the Group: In verses 5-7, Paul mentions testing of faith several times but isn’t explicit in how they are to do this. In what ways do you feel your faith has been tested?

Leaders’ Note: It may be beneficial for you to share an example from your own life here first to get things rolling.

- **Ask the Group:** What did you learn about yourself and God from those experiences?

- **Ask the Group:** What are some of the evidences of faith that Paul may be referring to in those verses?

Possible Answers: Paul may be referencing the fruits of the spirit from Galatians 5:22-26, which show the spirit working in one’s life. The fruits described are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Ask the Group: In verse 10, Paul states that the Lord has placed him in a position of authority in order to build up and not to tear down. What are some examples that you’ve seen when Christian leaders have used authority to tear down?

Possible Answers: Making decisions in own best interest, church wars, gossip, condemnation toward others, etc.

- **Ask the Group:** What are some examples that you've seen when Christian leaders have used authority to build up?

Possible Answers: Looking to Christ and others before making decisions, encouragement, mentoring others, etc.

Ask the Group: In verse 11, Paul gives five commands: rejoice, be restored, encourage, be of one mind, and live in peace. What is the common theme of these commands?

Possible Answers: All are examples of what it means to live in Gospel community and unity.

- **Ask the Group:** Why do you think Paul ends with this list of commands to the Corinthians?

Possible Answers: The Corinthians have struggled with this aspect of the Christian life in the past and Paul desires for them to seek Christ in community. He also may wish to end his letter on an encouraging note after a hard-hitting letter.

Ask the Group: Paul leaves the Corinthians with a final benediction in verse 14. What do we see about the personhood of God in this verse?

Possible Answers: We see God described as three persons (Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit). Although the Bible never uses the term "Trinity," it is clear from this passage that Paul believes that God exists in three distinct persons.

Gospel Application

Ask the Group (small or large): Are you relying on your own strength or humbling yourself and letting God's power fill your life?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** What will you do to more fully rely on the power of Christ this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): Consider taking Paul's challenge to test yourself this week. What evidence of faith do you see in your life?

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 can we allow the Gospel to so permeate our lives that we have the same type of concern for others that Paul had?

Ask the Group (small or large): In what ways may God be calling of us to give of ourselves in hard circumstances?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** How can we allow the Gospel to empower us to do this?