



DAY 1

## HOW TO BUILD YOUR DEFENSE

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-14

We all face situations where we don't get the credit for something we think we deserve. Whether it is a school project, a job presentation or what we think is a really great dinner, someone isn't going to appreciate our efforts as much as we want them to.

Many times we feel underappreciated and overlooked because we have worked at something alone. There is no one to encourage the progress along the way, and there is no one to help defend our efforts when the product is finished. It is easy to become deflated and discouraged.

In 2 Corinthians 1:12-14, Paul had turned his life around, and he was sold out to Jesus. Yet he found himself defending his credibility. "Now this is our boast," Paul says in verse 12. "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace."

There was a lot more at stake with Paul's credibility than a high-school grade. Damage would have been done to the spread of the Gospel if Paul was proven untrustworthy. Paul understood the risk, so he appealed to the Corinthians.

The importance of how we conduct ourselves should not be lost on us. Our lives are not lived alone. People are measuring our credibility. We must understand that our lives either point people to the cross or point people away from it. Each day, we have the opportunity to build our defense by being sincere and having integrity like Paul. Then, when the time comes, we should have no issues finding people we can appeal

### REFLECT

- Who is one person you can go to for affirmation and accountability?
- Take time to ask those close to you about the qualities they see in you on daily basis. Do these qualities point people to Jesus? If not, what can you do today to begin pointing people to Jesus through your attitude and actions?
- Paul says his integrity and sincerity come from God's grace, not worldly wisdom. What is the difference between the two? What is one thing you can do to prevent yourself from following worldly wisdom?



DAY 2

## WHEN NOTHING SEEMS AS BLACK & WHITE AS WE'D LIKE

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:15-24

From defending your thesis on a college exam to choosing candidates during an election year, we all know the uncomfortable tug of having to pick a side.

*What if I get it wrong? What if this person lets me down? Will it all have been a waste?*

Weighing the options and committing to anything can leave us confused, doubtful, and much more aware of how rare it is to be certain someone is right. Paul's letter to the Corinthians assures us that God's promises are not like the promises we make to one another. His words can always be trusted.

**2 Corinthians 1:20** says, "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." Jesus is the best proof of God's trustworthiness. Every promise God makes to His people — His promises to save them, to free them, to be with them, to strengthen them, to provide for them — is fulfilled in Jesus.

God's words will always come to pass (**Isaiah 55:11**). This is why Paul goes on to instruct the Corinthians to give God the glory and stand firm, for God has given us His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as a guide and a guarantee of our place in His family (**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**).

So how do we stand firm and trust in God's promises? We have to become confident in who God is and who we are in Him. The closer we are to God, the more confident we become that He will do what He says. Reading the Bible, talking to God through prayer, and actively participating in the church helps us see God in action and trust Him to guide us each day and in every decision.

### REFLECT

- Is there a decision you are facing today that seems gray? sought wise counsel from someone you trust? If you don't have someone to talk to, consider **joining a group!**
- Think about one time God was faithful in keeping His promises to you. How did that experience build your confidence in God's faithfulness?



DAY 3

## IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT ME

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-17

We hear the words "it's not all about you" a lot these days. Sometimes it's a genuine reminder toward selflessness. Sometimes it's pushback on someone who deserves it. Other times, it's code for "it's not about you because it's all about me." We all assign great importance to ourselves at one time or another.

In [2 Corinthians 2:11](#), Paul says we should live "in order that Satan might not outwit us." So, how is Satan trying to outwit us? Satan's plan is pretty simple. In life, people inevitably hurt, insult or otherwise offend us. When this happens, we must decide how we are going to react, respond and recover. Satan tries to keep our focus on the offense and the offender, which is a backhanded way of focusing on ourselves as we believe we deserve some sort of revenge or justice.

As we learn to forgive, we become more like Jesus. Forgiveness is not condoning sin. Forgiveness is choosing not to respond to sin with sin. When we forgive, we set aside our desire for revenge and trust God to exact justice. We choose not to hold on to bitterness, but instead to love those who hurt us. And as we forgive, God takes the worst of humanity — our selfishness, sin, and brokenness — and uses it as an opportunity to display His heart for the world — one of grace, mercy, and justice.

Our natural response is to disregard those who sin against us, but God's natural response is to forgive and restore. God cares that everyone, no matter the sin, finds hope, life, and forgiveness in His kingdom.

### REFLECT

- Who has sinned against you that you need to forgive? What step can you take today to let go of the grudge you're holding?
- What is one sin you committed that you haven't forgiven yourself for? Take time today to confess your sin to Jesus and ask for forgiveness from the people you've hurt.



DAY 4

## THE REASON YOU MIGHT BE SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-16

Do you remember going to birthday parties as a child and playing “Pin the Tail on the Donkey”? With a picture of a tailless donkey placed on a wall, kids stand in a line a few feet away. Each child takes a turn to be blindfolded, spun around, and pointed in the right direction in hopes of pinning the tail in the correct place.

It’s an uncomfortable feeling to be blindfolded. You are pointed in the right direction, but trying to reach the wall in darkness is difficult. You can hear friends giggling and guiding you as you stumble around. When the blindfold is finally lifted, the freedom of sight is a welcome relief.

Being able to see the world around you is amazing compared to the feeling of being in darkness. Could you imagine never being able to lift a blindfold from your eyes?

Those who do not have a relationship with Jesus live with a permanent blindfold that keeps them from seeing the beauty of God. The only one who can lift that blindfold is Jesus.

In **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**, we are taught that spiritual freedom comes from God Himself. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

In a relationship with Jesus, we are free from the darkness of sin and can boldly enter into the light of God’s presence. Our blindfolds are permanently lifted, allowing us to enjoy and reflect His glory! And as we do, we help to guide those who are still blindfolded to the one who can restore their sight.

### REFLECT

- How has knowing God changed how you see the world around you?
- Who do you know who is still blindfolded? How can you guide them toward the one who can unveil their eyes?



DAY 5

## IF YOUR LIFE WAS A LETTER, WHAT WOULD IT SAY?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18

2 Corinthians is actually a letter written by the apostle Paul to the Christians living in Corinth. When Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, letters were the main avenue of communication. Letters were handwritten, hand-delivered, and sealed by the writer to show the letter's authenticity.

In [2 Corinthians 3:2-3](#), Paul refers to us as God's letter to the world. Non-believers may never study God's Word, but they'll study God's people. Jesus' work in our lives is like a letter showing His amazing grace.

This may feel like a lot of pressure. But, it doesn't mean we perfectly follow every law. We try, but the purpose of the law is to show us our sin so we understand we need a Savior. Because we follow Jesus, we get to live in the freedom of the new covenant. And as we get closer to Jesus — understanding more of who He is — He changes us to be more like Him.

**The letter of the law locks us in the prison of rules and regulations. The letter of love unleashes us into a life of liberty.**

The letter of the law locks us in the prison of rules and regulations. The letter of love unleashes us into a life of liberty. It's not whether people see us live up to the law, but it's whether they see us live a life of love that shows them a picture of who Jesus is.

Live in the freedom that it's not the rules we follow that demonstrate our faith, but the difference people see in us as we grow in relationship with Jesus.

### REFLECT

- How has knowing God changed how you see the world around you?
- Who do you know who is still blindfolded? How can you guide them toward the one who can unveil their eyes?



DAY 6

## EVER FEEL LIKE A BROKEN RECORD?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-12

Many of us have felt the frustration of inviting a friend to church and seeing no response. Loving Jesus changes us in such a way that we want the ones we love to experience the same joy we have. So we share our story. We ask our friends to come on Sunday. We engage in awkward conversations in order to invite someone to church or share God's truth with them.

When we feel like a broken record, it's easy to let the discouragement overwhelm us and just stop asking. But God, in all His wisdom, knew the battle we would face in this world and wants to encourage us.

In [2 Corinthians 4:1](#), Paul tells us to not lose heart! He reminds us that we are to speak truthfully about God and His Word and live in a way that points to Jesus ([2 Corinthians 4:2](#)). While that certainly includes inviting that coworker, brother, or friend, it doesn't mean we have to save them because that's God's job. Unbelievers are actually blinded to the Gospel until God opens their eyes to His truth ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)).

God's plan for that coworker, brother, or friend is perfect. We are part of that plan because we are a part of that person's life. We are to love that person and point them to Jesus, no matter how many times we feel like a broken record. He takes it from there, knowing exactly how to open their eyes to His deep love for them.

### REFLECT

- Who is one person in your life that is resistant to the Gospel? Spend time praying for God to open their eyes.
- What is one way you can continue to reach out to that person and point them to Jesus?



DAY 7

## BEFORE JUMPING SHIP, NOTE THE LIFE RAFT

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18

Life is a series of ups and downs. A season of joy and peace can quickly be followed by a season of hardship and depression. We breeze through the ups, throwing caution to the wind, as we enjoy the sunshine of this season.

But when life brings storms of loneliness and despair, our happy highs are long forgotten, and we're ready to jump ship. We search for something to cling to and carry us out of the trenches.

What if we had the ability to persevere already within us? If you're a Christian the same power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise you out of your suffering and hardship. Paul refers to this power as "treasure in jars of clay" that only comes from God ([2 Corinthians 4:7](#)). It cannot be found in some magical solution here on earth. It's through God's strength, not our own, that we find the ability to stand when we've been knocked down.

[2 Corinthians 4:8-9](#) reminds us though we feel pressed, we are not crushed. Though we feel persecuted we are not abandoned. Consider the suffering Christ endured on the cross; He suffered the ultimate persecution, so He can walk us through these seasons. Our Savior understands more than anyone what we feel when the storms strike.

Though suffering is painful and overwhelming, God will supply us with the strength and encouragement we need to finish the course. When you feel the urge to give up, cling close to the Holy Spirit and do not lose heart.

Paul reminds us, "Our momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" ([2 Corinthians 4:17](#)). Your pain is a season for God to work inside of you. The bonus is that God promises an eternal reward in heaven for your hardship.

### REFLECT

- Do you feel kicked, knocked over, and down in despair? Why or why not?
- What is one way you can remind yourself the pain is temporary and there's a reward for the struggles you are facing?



DAY 8

## DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

Struggles with anxiety, panic attacks, and situational depression can last for years and grow with persistent problems or come for no apparent reason at all. For some, it's so serious that we contemplate suicide or wish that God would take our life. However, as [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) says, "Christ's love compels us." God will always bring us up from our lowest points; His love truly never fails! ([Psalm 100:5](#))

The answer is not to do nothing about anxiety or depression. [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) says that Christ's love compels us, which means action on our part. So what can we do in the midst of anxiety or depression right now? Christ's love compels us to get up and keep on living. Christ's love compels us to look in the mirror and see a person who is valuable, a person for whom Christ died!

Christ's love compels us to become members of a local church so that we do not try to face anxiety alone. Christ's love compels us to consistently read our Bibles and to focus our minds on His promises instead of our own (often skewed) thoughts. And, Christ's love compels us not to judge those struggling with anxiety or depression, lest we too are judged ([Matthew 7:1-5](#)). Ultimately, Christ's love compels us to hang in there until He uses our pain for His glory.

#### The process of healing is never a waste.

The process of healing is never a waste. Our anxiety or depression might be used one day to encourage another believer, drive us to the cross if we are not believers yet already, or refine our faith so that we will have less sin in our lives and more peace and perseverance ([James 1:2-3](#)). God would never give anything so painful as these problems to His children unless the blessings coming to us far outweigh the struggle ([2 Corinthians 4:15-17](#)).

### REFLECT

- What is one thing that Christ's love is compelling you to do right now?
- If you are struggling with anxiety or depression, what is one step you can take today to allow Christ to gain control over your worries?



DAY 9

## HOPE TO LIVE FOREVER

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21

Nothing lasts forever. Keep a car long enough, it will only be good for its parts. Keep a job long enough, we eventually will retire. Keep a cell phone long enough, there will eventually be a better model. Even our bodies, well, we eventually return to dust.

Cars, jobs, cell phones, laptops, they all serve a purpose and can be destroyed. The body, though? The body is a totally different blessing. God already created our bodies, but when we are in Christ, we become new creatures. From the moment we say "yes" to Jesus, we know there is a body waiting for us in Heaven.

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" ([2 Corinthians 5:1](#)).

How awesome is that promise? Our tents will eventually break down. Before we die, some of us will endure health problems, blindness, deafness, paralyzation, and other things that will make us moan and groan. But after our time in our tent is over, as long as we are in Christ, we will get new bodies, and they will be stronger than anything we could have ever imagined.

**Being in Christ means that forever continues in heaven after we take our last breath.**

Nothing lasts forever. Well, at least not on this side of the journey of life. Being in Christ means that forever continues in heaven after we take our last breath. Isn't that a beautiful thing to look forward to?

### REFLECT

- The promise in [2 Corinthians 5:1](#) applies to those who have a relationship with Jesus. Have you started a relationship with Him? If not, you can step into that promise by [starting one today](#).
- Does the promise of a perfect heavenly body give you hope in your pain? If you are struggling to find hope, who can you talk to that will encourage you?



DAY 10

## CAN GOD STILL USE ME?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-13

Our past doesn't disqualify us from our future. If we're not careful, we'll talk ourselves out of our potential. A healthy understanding of who we are in Jesus is essential in enabling who we will become. The problem is we know every single little rotten thing we've ever done and can reasonably make excuses for why we can't do something good.

Our history does not identify our identity and it absolutely does not define our destiny!

**Our history does not identify our identity and it absolutely does not define our destiny!**

Paul wrote to us compassionately in [2 Corinthians 5:17](#): "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

Paul knew Jesus has a strong track record of using imperfect people for His work. Jesus intentionally called the weak, broken, and messy people just like Paul — and just like us.

When Jesus died on the cross, He made a way for us to be reconciled with God. This is a one-way street. Salvation, through Jesus, cannot be earned, and it cannot be lost. By confessing Jesus is Lord, our eternal future changes in an instant. All of our sins are forgiven. [Psalm 103:12](#) declares, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions [sins] from us."

So, why is it so hard to get past our past? Maybe, we need to watch out for ANTs — Automatic, Negative Thoughts. Automatic, negative thoughts can interrupt our day and interfere with our doing. We move forward by doing three things: learning to recognize negative thoughts quickly, deciding to stop the thought immediately, and replacing the thought with truth from the Bible ([Philippians 4:8](#), [Ephesians 4:23](#)).

### REFLECT

- What negative thought from your past causes you to have ANTs? Ask Jesus to help you stomp those thoughts.
- What is one way you can begin to change that thought today? A great place to start could be writing down 2 Corinthians 5:17, replacing the word "anyone" with your name, and posting it where you can see it every day as a reminder of who you are in Christ.



DAY 11

## PLAY BY THE RULES? NO THANKS.

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

Have you ever been playing a game with a friend that likes to pick and choose the rules? There may be rules that end up taking too much time or effort, and they think the game is just more fun without it.

This isn't such a big deal when playing a game, but sometimes we can do this with our commitment to walk with God. And, that is a big deal.

**This isn't such a big deal when playing a game, but sometimes we can do this with our commitment to walk with God. And, that is a big deal.**

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians that we have to be committed to God through everything — the good and bad. We are commanded to fully commit ourselves to God in every aspect of our lives. It can be easy to love God when things are going well. But as soon as something bad happens at work, in our families, or in our relationships, we're drawn back to things that keep us from giving ourselves wholly to the Lord.

Picking and choosing the areas of our life where we obey God is something we all struggle with, but God gives us hope through the hard seasons. We see starting in [2 Corinthians 5:14](#) that God asks what unbelievers and believers, light and darkness, or the temple of God and idols all have in common. Then He says of believers:

"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from them and be separate..." ([2 Corinthians 5:16-17](#)).

Be encouraged, because God is with you even when you don't feel that you are with Him. Draw close to Him, and ask Him to give you the boldness and strength to live a life wholly committed to being a child of God, even during hardships and trials.

### REFLECT

- What's one area of your life you have not fully committed to God?
- Do you notice that you act more fully committed to Him during different seasons of life?
- What is one thing you can do to be more committed to the Lord during hard times?



DAY 12

## HOW TO TELL YOUR REAL FRIENDS FROM YOUR FAKE FRIENDS

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-7

Friendship has lost its depth of meaning in the age of social media. We feel connected to people because it's so easy to interact with them online, but many of those relationships are superficial at best. Who do you call in the middle of the night when you have to rush to the emergency room? Who stood by your side during the divorce? Who came to do laundry when you were sleep deprived with a newborn? Those are your true friends.

**Just because someone agrees with everything you believe doesn't make them your friend.**

Just because someone agrees with everything you believe doesn't make them your friend. Proverbs explains it this way: "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" ([Proverbs 27:5-6](#)). A true friend isn't afraid to tell you when you're wrong. True friends know your baggage, and love you anyway.

Paul encourages us, in [2 Corinthians 7:2-7](#), to have great friendships. And, Jesus modeled how to be the best friend. He told his disciples: "Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" ([John 15:12-13](#)). The Son of God Himself lived out the principle that you can't do life alone. During His ministry on earth, Jesus lived, laughed, cried, prayed, and fought alongside men and women He knew and loved with His whole heart. He died to pay for their and our sins. He rose from the dead so we could all live eternally in freedom together.

Friendship isn't an abstract ideal or a superficial reality. It's the way our God lived on earth and commands us to live. Having and being a friend isn't optional in this life.

### REFLECT

- Who would you call at 3am in an emergency?
- Who do you think would call you?
- What is one thing you can do today to be a better friend to someone you love?



DAY 13

## WHICH KIND OF SORROW ARE YOU FEELING?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 7:16

A switchblade and a scalpel have a lot in common. From their compact size to their razor-sharp edge, they're surprisingly similar. But despite their similarities, it's the differences that matter.

A switchblade is designed for destruction. Whether in self-defense or violent aggression, the person wielding this blade is focused on causing injury with no concern for the victim's well-being.

A scalpel holds the same damaging potential. However, in the skilled hands of a surgeon its blade separates tissue with precision. The resulting wound is minimal, focused on healing a deeper problem.

While both blades can open a wound, the purpose of that wound makes all the difference.

In [2 Corinthians 7:8-16](#), Paul is writing to the Corinthian church. His previous letter called them out for immorality and internal conflicts. Not surprisingly, this caused considerable sorrow and sadness. But like a doctor prescribing post-op care, Paul helps the church understand there are two types of sorrow: worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow.

Worldly sorrow focuses our attention on our failures and smothers us with guilt. Like a knife wound in a street fight, it leads to death. In contrast, while Godly sorrow may hurt for a moment, it leads us to repentance and restoration. Like the surgeon's incision, it causes temporary pain but brings eventual healing ([2 Corinthians 7:10-11](#)).

**While Godly sorrow may hurt for a moment, it leads us to repentance and restoration.**

Worldly sorrow comes from condemnation, and [Romans 8:1](#) tells us there is no condemnation for those who follow Jesus. Godly sorrow moves us to confession and allows us to claim the incredible promise of [John 1:9](#): "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

### REFLECT

- Are you experiencing sorrow over something you've done? In what way?
- If so, are you stuck in self-pity or moving toward confession and repentance? Why?
- What is one way you can move from feeling worldly sorrow to godly sorrow? God wants to restore your relationship with Him. Why not ask Him to use your sorrow to draw you closer to Him?



DAY 14

## MORE IS NEVER ENOUGH

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

One of the most challenging things in life is our relationship with money. We don't have enough. We want more. We waste what we have. We borrow from our future to stroke our present. We hoard what we have. We argue over money. We feel stress much of the time. We compare ourselves to others — feeling bad when they have more and feeling better when they have less.

Money must be mastered, not be our master. **Money must be mastered, not be our master.** So, how do we take steps to control our money instead of letting our money control us?

#### Three things we can stop doing:

1. Stop measuring what we have against what people wanting us to spend say we "need" or "deserve" — or anything else they say.
2. Stop believing the lie that getting more will make us happier (2 Corinthians 8:1-7).
3. Stop fighting with God about what He really means by what He says.

#### Three things we can start doing:

1. Every day, celebrate every detail regarding the blessings you already enjoy.
2. Train yourself to be happier — from inner joy, not from external circumstances (2 Corinthians 8:2).
3. Trust God to mean, and do, what He says.

We can trust God with our money. When we follow His commands about money, He changes our relationship with money. As we learn to be content with what God has given us, He gives us real joy that has nothing to do with our circumstances.

We don't have to buy our joy, Jesus already paid for us to have a joyful life when He paid for our sins on the cross (2 Corinthians 8:9).

When we listen to Jesus and do what He says, by tithing and giving generously, He protects us from greed. God commands us to bring 10 percent of our gross income back to the church and challenges us to give generously above the tithe as we aim to be more like Jesus.

God is always enough. Giving, not getting, is spiritually rewarding. The more we give, the more our spirit will celebrate.

### REFLECT

- When it comes to you and money, which is master in your life?
- What is one thing you can do today to begin thinking like Jesus about money?



DAY 15

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TITHE & AN OFFERING?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24

Talking about money is uncomfortable. Why is that? We all need it, use it, and want more of it. How we use money is important, not only to us, but to God — so much in fact that God broaches the sticky subject of money in the Bible more than 800 times. And just like everything else in God's Word, His ways are to lead us to His best for our lives.

**Malachi 3:8-12** shows that by not tithing we rob God. Everything we have belongs to Him. When we refuse to give God back the 10 percent He's commanded, we rob Him by keeping what doesn't belong to us.

Not only do we rob God of money, but we also rob ourselves of the blessings He wants to pour out on us. God desires to shower blessings on us if we will only trust Him.

In **2 Corinthians 9:1-9** there is another level of trust God longs to bless, and that is when we generously and joyfully offer more than what is required. Consider it as a next step in our faith walk. This is where each walk gets individual and personal since it is not a designated amount. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (**2 Corinthians 9:7**).

**Trusting God with our money is tough, but God's plans are never meant to burden us, but to lead us to further blessings.**

Trusting God with our money is tough, but God's plans are never meant to burden us, but to lead us to further blessings.

### REFLECT

- Why is it so hard to trust God with our finances?
- What next step do you need to take in trusting God with your finances?
- If you are tithing already, what is one way you can give generously?



DAY 16

## GIVING TO RECEIVE?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

Jesus never had trouble attracting a crowd. Even when people did not agree with Him, they were still interested in the backward way He suggested people live. Saying things like “to die is to live,” “love those who hate you,” and “it’s better to give than to receive” were, and still are, counterintuitive to our natural human reactions.

Those “crazy ideas” are not just “must do” statements in God’s Word. We also have God’s promises of blessing when we follow them.

For example, in [2 Corinthians 9:10-15](#), we see that when we give generously to the church,

#### God promises three things:

1. It increases our faith and our desire to be generous to others ([2 Corinthians 9:10](#)).
2. It meets others’ needs ([2 Corinthians 9:12](#)).
3. It increases others’ faith ([2 Corinthians 9:12-15](#)).

#### Giving is not always easy because we often see what we have been given from God as something we have somehow earned and deserve.

Giving is not always easy because we often see what we have been given from God as something we have somehow earned and deserve. When we start viewing everything we have, including money, as a gift from our Father for us to manage, it changes our perspective. Giving becomes fun because we get to do something for others, or the church, that God did for us first — give freely and joyfully.

### REFLECT

- Have you struggled with giving back to God and the church? Why, or why not?
- When was one time God met one of your needs and it increased your faith?
- What is one way you can be generous today, either to someone you know or to the church?



DAY 17

## YOU ALREADY HAVE THE BEST WEAPON

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

David, a small boy, faced the giant Goliath to defend his people. King Saul offered his own armor to David, but it was very heavy for him. Instead he went out in his own clothes with a staff, five stones and his sling. Why wouldn't he gear up as a soldier? It seems foolish. During the fight, David's real weapon becomes obvious: the full power of God.

We have the same power to fight against our enemy, Satan, through a relationship with Jesus. The world may not understand why we take different steps against our problems than others would, but we do so because we are fighting with different weapons. Paul's words in [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](#) remind us where our power comes from. Our weapons are not from this world.

Fighting with our own power is too heavy. When we accept Jesus's forgiveness, He arms us for battle, lifting the heavy burden by empowering us to "demolish strongholds."

What does this mean? When a wrong thought enters our mind, we can fight against it with our will or take it captive through God's Word. When an opportunity for advancement at work means compromising what is right, we can rationalize taking it or "demolish arguments." When we begin to think too much of ourselves we can continue in pride or submit to God and serve as Jesus would. Fight your battles with the power God has made available to you!

### REFLECT

- The power for living is found in a relationship with Jesus. Have you accepted His forgiveness and leadership? If not, salvation may be your next step!
- Is there a battle you are trying to fight with armor the world offers? What is one step you can take today to arm yourself with God's armor?
- What is one way you can use the Bible to defeat lies and wrong mindsets? ([Hebrews 4:12](#))



DAY 18

## WHY YOU SHOULD KEEP COOL IN THE FACE OF CRITICISM

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

Great leaders are fairly rare while critics are never in short supply. However, through the lens of time, do we ever remember the critics?

The apostle Paul had his share of critics, to put it mildly. Whether it was from those in the church who questioned his motives, Jewish religious officials, or Gentile skeptics, Paul was often on the defensive.

Paul may have been offended in many of those instances, but he never responded in kind. In fact, he opens the chapter like this, "By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you..." ([2 Corinthians 10:1](#)).

When it comes to not bowing to the will of others, Paul is a great example. Paul was accused of being timid, but he wasn't about to turn away from punishing those who continued to be disobedient ([2 Corinthians 10:1-6](#)).

**When we face criticism and conflict, our actions and character will speak louder than words.**

When we face criticism and conflict, our actions and character will eventually speak the loudest. In the meantime, the best way we can maintain our composure is through prayer, the encouragement of Scripture, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds us our battle is a spiritual battle, not a battle with other people, and we have to fight accordingly ([2 Corinthians 10:3-4](#)).

When we tap into the power God gives us, we should never have to worry about critics or those stirring up trouble. In the end, we can find justification in the eyes of a Heavenly Father who loves us, and we can perhaps point them in His direction.

### REFLECT

- Think back to the last time you faced conflict from a critic. How did you respond? What is one way you could have handled it better?
- What is one thing you can do today to prepare for the next time you are criticized?
- Do you ever find yourself in the position of the critic? How do you express your criticism? What is one way you can build someone up even when you disagree with them?



DAY 19

## WHAT INFLUENCES YOU?

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:17-33

One of the most important choices we make is what we allow to influence us. Our major influences are whatever or whoever we spend the most time with. Whether we're aware of it or not, we're influenced by what and who we listen to.

Two powerful forces that battle to influence us are wisdom and foolishness. The Bible tells us they compete for our attention — crying out and inviting us to follow them ([Proverbs 9](#)).

**Foolishness is deceptive; it can appear informed and attractive.** Wisdom and foolishness express themselves through the words of the influencers we allow into our lives. We'd like to think we'd never be influenced by foolish people. But, foolishness is deceptive and can appear informed and attractive.

Paul was frustrated with the Corinthian church because they allowed foolishness to deceive them. Flashy, self-proclaimed apostles preached a gospel inconsistent with the truth they originally believed.

But, Paul counters these false apostles' claims and gives us three tips to distinguish wise from foolish people:

1. Fools listen to anything anyone says. Wise people compare what they hear to God's Word and the counsel of the saints to see if it's truth ([2 Corinthians 11:3-4](#)).
2. Fools look to move up the ladder, becoming anyone and saying anything to get ahead. Wise people are faithful with the opportunities God gives them, and they put others first ([2 Corinthians 11:7-15](#)).
3. Fools boast about their achievements ([2 Corinthians 11:17-18](#)). The wise know to boast in the Lord ([2 Corinthians 11:30-31](#)).

Listening to foolish influences carries harmful consequences, but listening to wise people makes us wise ([Proverbs 13:20](#)). In a world so full of opinions, the Bible will always be our rudder of truth and wisdom.

### REFLECT

- Who/what influences you the most? Based on the three criteria above, are those influences wise or foolish?
- If necessary, what is one way you can begin to change who/what influences you today?
- What is one situation you need to ask God for wisdom about? "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" ([James 1:5](#)).



DAY 20

## FIND STRENGTH IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED PLACE

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-21

Weak and strong are opposites, right? By definition, when we are weak, we are not strong. At any given time, we can feel weak in hundreds of ways — inadequate, unqualified, unable, in over our heads, overwhelmed, and on and on. In the midst of all this muck, being strong seems very unlikely.

But in [2 Corinthians 12](#), Paul says these two opposites — weak and strong — work together, not in opposition. [2 Corinthians 12:9](#) says, “[The Lord’s] power is made perfect in weakness.” Let that sink in.

The all-surpassing power of God is made perfect, in weakness. The places we are most feeble, are the best platform for the Lord to show His perfect strength. God can be most clearly seen when we stop our boasting and grandstanding — when we stop trying to prove to the world we can muscle up and push our way through. When there is no way, God shows up and blows all of our minds.

**When we want to hide away, God comes and shows how perfect He is and how much He can do.**

It is easy to hide behind the best parts of us. It is easy to show the world the beautiful and perfect. But in the lumps and bumps, in the hard parts that make us want to hide away, God comes and shows how perfect He is and how much He can do.

Today, let’s choose to embrace what God can do when we are at our worst. Let’s trust God will be strong in us.

### REFLECT

- Where do you feel weak today? What area are you tempted to hide away? Ask God to specifically show you how strong He is in those areas.
- Who is one person you can talk to about your weaknesses? Who is one person who can point out God’s strength in your weakness even if you can’t always see it? When can you talk with them this week?



DAY 21

## GOD EQUIPS HIS PEOPLE

### READ 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

Have you ever felt unequipped with words in a tough conversation?

Maybe you were having a normal conversation with your boss when suddenly it turned into an opportunity to share the Gospel, leaving you feeling unequipped with the right words.

Maybe you have that particular family member you feel unequipped to reach out to, to share the Gospel with, even though you feel that tug at your heart.

Or maybe, it wasn't an opportunity to share the Gospel but an opportunity of influence. Maybe you had an opportunity to share your story, impacting someone else with what God has done for you, but you felt unequipped — like God could use someone a little better equipped in that area than you in that moment.

#### God equips His people for just the right conversation at just the right time.

God does not make mistakes. His timing is perfect, and He equips all of His people for just the right conversation at just the right time. God equips His people in all areas of our lives to share the Gospel at just the right time to invite others into a relationship with Jesus. He also equips us to share our stories to help others grow and mature in their faith by being the influence they need.

"[Jesus] is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, but by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you" ([2 Corinthians 13:3-4](#)).

So although you may feel unequipped with words at times, remind yourself that the power of the Holy Spirit lives within you. God has equipped you to fulfill His purpose for your life, for just that exact moment.

### REFLECT

- When was one time you felt unequipped for a conversation? What did you do?
- What is one way you are aware of Jesus' presence and power in your life? Ask Him to reveal His presence and power to you when you feel unequipped.
- What is one conversation you have been avoiding? What is one step you can take today to have that conversation knowing Jesus will equip you for it?