



## May 1 & 2: Forgiveness

### Overview

There are times in life when we all feel like people have deliberately run over us, when we have been knocked down or deeply wounded. In the book of *2 Corinthians*, Paul emphasizes the special resources available to those who are Christians and who are hurting. This letter was written to a troubled church and a hurting people. Throughout the letter Paul encourages the church to remain faithful. Paul himself had faced many hardships; he was able to encourage them because Jesus Christ had transformed his attitude. As we look through *2 Corinthians*, we will see how God can change our perspective and take us BEYOND the blues.

#### Goals of the study guide:

- To look at the characteristics that are part of being a compassionate leader.
- To recognize that how we relate to and with people is a crucial part of good spiritual leadership.
- To understand what it means to be sensitive and encouraging to others in every situation.

#### Key points:

- Sin can lead to pain for the person and for the church.
- Discipline in the church is to restore the person who has walked away from God and to maintain purity in the church.
- Repentance can lead to forgiveness, restoration and acceptance.



### Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

What do you do when a Christian friend begins to drift away from the Lord? It is the easiest thing in the world to look the other way and just passively hope that everything will take care of itself. After all, *Matthew 7:1* says, *Don't judge others, or you will be judged.* (NCV)

Who am I to tell another Christian how they are supposed to live? But *Galatians 6:1* says, *...if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.* How do you reconcile those two verses of Scripture?

In *2 Corinthians 2:5-11*, Paul discusses forgiveness for the repentant sinner. Notice four potential results of sin and how we can respond to them.

#### 1. Sin can lead to *pain*.

A man in the church had committed a flagrant and continuous sin. He had grieved the church, he had grieved Paul and he had probably brought a lot of grief to himself. *1 Corinthians 5:1-2*

Paul says, "Rather than be tolerant, you ought to be so upset that you put this man out of your fellowship." I take that to mean that they were to say to the man and the congregation, "This person is no longer a member of this church."

The purpose is to restore him. You see, the church is to confront flagrant sin, but the Bible does not instruct church leaders to be undercover agents, privately investigating the lives of Christians and confronting every misdeed. However, when the offenses are flagrant and continuous, and when they threaten the testimony of the church, then they must be confronted.

#### 2. Sin can lead to *discipline*. *2 Corinthians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5*

- The purpose is to *restore*.
- The purpose is to maintain *purity*. *1 Corinthians 5:6*
- Steps to church discipline.
  1. *Self-examination* *Matthew 7:1-5*
  2. *Gentle Confrontation* *Galatians 6:1*
  3. *Group Intervention* *Matthew 18:15-16*
  4. *Deliberate Isolation* *Matthew 18:17*
  5. *Loving Restoration* *2 Corinthians 2:6-7*

### 3. Sin can lead to *repentance*.

Genuine repentance involves three words:

- *Conviction*: The open admission that “I have sinned. I have been wrong.” without trying to cover it up.
- *Contrition*: Being able to say, “I am genuinely sorry for what I have done.”
- *Change*: Repentance means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction.

### 4. Sin can lead to *restoration*.

*2 Corinthians 2:7, ...forgive and comfort him... 2:8, ...reaffirm your love for him.*

*Ephesians 4:32, Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Our forgiveness of ourselves and other people is closely related to our concept of God. What’s your concept of God? Do you see God as a rigid legalist who stands ready to punish? If so, it’s really hard to forgive yourself and to forgive others. Or do you go to the other extreme and see God as a doting old grandfather who would never hold anybody accountable? Then it’s hard for you to stand for the truth. Jesus came to reveal God to us. He was full of grace, and He was full of truth.



## Take it to the source ... Bible Study

**Introductory question:** Have you or somebody you know ever had to have a surgery or physical treatment that was very difficult but that positively changed your or their life? What was the ailment and what were the benefits of the treatment?

### Opening thought:

Sometimes the thing that brings healing can be painful and difficult. Use this time of sharing stories to help your group understand that the path to spiritual and physical healing is not always an easy one, but the results can be very positive.

### Read *2 Corinthians 2:5-11*.

1. How can one person’s sin cause pain to an entire church? What does that say about the spiritual dynamics that affect relationships or a small group?
2. Would you say you see God as a rigid legalist or a doting grandfather? Why?
3. What do you need in your life to help you get a more balanced view of God that equally emphasizes both His grace and His truth?
4. Is there someone that you can help restore to a right relationship with God? What could you or your small group do to show God’s forgiveness to someone who has possibly given up on themselves and on God?

### Key points:

- One person’s pride, selfishness or immoral decisions can affect an entire group of people. It may be obvious by disturbing relationships or abilities, or it may be subtle and not so noticeable until damage is done. Look at *Joshua 7* to see an example where one person’s sin affected an entire nation.
- We are to faithfully uphold God’s truth and His standards for living, but at the same time we are to make every effort to restore people who have fallen out of relationship with Him. It is not an either/or situation. It is both/and — both sides are necessary if we are to accurately reflect the nature of God.

**Read *Matthew 7:1-5, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-17* and *2 Corinthians 2:6-7*.**

1. Why does Jesus teach us to take care of our own faults before we start trying to fix the rest of the world?
2. How quick are you to judge others without considering how you might behave in a similar situation? How can you guard against that?
3. What would you say makes a *spiritual* Christian? Why would such a person be able to help someone who is caught in a sin?
4. How do the steps in *Matthew 18:15-17* show love to a person who is unable to walk away from a bad habit or a destructive relationship?
5. Why is despair such a dangerous spiritual condition? How can a forgiving and restoring attitude help renew hope for a person who feels overwhelmed and hopeless?

**Key points:**

- We are to concentrate on our own flaws and failings that may keep us from seeing ourselves clearly. It is impossible to help others when we are not seeing ourselves in a realistic light. Jesus says start with yourself, then your perspective concerning others will be much clearer.
- A spiritual Christian is not a perfect Christian. A spiritual Christian is a person who is doing their best to live a life of obedience and who is making God's priorities and perspective their priorities and perspective.
- A person who is in a state of despair no longer has any hope for their future. They believe that God cannot forgive them, so they see any spiritual activity as pointless. Many times it is the tangible acceptance and forgiveness of another person that helps them to regain hope and trust in God and His love.

**Read *Ephesians 4:32*.**

1. How does a right understanding of God's forgiveness to you help you to show kindness and compassion to others?
2. How can the character traits listed in this verse reflect the love of God to people who need to be forgiven, restored and accepted?

**Key points:**

- We only know how to truly love others when we understand the way that God loves us. Our love and compassion is simply a reflection of His love and compassion. Our world doesn't need to only hear words about God's love, they need to see and feel His love and acceptance in a way that will lead them to restoring a relationship with God. This is our role as individuals, and this is our role as a small group and a church.



**Take it home ... Practical Applications**

Reflect on *John 1:14* in your devotional time this week...

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14*

- Consider how Jesus displayed both grace and truth in His life and ministry.
- Ask God to help you to have a right balance between grace and truth in your own life.
- Look for ways that you can be a reflection of God's truth and grace in your own relationships this week.

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*All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.*

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