

# PAY IT FORWARD



## 2 CORINTHIANS

### 2 Corinthians reading plan January 2024

*Reading through 2 Corinthians, I am struck by the theme 'Pay it forward.' 2 Corinthians tells us that 'the God of all comfort comforts us – so that we can comfort others. God loves us – so we can love others. God provides for us – so that we can provide for others. As you read, I pray that you will sense God's love for you and feel compelled to extend that love to others.*

#### **January 1** – 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1. 2 Corinthians begins with worship. Paul opens the letter and then overflows with exuberant praise for our God. How does Paul describe God here? What encouragement does that give you? What does it move you to do?
2. How do distress, comfort and salvation fit together in Christian experience? What would you say to someone who says 'if you just believed more, your suffering would be relieved'?

#### **January 3** – 2 Corinthians 1:12-24

1. What's the difference between 'worldly wisdom' and 'God's grace'? (See verse 12). What does it look like to treat people according to 'worldly wisdom'? What does it look like to treat people according to 'God's grace'? Which paradigm characterizes your actions?
2. What assurances does God give to us as His children? (See verses 20-22).
3. Have you ever been let down by a Christian leader? Have you ever misunderstood their intentions? (Situations like these seen to have prompted the writing of this passage and into chapter 2). How does Paul model seeking reconciliation in these passages?

#### **January 5** – 2 Corinthians 2:1-11

1. Verse 4 says: "For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you." Do you know that feeling? Do you think Jesus ever feels this way about His people?

2. Paul assumes here that the members of the church in Corinth will hold each accountable and help one another to turn from sin and grow in goodness. That was a natural part of the early church; why don't we do that more today?

**January 8** - 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

1. What do you think Paul means when he talks about 'the aroma of Christ'? How would you put it in your own words?

2. How can you tell when someone is 'peddling the word of God for profit' versus 'speaking before God with sincerity'?

**January 10** - 2 Corinthians 3:1-11

1. In this passage, Paul asserts that God has made us 'ministers of a new covenant.' Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and note all the similarities and allusions in this passage. What makes the new covenant different from the old one?

2. We often think about the Law in bleak terms and yet hear Paul calls it glorious! Yes, people were not able to obey it but that doesn't make it any less glorious as the revelation of God's character and worldview and goodness and justice.

**January 12** - 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

1. Take a minute to read Exodus 34:29-35. That's the passage about Moses that Paul refers to in verse 13. What does Paul take from that passage? What can we learn about meeting with God from Moses' experience?

2. Verse 17 says 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.' Freedom from what?

3. Read verse 18 out loud and take the time to contemplate each of part of this verse:

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.

Wow.

**January 15** - 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

1. How can you help your pastors to 'renounce secret and shameful ways, not using deception and not distorting the word of God'?
2. It's no secret that many people have no interest in the Gospel. Verse 4 gives us some theological insight into that reality. Why do unbelievers resist the Gospel, according to verse 4? Read in the whole of Scripture, what do we do about it?

**January 17** - 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

1. How does an eternal perspective (vss. 17-18) help us when we are feeling hard pressed, perplexed and persecuted (v. 8)?
2. 'We are being renewed day by day' (v. 16). What can you do to remind yourself of that fact?

**January 19** - 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

1. What are some of the differences between a tent and a house? If our bodies are like 'tents' now, what will our 'house-like' bodies be like in eternity?!
2. What does it mean to 'live by faith and not by sight'?
3. Does verse 10 teach salvation by good works? How do grace and accountability intersect here? How do verses 18-19 affect your answer?

**January 22** – 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

1. Francis Schaeffer once famously asked in light of the Gospel: "How then shall we live?" If Jesus died and rose again out of love for us, *how then shall we live?*
2. 'If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation!' What changes a. in your behaviour, b. in your thoughts, c. in your attitude when you become a new creation?
3. 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (v. 21). Is there a better, more powerful way to describe what happened on the Cross than this? This is a verse worth memorizing.

**January 24** – 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

1. What does it look like when people receive God's grace in vain?
2. How do verses 4-10 compare to the image of Christianity proposed by 'health and wealth' Gospel preachers? What would you say to someone who says that 'if you believe hard enough, you'll have a *#blessed* life?'

**January 26** – 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

1. This passage is often used to say that believers should not get into relationships with non-believers and as a principle, that makes sense. How do we apply this though when one person in a marriage came to faith later or decided they wanted to invest more in their faith than their partner?
2. The words 'Therefore come out from them and be separate...' (6:17) played an important part in abolitionist thinking (See for example pg 24 of William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization*, available here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/31178/pg31178-images.html>). Garrison argued that true believers should leave churches who were willing to defend and even tolerate slavery. What issues today should we be willing to take a moral stand on?
3. How do we balance 'coming out and being separate' with 'being salt and light' in the world?

**January 29** – 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

1. Paul encourages us to grow in holiness. What motivates us to grow, according to Paul? (See verse 1).
2. What's the difference between 'godly sorrow' and 'worldly sorrow'?

**January 31** - 2 Corinthians 8:1-24

1. Once again, Paul insists (v. 9) that Jesus' actions should shape ours. How does Jesus' self-giving motivate our financial giving?
2. What principles does Paul establish here for missional giving?

3. Notice the lengths to which Paul went to ensure that their handling of money would be above reproach. Why can money be such a dangerous temptation within the church? Why do some church leaders avoid transparency in these areas?

**February 2** – 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

1. What principles does Paul establish here for giving?
2. How does Paul think God's generosity should impact ours?
3. How does generosity benefit God? How does generosity benefit those in need? How does generosity benefit us? (See especially vss. 12-14).