



AUGUST 2010 TEACHING PLANS

HERE'S THE CHURCH

BY SHARON HODDE MILLER

When it comes to the church, we all bring our own strengths and weaknesses. Our similarities may unify us as members of the body of Christ, but it's our differences that can bring refreshing variety to our lives and to our churches. When we work together, embracing and loving one another, the church functions as God intended.

Paul knew this, and that's one of the reasons he worked so hard to help the Corinthian church overcome its division. The Corinthians weren't divided as the result of disagreement. At its root, the division was caused by sin. The Corinthians had let the world seep in, and eventually their sin ate away at the core of their unity.

First and 2 Corinthians teach us that the way we live our lives is deeply connected to the community around us. We can't hope for unity if we aren't submitting our own lives to God. In 1 Corinthians Paul addressed the sin that infiltrated the church and explained how to squelch it. In 2 Corinthians Paul focused more on the relational healing that needed to take place as a result of the problems within the Corinthian community.

Corinth wasn't unlike our culture today, so the story of their church is a cautionary tale. As Christians today become more and more convinced that what they do only affects themselves, the story of Corinth warns us otherwise.

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: "Getting Started" helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. "Need to Knows" provide the lesson overview and key verses of each lesson. "Explore the Bible" leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. "Apply to Life" gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided (threadsmedia.com/collegiate) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons.

As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

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THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 44 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "TWICE AS GOOD" BY SARA GROVES FROM THE ALBUM *FIREFLIES AND SONGS*.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

These lesson passages are about Paul's conduct toward the Corinthians. The emphasis is on principles for exhibiting integrity amid imperfect relationships. The lesson encourages college students to live with integrity.

FOCAL PASSAGES

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7,8-11,12; 2:14-17



RELATIONSHIPS: THE INTEGRITY FACTOR

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Twice As Good" by Sara Groves playing in the background as students arrive.

- The word "integrity" is often used in a general way to describe a host of different positive attributes. What are some concrete characteristics of a person with integrity?
- What do you think it means to be a community of integrity?

Dictionary.com tells us that *integrity* is, "the adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty." However, this definition is relative to an individual's personal sense of morality and ethics. If a person values the environment, his or her sense of integrity is measured by actions such as recycling and living green. If a person values financial success, then his or her sense of integrity is measured by an ability to excel in the workplace. Similarly, your lifestyle and personal measure of integrity will show the world what you value and who you listen to. In 2 Corinthians Paul provides some of the chief markers of Gospel-centered integrity.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 44 in the Summer 2010 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a word study and a quote related to this topic.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 44 of the Summer 2010 *Collegiate* magazine.

1) LIVE FOR OTHERS

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵For as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so our comfort overflows through Christ. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is experienced in the endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will share in the comfort.

Have someone read “Live for Others” on page 44 of *Collegiate* magazine.

When we think of integrity we tend to think of a person who lives well, never lies, never hurts anyone, and so on. But Paul offered a much more proactive definition of integrity. Integrity isn’t simply the avoidance of doing bad. It’s the taking of initiative in doing good. In particular, a person of gospel-centered integrity can take difficult circumstances and use them for good.

- According to Paul, what’s one of the main reasons God comforts us during our own trials?
- How is Paul’s response different from most people’s responses to hardship?
- Why is it important that we respond to adversity this way? (For example, how does a positive response affect our witness? How does it affect our personal attitudes? How does it strengthen our community?)

2) LIVE IN GOD’S STRENGTH

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11.

⁸For we don’t want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in the province of Asia: we were completely overwhelmed — beyond our strength — so that we even despaired of life. ⁹However, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and He will deliver us; we have placed our hope in Him that He will deliver us again. ¹¹And you can join in helping with prayer for us, so that thanks may be given by many on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.

Have someone read “Live in God’s Strength” on page 44 of *Collegiate* magazine.

While it’s important to live for others, there’s a big difference between living for others and living for others’ approval. The main distinction between worldly integrity and Christian integrity is that one is measured by our relationships with others, while the other is measured by our relationship with God.

- What are some other things we rely on in the face of difficulty instead of God?
- How does our reliance on these things ultimately hurt ourselves and our community?
- What does reliance on God have to do with integrity?
- How does reliance on God counteract the culture of victimhood?

When we rely on ourselves, our friends, or our family more than we rely on God, we’re placing impossible expectations that set everyone up to fail. When this inevitable failure occurs, it creates insecurity in ourselves and bitterness toward others. We can’t love people well if we need them to satisfy us in ways they weren’t designed to satisfy. Relying on God instead of ourselves and others helps us treat everyone with the integrity of Christ. Remember, Jesus wouldn’t have been able to love and forgive us had He not known that His Father had a perfect plan.

3) LIVE SO GOD APPROVES

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12; 2:14-17.

¹²For our boast is this: the testimony of our conscience that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with God-given sincerity and purity, not by fleshly wisdom but by God’s grace.

.....
¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ, and spreads through us in every place the scent of knowing Him. ¹⁵For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶To some we are a scent of death leading to death, but to others, a scent of life leading to life. And who is competent for this? ¹⁷For we are not like the many who make a trade in God’s message for profit, but as those with sincerity, we speak in Christ, as from God and before God.

Have someone read “Live So God Approves” on page 45 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What are some “good” things Christians do for the wrong reasons?

Paul described Christians as being the “fragrance of Christ.”

- What do you think he meant by this phrase?
- What is the source of our fragrance? Is it our good deeds or something else?
- How might our good deeds fail to be a fragrance of Christ?

Fragrance works as a sign pointing back to its source, and the Christian life is to be the same. If we live for anyone but God, then our fragrance won’t lead people to Him. We will be little more than a fragrance for our own self-glory. That’s why we must live for God alone. Only then will we emit the sweet and perfect scent that entices people to Him.

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 46 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "LO THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE BREAKING" BY SANDRA MCCRACKEN FROM THE ALBUM *BY THY MERCY: INDELIBLE GRACE ACOUSTIC*.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about Paul's faithful service as an apostle despite several challenges, including that of his relationship with the Corinthians. The emphasis is on serving God faithfully amid Christian relationships that seem to be going nowhere. The lesson encourages college students to persevere in faithful service to God.

FOCAL PASSAGES

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6; 4:1-5,15-18; 5:9-10



RELATIONSHIPS: THE FAITHFULNESS FACTOR

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Lo the Storms of Life Are Breaking" by Sandra McCracken playing in the background as students arrive.

In 2006 recording artist Rihanna came out with a song titled "Unfaithful" in which she sang about her unfaithfulness to her boyfriend. In the song, she confessed she didn't want to betray her boyfriend but couldn't stop herself.

- Based on this song, as well as related themes in TV shows and movies, how do you think the world perceives faithfulness?
- Do you see the world's perception of faithfulness play out in negative ways?
- Do you think the world has had any influence on Christians in this regard?

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 46 in the Summer 2010 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for an additional Scripture passage to study.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 46 of the Summer 2010 *Collegiate* magazine.

1) RELY ON GOD

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6.

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or like some, do we need letters of recommendation to you or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized and read by everyone, ³since it is plain that you are Christ's letter, produced by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets but on tablets that are hearts of flesh. ⁴We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: ⁵not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. ⁶He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.

Have someone read “Rely on God” on page 46 of *Collegiate* magazine.

When it comes to difficult relationships, our faithfulness to friends and family isn't always interpreted the way we may intend. Sometimes our good intentions and caring gestures are misunderstood or rejected altogether. In response to these reactions, we must rely on God to defend us. As long as we can stand blameless before Him in our treatment of others, we can trust that He will help us navigate tough relationships.

That's exactly what Paul did with the Corinthians. In the above passage, Paul defended his ministry to the Corinthians by appealing to God's authority and not his own. In fact, Paul cited the Corinthians themselves as evidence of God's presence in his ministry. Their transformed lives were like letters of recommendation from Jesus on his behalf.

Spend some time reflecting on this analogy:

- Why did Paul need a “letter of recommendation” for the Corinthians to listen to him?
- In our own lives, what are our “letters of recommendation” to the world? In other words, what gives us credibility outside of ourselves?

2) STAND BY THE GOSPEL

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5.

¹Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not give up. ²Instead, we have renounced shameful secret things, not walking in deceit or distorting God's message, but in God's sight we commend ourselves to every person's conscience by an open display of the truth. ³But if, in fact, our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴Regarding them: the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus.

Have someone read “Stand by the Gospel” on page 46 of *Collegiate* magazine.

When asked what is the toughest thing for Christians to do in the world today, American theologian Stanley Hauerwas once replied, “Don't lie.” When faced with a difficult relationship, it's easy to take the path of least resistance. We're tempted to bend the truths of Scripture or walk away from the relationship altogether — anything to avoid confrontation.

Even if we choose to stick with a tough relationship, we aren't being faithful friends or Christians if we compromise God's teachings in the process. Both Paul and Hauerwas understood that the key to faithful Christian relationships is to renounce “shameful secret things, not walking in deceit or distorting God's message” (v. 2).

- Why is such a seemingly small thing like truthfulness so important to being a faithful Christian and friend?
- What happens if we hedge away a few things in the gospel? What are the consequences of changing parts of it that we don't like, even small parts, so that others are more likely to accept us?

Too often, Christians make little compromises in the way we teach and live out the gospel. However, when this happens we're neither faithful to the gospel nor our friends. Half the truth isn't really the truth at all; it's just a lie. That's why we must be uncompromising when it comes to the truth of the gospel.

3) CONCENTRATE ON THE ETERNAL

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:15-18.

¹⁵For all this is because of you, so that grace, extended through more and more people, may cause thanksgiving to overflow to God's glory. ¹⁶Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. ¹⁸So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Have someone read “Concentrate on the Eternal” on page 46 of *Collegiate* magazine.

In the midst of a difficult relationship, Paul encourages us to focus not on what is seen but what is unseen.

- In a tough relationship, what do we usually see first? What is obvious to us, and where do we tend to put our focus?
- What are the unseen elements of our Christian friendships? What are we tempted to overlook or ignore when things are difficult?



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

It's always tempting to let small things divide us rather than remember that Christ forever unites us. No disagreement or frustration can ever surpass the power of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. If the Holy Spirit unites us, then we shouldn't be distracted by the superficial problems that are only visible to the worldly eye. Focusing on the unseen will give us the perspective to persevere and remain faithful to our friendships.

4) ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:9-10.

⁹Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or bad.

Have someone read "Anticipate the Future" on page 47 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- **Why is it so difficult to wait on God's good timing? Why do we want Him to fix things right away?**
- **God doesn't work on our time line, but is there a reason for that? What could God be teaching us when He doesn't restore or fix a situation all at once?**

God wants us to trust Him with our relationships, but we won't trust Him if we're never given the opportunity to learn how. Through His promise of a future reward, we're given the opportunity to trust God in the present. Sometimes it's difficult to remain faithful to God, but many times there's a lesson behind that difficulty. It's a chance to grow closer to Him.

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 48 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "RESTORATION" BY WES WALTERS, FROM THE ALBUM *RESTORATION WORSHIP — EP*.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about Paul's concern for reconciliation with the Corinthians. The emphasis is on the importance of being reconciled with other believers. The lesson encourages college students to seek and receive reconciliation with grace.

FOCAL PASSAGES

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13, 14-16, 17-21; 6:1; 7:2-4



RELATIONSHIPS: THE FORGIVENESS FACTOR

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Restoration" by Wes Walters playing in the background as students arrive.

- What do you think makes forgiveness so difficult for people?
- What are people's motivations for withholding forgiveness?
- What can happen to a person over time if they refuse to forgive another person?

Forgiveness and reconciliation are challenging because they're counter-intuitive. We often assume we're somehow punishing a person by withholding forgiveness. In reality, we're only punishing ourselves. When unforgiveness and disunity are left to fester, they not only eat away at the person harboring them but also sow the seeds of destruction in their surrounding community as well. Knowing this threat, it's important to arm ourselves with the tools to fight it.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 48 in the Summer 2010 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a quote and a couple of word studies on forgiveness and reconciliation.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 48 of the Summer 2010 *Collegiate* magazine.

1) BE OPEN TO RECONCILIATION

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13

¹¹Knowing, then, the fear of the Lord, we persuade people. We are completely open before God, and I hope we are completely open to your consciences as well. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who take pride in the outward appearance rather than in the heart. ¹³For if we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we have a sound mind, it is for you.

Have someone read “Be Open to Reconciliation” on page 48 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Paul acknowledged that there’s some bad blood between him and the Corinthians, but he hoped to be “open to their consciences” as he sought reconciliation. What did he mean by this?
- Paul’s words imply an openness to accepting responsibility for anything he may have done wrong. Why is this an important step in reconciliation?

Paul approached the Corinthians in humility, knowing he wasn’t perfect and that some fault may have laid on his end. This is an important step in reconciliation because it forces us to take one step away from any feelings of self-righteousness we may be experiencing. Oftentimes a false sense of blamelessness stands between us and an openness to reconcile, so it’s important to tear down that barrier early on.

2) RESPOND IN CHRIST’S LOVE

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-16

¹⁴For Christ’s love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: if One died for all, then all died. ¹⁵And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised. ¹⁶From now on, then, we do not know anyone in a purely human way. Even if we have known Christ in a purely human way, yet now we no longer know Him like that.

Have someone read “Respond in Christ’s Love” on page 48 of *Collegiate* magazine.

When preaching on forgiveness, it’s common for pastors to focus on Christ’s forgiveness of you, and how you should therefore forgive others. However, Paul did something quite different. He focused on God’s forgiveness of the person who wrongs you.

- How should God’s forgiveness of the people who hurt us shape the ways in which we respond to them?
- Since Christ died “once and for all,” what does this tell us about the on-going nature of forgiveness? Does it make sense to bring up a past hurt later if we have forgiven the person?

When we refuse to forgive someone, we also refuse to acknowledge that Jesus died for his or her sins. The very thing that was done to hurt us has been nailed to the cross. If we still refuse to forgive someone, we live as if Christ’s death wasn’t punishment enough and that we must add to it.

3) REMEMBER GOD’S WORK IN CHRIST

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. ¹⁸Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ’s behalf, “Be reconciled to God.” ²¹He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Have someone read “Remember God’s Work in Christ” on page 48 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What does a refusal to be reconciled with another person say about our understanding of Christ’s forgiveness of us?
- What does Paul’s reminder that we’re a “new creation” (v. 17) have to do with forgiveness and reconciliation?
- How does forgiveness and reconciliation within the Christian community impact our witness to the world around us?

Rather than seeing reconciliation as a compromise or an obligation, we should see it as a tool. It’s not only the best way to restore the unity of a community, but it also blazes a powerful witness to the surrounding culture. Christ’s radical act of self-sacrifice stood out in our selfish world and compelled millions of people to follow Him. We have the same power to change people if we follow His example. In this way, reconciliation is a missional tool that sets us apart and grabs people’s attention.



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

4) A DECISION, NOT A FEELING

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1; 7:2-4

¹Working together with Him, we also appeal to you: "Don't receive God's grace in vain."

*.....
²Take us into your hearts. We have wronged no one, corrupted no one, defrauded no one. ³I don't say this to condemn you, for I have already said that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.*

⁴I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overcome with joy in all our afflictions.

Have someone read "A Decision, Not a Feeling" on page 49 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Based on how childish the Corinthians were acting, do you think Paul wanted to be reconciled with them?
- Why did Paul choose to be reconciled with them anyway?

After the genocides in Rwanda, the country instituted a policy of reconciliation. Throughout the nation, it's expected that no matter how many family members you lost or how much wrong you endured, you're to forgive those who hurt you.

- Why do you think the leaders in Rwanda made forgiveness into a policy?
- Do you think Christians should have a similar policy? Should we expect Christians to always reconcile and forgive?
- Does the Bible ever grant us any excuses to not forgive someone? Why?

Regardless of our feelings or how severe the wrong-doing, God expects us to forgive. This may not always reflect the way we feel, but it's not OK to seek vengeance for what someone else did. It's also a choice to not be ruled by

anger and bitterness. That's exactly why Rwanda chose a policy of reconciliation. They recognized that the only way to move forward from such a tragedy was not in vengeance but in forgiveness and peace.

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 50 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "A FRIEND IN THE WORLD" BY MATTHEW WEST FROM THE ALBUM *SOMETHING TO SAY*.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about the offering Paul was promoting among Gentile churches for those in the church in Jerusalem. The emphasis is on principles of ministry in distant, uneasy situations. The lesson encourages adults to minister to others in long-distance relationships.

FOCAL PASSAGES

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9; 9:1-2,7-8,12-15



BIBLE STUDY

2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-9:15 //
WEEK OF AUG. 22

RELATIONSHIPS: THE LONG-DISTANCE FACTOR

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "A Friend in the World" by Matthew West playing in the background as students arrive.

Long-distance relationships are very common in college but they're often tough to navigate.

- What makes long-distance relationships so hard?
- What causes these relationships to fail?
- What helps long-distance relationships to succeed?

Long-distance relationships can be difficult because it's easy to miscommunicate and hard to be attentive. The same is true of the larger church. We can easily forget about other Christians in the world or grow complacent in our relationships with them — just like a long-distance relationship. That's why Paul laid out several steps for maintaining a healthy "long-distance relationship" with the larger church to which we belong.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 50 in the Summer 2010 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a video to watch and a suggested missions opportunity.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 50 of the Summer 2010 *Collegiate* magazine.

1) BE GENEROUS

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-7.

¹We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God granted to the churches of Macedonia: ²during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity. ³I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability, ⁴they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, ⁵and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God’s will. ⁶So we urged Titus that, just as he had begun, so he should also complete this grace to you. ⁷Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—excel also in this grace.

Have someone read “Be Generous” on page 50 of *Collegiate* magazine.

In the above passage, Paul told the Corinthians about the church of Macedonia, a group of Christians whose generosity wasn’t limited by their own poverty and difficult circumstances.

- Statistics show that the poor in America are some of the most generous givers in our country. Why is it so difficult for wealthier Americans to part with their money?
- Despite their own poverty, the Macedonian church “begged” to give their money away. Why do you think they felt this urgency, given that they could’ve certainly used the money themselves?

2) BE LOVING

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:8-9.

⁸I am not saying this as a command. Rather, by means of the diligence of others, I am testing the genuineness of your love. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: although He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich.

Have someone read “Be Loving” on page 50 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Paul stated that our willingness to reach across barriers and befriend people who are different than us is an indicator of the “genuineness” of our love. Why does this particular behavior reveal whether our love is genuine?
- What kind of love is Paul talking about? Love for God or love for others?

ALSO READ 1 JOHN 3:18.

- Why can the first kind of love be less effective than the second?
- What are some of the ways Christians love in word but not in deed?

Like a bad long-distance relationship, we should never say we love our Christian brothers and sisters while failing to show it with our actions. Rather than being content to merely say the right words, it’s important that we take action to love other Christians who need us.

3) BE EAGER

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-2,7-8.

¹Now concerning the ministry to the saints, it is unnecessary for me to write to you. ²For I know your eagerness, and I brag about you to the Macedonians: “Achaia has been prepared since last year,” and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

.....
⁷Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not out of regret or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.

Have someone read “Be Eager” on page 50 of *Collegiate* magazine.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that their initial offer to help the suffering Macedonian church was so encouraging that it spawned generosity in the Macedonian community as well. However, Paul urged the Corinthians to follow through on their initial enthusiasm. He didn’t want their eagerness to be proven fake. While enthusiasm is important, it should also be genuine.

- Do you think Christians ever struggle to be genuinely enthusiastic in their love for others? (Example: Do Christians ever paint on a smile but have no intention of following up in people’s lives?)
- How do we overcome this false enthusiasm?
- Is it possible to generate authentic enthusiasm in ourselves? Can it be forced?

It’s important to remember that we shouldn’t be eager for eagerness’ sake. We should be enthusiastic about loving people because we really love them. This isn’t something that can be forced, but we can influence our hearts by spending time in the Word and with God. We can’t change our hearts, but God can.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

4) BE OPTIMISTIC

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:12-15.

¹²For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God. ¹³Through the proof of this service, they will glorify God for your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with others. ¹⁴And in their prayers for you they will have deep affection for you because of the surpassing grace of God on you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.

Have someone read “Be Optimistic” on page 51 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- In the above passage, Paul told the Corinthians that their ministry should overflow with many acts of thanksgiving to God. We don’t often think of “thanksgiving” as a form of ministry. What do you think Paul meant by this?
- How does pessimism or a bad attitude prevent Christians from doing what they should?



THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 52 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "WHAT DO I KNOW OF HOLY" BY ADDISON ROAD FROM THE ALBUM *ADDISON ROAD*.
- COPIES OF THE FALL 2010 *COLLEGIATE* TO DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR STUDENTS.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about Paul's answers to his critics in Corinth. The emphasis is on principles for seeking to improve relationships that are lacking. The lesson encourages college students to develop skills to improve their relationships.

FOCAL PASSAGES

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-3,15-18; 12:14-21



RELATIONSHIPS: THE IMPROVEMENT FACTOR

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "What Do I Know of Holy" by Addison Road playing in the background as students arrive.

- What does our culture think about imposing one's beliefs on another person?
- Do you think accountability is the same thing as imposing your beliefs on another person?
- How might accountability be a way to separate ourselves from the surrounding culture?

In decades past, the one verse most Americans could quote was John 3:16, "For God loved the world ..." Today, most Americans, metaphorically, know a different verse, Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge ..." Our culture reacts strongly against any form of moral accountability, which is why we're often so hesitant to enhance it. Fortunately, Paul concludes with some tips on how to approach a friend in accountability.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 52 in the Summer 2010 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for some verses to check out and an article to read.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the session on page 52 of the Summer 2010 *Collegiate* magazine.

1) APPROACH COURAGEOUSLY

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-3.

¹Now I, Paul, make a personal appeal to you by the gentleness and graciousness of Christ—I who am humble among you in person, but bold toward you when absent. ²I beg you that when I am present I will not need to be bold with the confidence by which I plan to challenge certain people who think we are walking in a fleshly way. ³For although we are walking in the flesh, we do not wage war in a fleshly way,

Have someone read “Approach Courageously” on page 52 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Paul draws a parallel between accountability and “waging war.” What war is he talking about?
- What does accountability have to do with fighting this war?
- How does the wartime imagery influence the urgency with which we approach accountability?

2) ENGAGE GOD’S WORK

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 10:15-18.

¹⁵We are not bragging beyond measure about other people’s labors. But we have the hope that as your faith increases, our area of ministry will be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel to the regions beyond you, not boasting about what has already been done in someone else’s area of ministry. ¹⁷So the one who boasts must boast in the Lord. ¹⁸For it is not the one commending himself who is approved, but the one the Lord commends.

Have someone read “Engage God’s Work” on page 52 of *Collegiate* magazine.

Here Paul pinpointed one of the main consequences of sin and division in the church: inaction. There’s no fruit. There’s no ministry. He hopes restoration will lead to greater ministry opportunities.

- Does this mean that someone struggling in sin should cover it up by staying involved in a lot of ministry activities? Obviously not, so what’s Paul saying?
- How does involvement in ministry act as a natural form of accountability?

ALSO READ PROVERBS 21:25.

- What is this verse saying?
- Why is free time or complacency with our schedules so dangerous in the face of temptation?

We should never immerse ourselves in ministry solely to cover up our sin. If we do, then both our relationship with God and our ministry will suffer. However, it’s important to look at our schedules and see how we’re using our time. What are the temptations, and when are we most tempted to fall into them? Examine how we can combat those temptations actively, and how we can help one another in the process.

3) DECLARE ANY CONCERNS

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-18.

¹⁴Look! I am ready to come to you this third time. I will not burden you, for I am not seeking what is yours, but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? ¹⁶Now granted, I have not burdened you; yet sly as I am, I took you in by deceit! ¹⁷Did I take advantage of you by anyone I sent you? ¹⁸I urged Titus to come, and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Didn’t we walk in the same spirit and in the same footsteps?

Have someone read “Declare Any Concerns” on page 52 of *Collegiate* magazine.

As Paul explained his concerns, he also explained his intentions to the Corinthians. He never sought to take advantage of or manipulate them. Instead, he always laid himself down for them time and time again.

- Why was it important for Paul to point out this track record as he declared his concerns?
- How does Paul’s example direct us when we seek to hold others accountable?

While it’s very important to declare your concerns and be clear, you must also consider the source.

- Have you been a good friend on a consistent basis? Have you sacrificed for others? Have you given them any reason to believe that you’re seeking to manipulate them or act self-righteously?

Accountability isn’t what takes place in a single moment when we declare our concern. It comes out of an environment of trust and fellowship that you’ve fostered over time. The question is — are you creating that environment in your friendships right now so that when the time comes to declare concerns, you can do so with credibility?

4) SEEK TO STRENGTHEN

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:19-21.

¹⁹You have thought all along that we were defending ourselves to you. No, in the sight of God we are speaking in Christ, and everything, dear friends, is for building you up. ²⁰For I fear that perhaps when I come I will not find you to be what I want, and I may not be found by you to be what you want; there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions,



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come my God will again humiliate me in your presence, and I will grieve for many who sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, sexual immorality, and promiscuity they practiced.

Have someone read “Seek to Strengthen” on page 53 of *Collegiate* magazine.

Throughout the 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul was forced to defend his credibility. However, in verse 19 he claimed none of this was about defending himself to them.

- **How do we make a distinction between building the case for our own credibility and getting defensive? Are the two different?**
- **Paul also says, “everything ... is for building you up” (v. 19). Do you think he meant that literally?**
- **Was he promoting a model of friendship in which we only do and say things that build one another up? Is that even realistic?**

Before ever writing to the Corinthians, Paul laid the groundwork for his case. He spent years teaching them faithfully and suffering for their sake. His defense had nothing to do with pride, but was a gentle reminder of his obvious love for them.

Knowing this, it’s not unrealistic to assume Paul was speaking literally when he said “everything” was for building them up. If you’re about to say something to another person that you can’t safely deem to be edifying, then don’t say it. Accountability can only work properly when we foster an environment in which we’re constantly seeking to build one another up.

