



# 2 CORINTHIANS



Practical, Easy-To-Use Devotionals Made for Families.

*1 & 2 Corinthians*



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Practical, Easy-To-Use Devotionals Made for Families.



# BOOK SUMMARY

..... **2 CORINTHIANS**

# 2 CORINTHIANS



## OVERVIEW & SETTING

2 Corinthians is the second letter we have from the Apostle Paul to the people of the church in Corinth. (To hear more about who Paul is, turn to the end of the Book Summary.) Though it's the second letter we have in the Bible, it seems he wrote several letters to them. Paul was addressing serious problems in this church of people he knew well.

Paul went to Corinth on his third missionary journey (Acts 18), and he spent about a year and a half there, talking to people about the good news of Jesus. Many people believed, and Paul helped them start a church. Then he went on to another city to share the gospel with even more people. After a while, he received word that things weren't going so well back in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11).

He started to write them letters. He tried to help them see how the things they were doing were hurtful and wrong. He explained how the gospel (the good news of Jesus) affected every area of their lives--especially the parts where they were having problems. He talked to them about love, unity, and keeping respectful order in the church. He reminded them about the wisdom of God and the power of the Holy Spirit (who is God living in us!). Unfortunately, many of the Corinthians seem to have rebelled against Paul and what he said in that letter! Someone led them to question his authority as a real apostle of Christ! They began to reject him as their teacher!

So, Paul visited them to confront them about it face to face. This is like a surgeon being willing to do whatever it takes to heal someone who's really sick. He calls this experience the "painful visit" (2 Corinthians 2:1). Even after that, he had to send them ANOTHER letter written with "anguish and tears" to help them see the truth! That's real determination and love (2 Corinthians 2:3-4)! Finally, a good number of the Corinthians repented. They had been wrong, and they knew it. So, they wrote to Paul asking his forgiveness and telling him that they wanted to reconcile (heal the relationship).

2 Corinthians is Paul's letter in response, telling them he welcomed them and loved them! He wanted his next visit to them to be a peaceful and beautiful one. (FYI, 2 Corinthians came probably about a year after 1 Corinthians.)





# 2 CORINTHIANS



## THEMES

What was the problem that had gone on so long? Through different parts of the letter, we find out that the Corinthians had begun to look down on Paul because he wasn't as impressive as some of the newer fancier "Christian teachers" they'd met. They had become embarrassed that Paul was their teacher because he wasn't as wealthy or as good with words as the new teachers. He humbly worked with his hands to make a living (instead of receiving money from them). They believed that they'd come across something better, smarter, more impressive-- even more spiritual. Because of the influence of these newer teachers, their ideas about Jesus, what He promises us, and what He calls us to do with our lives had been changing (not for the good)!

Many in the church saw how wrong they were and asked forgiveness. But some did not. Paul addresses this situation (with a little sarcasm) in the last chapters of the letter. Paul spends the early part thanking God for the way He's comforted him and the Corinthians when their relationship was rocky. Paul shows them how a life modeled after Jesus' self-giving

love (a cross-shaped life) is the path to glory in God's Kingdom. Maybe we think glory comes from being impressive. But that's not God's way! To Him, the greatest among us will be those who serve. Paul shows them how his own life is based on mirroring Jesus' humility. Like Jesus, he's willing to suffer so he can bless others. That means that when some of the Corinthians reject Paul because of his low status, they're kind of rejecting Jesus, too! Yikes!

Finally, Paul calls the Corinthians to share with those in Jerusalem who are suffering. He talks a lot about how God wants us to share with others in His family and the blessing that comes to us because of it.

## HOW TO USE

2 Corinthians has a lot to say to us about the cross-shaped life. It talks about humility, generosity, and unity. It shows us God's way of greatness and how it's different from how we usually think. It tells us how the Holy Spirit changes us and how each of us will one day give an account to God for the lives we lived here on Earth. 2 Corinthians also reminds us to hold tightly to the truth about Jesus—even when something that seems easier or more popular to believe comes along. This letter stresses the importance of peace and truth in God's family.



# 2 CORINTHIANS



## WHO IS PAUL?

Paul is a man that God used to start many churches you'll read about in the New Testament. In fact, thirteen of the New Testament books are letters that Paul wrote (often along with his co-workers) to those churches. He wrote words of encouragement, instruction, correction, and comfort for times when they suffered.

Paul was probably just a few years younger than Jesus. He grew up in a big city called Tarsus (in modern-day Turkey). It was one of the intellectual hot spots of its day. Paul's family was Jewish, so he learned the Scriptures (at that time, the Old Testament) from a very young age. He could likely recite parts of it by the time he was five!

Paul was very serious about the traditions of Judaism (that's another word for the Jewish religion). So, he went through training with one of the top rabbis of his day: Gamaliel. (In Acts 5, you can read the story of how God used Gamaliel's influential wisdom to rescue some of the disciples from death!) Paul likely moved to Jerusalem when he was only 13 to study with his famous teacher.

Paul rose through the ranks really quickly. He tells us in Philippians 3, Acts 22, and Galatians 1 that he was advancing faster than his classmates because of his zeal. He became a Pharisee like his teacher. The Pharisees were a special group within Judaism that emphasized religious purity and keeping the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament).

It's very possible that Paul was in Jerusalem

when Jesus was tried and crucified, and it's very likely that he agreed (at that time) with what happened. How do we know? 1) Paul was a Pharisee, and most of the Pharisees (mistakenly) felt that Jesus wasn't keeping the laws of Judaism! They thought He was leading the people astray. It seems that what the Pharisees were actually bothered by was losing control. Many people were believing in Jesus and not listening to them anymore! Jesus was a threat to their power. 2) When the church began to meet after Jesus' resurrection, there's a sad story (in Acts 7) about a man named Stephen who was killed by the same Jewish supreme court that had sentenced Jesus to die. Who does it say stood by and held their coats so they could kill Stephen? A young man named "Saul." Saul was Paul's Hebrew name. Paul was his Greek/Roman name. It was common in those days for people to have both. Acts 8:1 tells us Saul approved of Stephen's death.

After Stephen's death, Paul began to hunt down the Christians to try to stop them from worshipping Jesus—even if that meant doing them physical harm. It seems he thought he was serving God. But as he was on his way to Damascus to find the Christians there, Jesus stopped Paul dead in his tracks! (Acts 9). Jesus blinded Paul for a time with a bright light and asked him why he was persecuting Him (harming and harassing Him for spiritual reasons). In a flash, Paul understood that Jesus really is God! He also realized that the Church is God's family and that when they hurt, He hurts!





## WHO IS PAUL?

As the story goes on, we find out that God has chosen Paul to carry the message of Jesus, the true God, to the Gentiles (those who aren't Jews). The kind of Judaism that Paul had grown up with didn't approve of associating with Gentiles. So, it was quite a surprise to EVERYBODY when Paul began to follow Christ (and eventually serve the Gentiles). Many didn't believe his faith was real. They were scared of him. But within days, God was using Paul's knowledge of the Old Testament to persuade others of the truth about Jesus in the Scriptures!

God took all the parts of Paul's background: his training in the Old Testament Law, his Roman citizenship (which came with privileges and protections he would need along the way), the zeal (enthusiasm) of his heart, and even his training as a tent-maker to advance the gospel (the good news about Jesus). From then on, Paul served, loved, and lived for Jesus.

Paul's life was often full of danger and suffering (like being shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, thrown in prison, insulted, and chased out of town)—but it was also full of the glory and privilege of seeing God work! God used Paul to perform miracles like healing people and even raising someone from the dead! It was God's power that did these amazing things, but Paul got a front-row seat!

God used him to parent many people spiritually. He told them about God's love, coached them in their new faith, wrote them letters with important encouragement and instruction, and trained and appointed many of the church's early leaders! God gave Paul both boldness and kindness. He was brave, focused on others and his God-given task, and a beloved friend to many. You can read about

some of the scenes of Paul's life in the book of Acts. His story is intertwined with the story of the Church and the gospel.

How did Paul die? Though the New Testament doesn't tell us exactly, it seems that Paul was executed in Rome shortly after he wrote 2 Timothy. He was likely in his early 60's. He was probably about 30 when Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus and called him to faith. So, Paul walked with Jesus in this life for almost 30 years.

What did Paul look like? We don't really know, but he's traditionally portrayed as a little bit short, balding, bow-legged, and with a bit of a crooked or long nose.

One thing is for sure! God used this man to do mighty things, and we'll get to meet him one day in Jesus' presence!





# READING PLAN

..... **2 CORINTHIANS**



# 2 CORINTHIANS



## FAMILY READING PLAN

our family name

### ○ Chapter 1

God Offers Comfort In Trials And Paul Explains His Change Of Plans

### ○ Chapter 2

Forgiving And Offense And Paul As The Servant Messenger Of Christ

### ○ Chapter 3

Paul's Proof Of Authority And The Glory Of Knowing God Through The Spirit

### ○ Chapter 4

The Glory Of The Gospel In Our Suffering

### ○ Chapter 5

The Hope We Have Even In Death And The Ministry Of Pointing Others To Christ

### ○ Chapter 6

Paul's Witness Is Proved Authentic And A Call To Holy Living

### ○ Chapter 7

Paul Is So Glad They've Returned To The Truth. Their Relationship Is Restored.

### ○ Chapter 8

An Invitation To The Grace Of Giving And The Wisdom Of Doing Things Rightly

### ○ Chapter 9

The Time To Give Joyfully And The Blessings That Follow

### ○ Chapter 10

Fighting Spiritual Battles In Spiritual Ways And Paul Works To Restore Trust

### ○ Chapter 11

Paul Defends His Choice Not To Take Payment And Shows The False Teachers As False

### ○ Chapter 12

Paul's Experience From The Lord And A Last Call To Them To Trust Him

### ○ Chapter 13

Closing Remarks And Well-Wishes





# FAMILY JOURNALS

..... 2 CORINTHIANS

God Offers Comfort In Trials And Paul Explains His Change Of Plans

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

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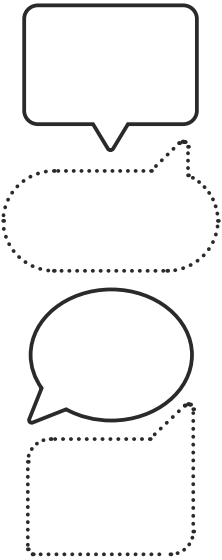
WORTH A NOTE

In this chapter, Paul helps us see how he thinks about suffering! What do we learn about comfort in vs. 3-5? How can God use our suffering? Look at v9. What effect did Paul's suffering produce in him? How had prayer been a part of Paul's story of God's help (v11)?

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

Diagram with three vertical columns and a horizontal line at the top, intended for notes on key points.

**FAV WORDS**



**A place for thoughts** *(write or draw)*

Large grey rectangular area for writing thoughts or reflections.

**This story inspired me to...**

**BACKSTORY**

Remember that some of the Corinthians had been deceived into questioning Paul's authority, character, and teaching, so he had to confront them about it. While many had returned to right thinking and wanted the relationship to be restored, others were still against him. In vs. 12-24, Paul answers an accusation that he had been "fickle" (not sticking to his word). In this section, he explains why he made the choices he did. (Hint: it is for THEM!) We'll get more clues about the situation in the next chapter! [In v1, what does Paul call himself? "Apostle" means "sent one." It usually refers to Jesus' twelve close disciples plus Paul.]



Forgiving And Offense And Paul As The Servant Messenger Of Christ

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

**FAV WORDS**









A place for thoughts *(write or draw)*

This story inspired me to...

**WORTH A NOTE**

(vs. 1-11) In between 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul apparently had to write a stern letter to his friends. What was his motive (v 4)? Sometimes, when someone is stuck in bad patterns, the most loving thing we can do is help them see it. Paul had visited them (the “painful visit” (v1)), and he had written them letters. Vs. 5-11: While Paul was away from Corinth, someone had stirred up trouble and opposed Paul to the congregation! At first, it seems that the Corinthians went along with it! But after Paul’s stern letter, many changed their minds. The man was disciplined. How does Paul want them to treat him now (v7)? Does Paul forgive him (v10)? Why does Paul say forgiveness is important (v11)? Is there someone you need to forgive?

**HISTORY**

(vs. 12-17) Paul begins to talk about how he views his life as a messenger of the good news about Jesus! The picture he provides is a Roman victory parade in which captives parade in front of the victorious general’s chariot. Paul is a captive of the Lord—happily conquered by His grace for the sake of His love and His mission.



Paul's Proof Of Authority And The Glory Of Knowing God Through The Spirit

SUMMARY (write or draw)

WHAT STOOD OUT

FAV WORDS

Four horizontal dotted lines for writing.

HIGHLIGHT

(vs. 1-6) Someone had come among the Corinthians and challenged Paul's credibility (his word and authority). It seems that his opponent(s) had produced letters supposedly vouching for them as teachers. What does Paul say is the letter of his credibility (vs. 1-3)? In vs. 4-6, from where does Paul say his competence (ability to do what's asked of him) comes? The same is true for us. Where do we get our strength to share God's word, serve others, follow Christ, and live our lives victoriously?

BACKSTORY

(vs. 7-17) Moses was one of the heroes of Old Testament history! God worked through him to set up the Old Covenant (including the ten commandments). (A "covenant" is a special relationship contract.) When God spoke with Moses on Mt. Sinai, Moses' face glowed because of God's glory. He had to cover his face because the people were so shocked! Here, Paul talks about the glory that shines in and on us because we have an even better covenant made by Jesus and carried out by His Spirit. What's happening to us, according to v18? (Note: What happens where the Spirit is (v17)?) What part of this is most meaningful to you?

A place for thoughts (write or draw)

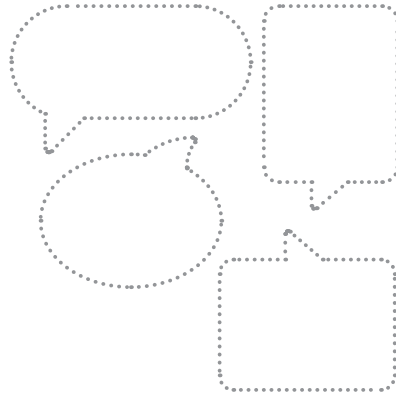
This story inspired me to...



The Glory Of The Gospel In Our Suffering

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**FAV WORDS**



**A place for thoughts**  
*(write or draw)*

**RESPONSE**

This is such a powerful chapter! Read vs. 1-12 slowly, paying attention to the details. There are two big themes: the truth that Paul proclaims plainly (this is the “treasure” that’s in his clay jar!) and the suffering that God has given him the strength to endure. If you have time, write vs. 7-11 by hand. What stands out to you now that you’ve gone word-by-word through it? What surprises you about what Paul is saying? (If you’re short on time, pick one verse to write out and think on.)

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

This story inspired me to...

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**PICK ONE**

There are incredible promises in vs. 13-18! Pick one of them and write it out in your own handwriting. Take a few minutes to think about how that sentence relates to the others in this section and to Paul’s overall train of thought. What makes this verse special to you? Consider memorizing this verse or sentence.

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The Hope We Have Even In Death And The Ministry Of Pointing Others To Christ

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**PICK ONE**

There are some powerful truths in vs. 11-21! Read these verses slowly. Pick one or two to write out word for word. Why is that one in particular important to you? Consider memorizing it!

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

**FAV WORDS**

**A place for thoughts** *(write or draw)*

**This story inspired me to...**

**RESPONSE**

In chapters one and four, we learned that Paul had been in danger and distress. Now we find out what gives him hope even in the face of death. In vs. 1-10, Paul (who was a tentmaker!) uses a word picture to help us understand that

- 1) Believers will have a home even when they leave their physical, earthly bodies
- 2) They'll go right to the presence of God
- 3) The Holy Spirit's presence is given to us as a promise that He will do EVERYTHING He said! Praise! Make a list from vs. 1-10 of each thing that stands out to you. How could these truths impact your life? [Note: The judgment seat of Christ is about a reward for how we've lived. We're always *saved—forgiven and made new—*by His grace alone!]



Paul's Witness Is Proved Authentic And A Call To Holy Living

SUMMARY (write or draw)

Large empty rectangular box for writing or drawing a summary.

WHAT STOOD OUT

Three circles: the first and third are dotted lines, the middle one is a solid line.

FAV WORDS

Decorative banner with speech bubble icons and the text 'FAV WORDS'.

A place for thoughts (write or draw)

This story inspired me to...

HIGHLIGHT

(vs. 1-12) A believer's strongest evidence for the truth of Jesus is the life he or she lives! No one will listen to our words if our lives don't point to God's goodness, too. Remember that someone had accused Paul of lacking integrity or authority. To re-strengthen his bond with the Corinthians, he's going to show them he's the real thing! He's called an "apostle" by the will of God (Ch. 1), his "letter of authenticity" is written right into their lives (Ch. 3), his role as an ambassador of Christ is secure (Ch. 5)—and now his endurance of suffering for the gospel proves his love for Christ is REAL. What had Paul experienced? (read slowly and carefully) What was he asking the Corinthians to do in response? (v13)

WORTH A NOTE

(vs. 14-18) These verses are about a call to live a holy life. The Corinthians had previously had a problem living like unbelievers. Paul may know their consciences still aren't clear about something. This passage isn't saying that Christians shouldn't be friends with those who don't believe in Jesus. It means that we shouldn't be involved in activities or close relationships that influence us away from Jesus.



Paul Is So Glad They've Returned To The Truth. Their Relationship Is Restored.

### SUMMARY *(write or draw)*

### WHAT STOOD OUT

### FAV WORDS

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### WORTH A NOTE

(vs. 8-11) Paul outlines a profound truth in these verses. There are two kinds of sadness over our sin: 1) There's godly sorrow where we're willing to see what we did wrong and turn away from it. We admit it to God and others. We're forgiven, and God sets us free to keep moving! 2) There's worldly sorrow that refuses to admit fault and leaves us with bitterness and deep regrets. We beat ourselves up inside, or we accuse others of being the whole problem.

### A place for thoughts *(write or draw)*

### HIGHLIGHT

Often when our relationships with people are out of sorts, we feel anxiety, sadness, fear, and desperate for hope that everything will turn out okay.

In this chapter, we see how HUGELY RELIEVED Paul felt when he heard from Titus that the Corinthians had received his "severe letter" and believed the truth about Paul and themselves. Their relationship was made right because Paul took the proper steps to reach out to them. Is there anyone you need to reach out to make a relationship right?

### This story inspired me to...



An Invitation To The Grace Of Giving And The Wisdom Of Doing Things Rightly

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**RESPONSE**

(vs. 1-15) What was the grace that God had given the Macedonians? (FYI, if you read "Philippians" in your Bible, you're reading a letter to a church that was in Macedonia!) Hint: the answer is in v2. When God causes generosity to well up in our hearts and moves us to give, that's His grace at work in us. He's shaping our hearts to look like His! Did the Macedonians give because they were forced or pressured? Paul allows the Corinthians to share in this grace, too. There were believers in Jerusalem who were suffering. What is Paul's (and the Lord's) goal? (vs. 13-15) Take a moment to write the answer in your own words.

**A place for thoughts**  
*(write or draw)*

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

**This story inspired me to...**

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**HIGHLIGHT**

Read vs. 16-24. In v21, what does Paul say they're taking pains to do? We must do what's right. We strive to live honorably so that others know they can trust us and the God who guides us. It speaks highly of God when His people live humbly, lovingly, and rightly. Is there anything God is leading you to change about your life right now?



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The Time To Give Joyfully And The Blessings That Follow

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

HIGHLIGHT

(v1) The Corinthians had eagerly promised to help the believers in Jerusalem by taking up a collection. The time to collect the money had come! Paul would be arriving soon to visit them and pick up the gift for the church in Jerusalem. Look at vs. 5-7. What do you learn about the heart the Lord longs to see in our giving? Can you think of a time that you gave to someone with joy in your heart? Is there anyone God wants you to help now?

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

**FAV WORDS**

**A place for thoughts** *(write or draw)*

**This story inspired me to...**

**WORTH A NOTE**

What promises does God make to the Corinthians about giving? (vs. 8-11) Write about it in "A place for your thoughts." v13 tells us some of what can happen when we allow God's resources to flow to others when they need them—who will they praise? Because all things come from God, praise rightly goes to Him (even when He uses another person to offer us help). How have you seen God meet your needs? Make a list of at least ten things and give him thanks!



Fighting Spiritual Battles In Spiritual Ways And Paul Works To Restore Trust

SUMMARY (write or draw)

Large empty rectangular box for writing or drawing a summary.

WHAT STOOD OUT

Three circles: the first and third are dotted lines, the middle one is a solid line.

FAV WORDS

A horizontal bar with speech bubble icons at each end and a central box for writing favorite words.

BACKSTORY

(vs. 1-2) It's important to remember that Paul was trying to pull his friends out of a very deep pit of lies that they'd been dragged into by false teachers. Those other teachers said that Paul wasn't a real apostle and that the Corinthians shouldn't listen to him. The first line shows us the sorts of things Paul had to fight against so that he could teach them the TRUTH. Skip ahead and read vs. 6-18. What are Paul's main points?

RESPONSE

Verses 3-5 are POWERFUL. If you're a follower of Jesus, these verses contain truth that is every bit as real for you as it was for the Corinthians. Ephesians 6 tells us that our real battle is never against people, but it's against spiritual forces that tempt us to do evil and make us doubt God. Make a list of what you learn in this passage. Record it in "A Place for Your Thoughts." [Note: a stronghold is a place where the enemy has gathered strength.]

A place for thoughts (write or draw)

This story inspired me to...





Paul Defends His Choice Not To Take Payment And Shows The False Teachers As False

SUMMARY (write or draw)

WHAT STOOD OUT

FAV WORDS

Dotted lines for writing favorite words.

BACKSTORY

Paul sets up a comparison between himself and the false teachers in this section. He isn't bragging—he's helping the Corinthians recognize the truth and trust him! He even gets a little sassy in vs. 19-21! (In Acts 9:23-25, you can read the story Paul mentions in v33.)

WORTH A NOTE

There are a few verses in this chapter that help clarify what Paul is trying to share. Look at v3 and vs. 12-15. What do you think was the problem? Take a moment to talk about it. Evidently, the false teachers tried to use Paul's refusal of payment as proof that he wasn't a real apostle! But they were taking people's money and lying to them (even about spiritual things)! Now go back and read vs. 1-15 to get the whole flow of thought. (In v8, Paul doesn't mean he literally stole from the church. He's using dramatic speech to explain that he received money from another church to fund his work in Corinth.)

A place for thoughts (write or draw)

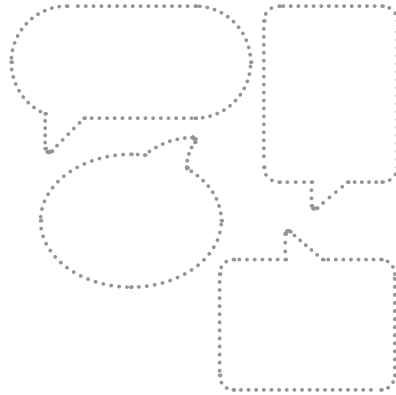
This story inspired me to...



Paul's Experience From The Lord And A Last Call To Them To Trust Him

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**FAV WORDS**



**HIGHLIGHT**

(vs.11-21) Paul's whole point is to prepare them for his visit. He wants the ones with hard hearts to return to trusting him as a spiritual father—as a real apostle of Jesus whose guidance, love, and teaching could be believed. He wants them to leave behind all the sin he wrote them about.

**A place for thoughts**  
*(write or draw)*

**This story inspired me to...**

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**WHAT STOOD OUT**

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**FUN FACT**

(vs. 1-10) The Corinthians demanded that their teachers prove themselves, so Paul reveals a secret that he's kept for a very long time. (v2 - How long had it been?) That experience of the Lord was so powerful and special, and Paul's humility about it was so great that he chose to speak about it only in the third person (he/him, instead of I/me). What did God give Paul to keep him humble (vs. 7-9)? Paul had a very difficult ministry—he was often suffering. It seems that God may have given Paul this special experience of Himself to reassure him and strengthen him for all he would endure. What did the Lord say to Paul (v9)? He says the same to all of us who know Jesus!



Closing Remarks And Well-Wishes

**SUMMARY** *(write or draw)*

**WORTH A NOTE**

(vs. 1-10) What does Paul ask his friends to do in this final part of the letter? (v 5, 11). Why do you think those things were important (based on all you've learned about the Corinthians situation)? Write about it in "A Place For Your Thoughts."

**WHAT STOOD OUT**

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**FAV WORDS**

**A place for thoughts** *(write or draw)*

This story inspired me to...

**RESPONSE**

(vs. 11-14) [Fun Fact: A holy kiss (v12) was pretty much like a handshake in those days. It wasn't anything romantic.] As you wrap up this letter, what would you say it's about? Can you explain some of the problems the Corinthians had been having? How can you put v11 into practice? As you look back through the Family Journal pages, what stands out to you as something you'd like to remember? Take a moment to talk about it. Make a plan for how you'll keep some of these things in mind (sticky notes, reminders on the fridge, etc.).

