

True Discipleship

2 Corinthians 1 – 7

by James Hughes



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True Discipleship: 2 Corinthians 1 – 7
A good book guide
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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the 'big picture' of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

-  **Talkabout:** most groups need to 'break the ice' at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
-  **Investigate:** the Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes  additional 'follow-up' questions.
-  **Explore more (optional):** these questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw.
-  **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. Some of these have questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. Sometimes a  **getting personal** section is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
-  **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study *True Discipleship?*

'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God...'

2 Corinthians 5 v 17-18

Many of the problems in our churches today are the same things that the Corinthians struggled with. Problems with pride and arrogance, with misunderstanding the gospel, with thinking that the Christian life is more about health, wealth and happiness than about suffering and persevering through difficulties to reach glory.

Just like the Corinthians, we get stuck in the here and now, and forget about eternity. Like them, we are more impressed by fame and fortune than by faithfulness to Jesus Christ. We too struggle when life gets hard, and would love life to be a prosperous bed of roses. We would love to be strong, but know that we are weak—fragile clay pots that are filled with the immense treasure of God's grace.

So Paul's letter speaks to us as it spoke to them—about the way of true discipleship. And the reality he paints is not for the faint-hearted. Because it involves suffering as well as comfort. It means listening to hard truth as well as receiving and enjoying forgiveness. It involves dying to ourselves and the world, as well as living for the Lord.

All these issues and much more are covered in this Good Book Guide, where we'll look at the first seven chapters of 2 Corinthians over nine sessions. So read on, as together we get to grips with what it means to live as true disciples—God's 'new creation' in the old creation that is passing away.



2 Corinthians 1 v 1-11

SUFFERING AND COMFORT

God's work in our troubles



introduction

▶ Read 2 Corinthians 1 v 1-2

In 2 Corinthians Paul writes to the church in Corinth. It's a church he's close to—he has already written them at least one letter (1 Corinthians) and spent 18 months there (see Acts 18 v 1-18). Paul has already said some challenging things to the Corinthians, and there are more in this letter, but he begins with a greeting.

Notice how Paul writes to the church in Corinth, and also to the saints or believers in Achaia. The things he needed to say to the Corinthians would also be relevant for other Christians in a large part of what is now modern-day Greece.

As we read 2 Corinthians, we're reading a letter Paul wrote nearly 2000 years ago. But we are also reading a letter written to us. That's why we're going to spend time seeking to understand it, and applying it to our lives.



talkabout

1. Think about some of the difficult situations you have faced in life (eg: work, relationships, money, ill-health, failure, disappointments). How do difficulties change people, for better or for worse?

- What have you done in the past to cope with difficult situations?



investigate

▶ Read 2 Corinthians 1 v 3-11

Paul now comes to his first subject—comfort in times of trouble. He wants to share with the Corinthians his experience of God at work.

2. Look at verses 3 and 4. Who comforts who here?

3. How is God described in verses 3 and 4? What does this tell us about God's relationship to us and His character?



➔ apply

4. What is the worst trouble that you can imagine striking you?

- How does the possibility of this kind of trouble affect the way you live now?

- How can the phrase ‘the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles’ (v 3-4) transform your life right now?

🗣️ getting personal

Of all the troubles that might come to us in this world, there is none that leaves us in a place where God cannot comfort us—totally. Can you trust your compassionate heavenly Father for this? And if you can, have you ever comforted others with this truth about God?

🗣️ explore more: God’s character

optional

There are two other places in the New Testament where God, ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’, is praised for who He is and what He has done—read **Ephesians 1 v 3-14** and **1 Peter 1 v 3-5**.

- Make one list of words that describe our Father God, and another list of what He has done.
- What new insights into God’s character have you discovered?

⏏ **investigate**

God reveals Himself to us in His word, and here we find out about His perfect fatherly compassion and care for us, most of all in sending His Son for us.

5. What did Christ suffer (v 5)?

6. Why does Paul suffer?

- v 5:

- v 6:

7. How is Paul comforted (v 4 and 5)?

8. What do Paul and the Corinthians share (v 7)?

➔ **apply**

9. What troubles have you experienced as a result of being a follower of Jesus Christ?



- How have you drawn comfort from knowing Jesus as Saviour and Lord?

⏴ **investigate**

10. What was the purpose of Paul's sufferings in Asia (v 8-11)?

11. What should suffering make us do?

➔ **apply**

12. What will help you to turn to 'the God of all comfort' in difficult circumstances?

🗺 **getting personal**

Think about your experience of God's comfort in sufferings. Who, in a similar situation, could you help?

⬆ **pray**

- Give thanks to God for who He is and what He has done.
- Reflect on how God has helped you through suffering.
- Seek God's guidance as to how you can help others.
- Pray for God's strength in any suffering you or others in the group are currently facing.