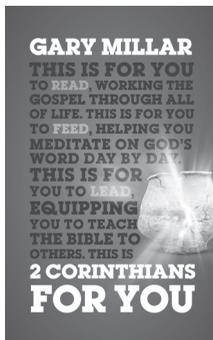




# The gospel in all of life

## 2 Corinthians

by Gary Millar



## 2 Corinthians For You

If you are reading *2 Corinthians For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *2 Corinthians For You*:

Study One → Ch 1-2

Study Five → Ch 8

Study Two → Ch 3-4

Study Six → Ch 9-10

Study Three → Ch 5

Study Seven → Ch 10-11

Study Four → Ch 6-7

Find out more about *2 Corinthians For You* at:  
[www.thegoodbook.com/for-you](http://www.thegoodbook.com/for-you)

The gospel in all of life

The Good Book Guide to 2 Corinthians

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Unless indicated, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version.

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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 for 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; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. ☒ **Getting personal** 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.

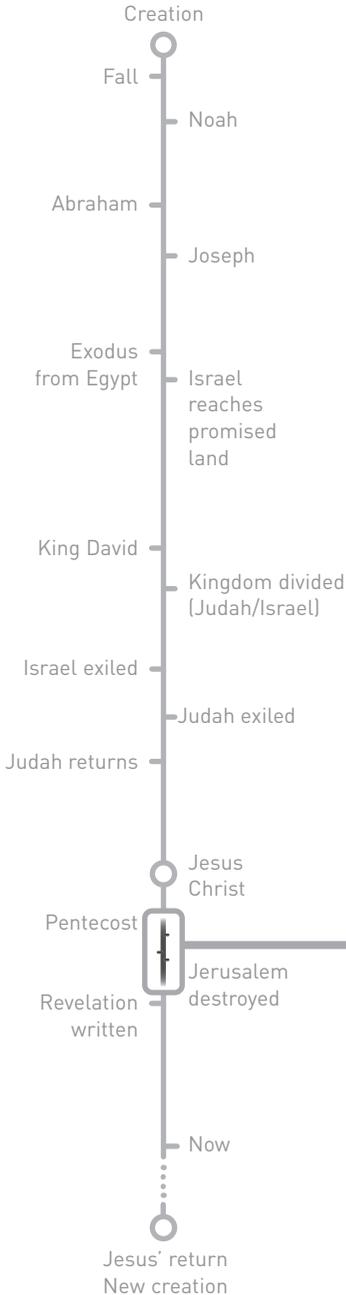
# Why study 2 Corinthians?

Corinth was the ancient world's equivalent of a modern, thriving, multicultural city. When Paul showed up in Corinth for the first time, he found a city with a Roman face, a Greek heart, a large Jewish minority and a deeply ingrained universal desire to impress. It's hardly a shock then that, when Paul preached the gospel and a church was born, life got pretty complicated. What else would you expect from a bunch of people who are mostly Greek following a suffering and dying Jewish Messiah in the middle of a Roman city which prides itself on always coming out on top. Welcome to the mess that is Corinth.

Now I know that church is always messy. I know that ministry is always more complicated than we first think. But it's also true that some places are more messy than others. And Corinth was one of those places. And Paul's relationship with the messy church he had planted in this complex city was... yes, you guessed it, *messy*.

Paul had a difficult relationship with the church he had planted. After he left, he had to write them numerous letters, some of them now lost. In them, he teaches, he rebukes, he reminds them of the basics that they had so quickly forgotten about. And then he had what he describes in 2 Corinthians 1 as "the painful visit". And at this point in their relationship, it's still not entirely clear whether the church will flourish and grow or crash and burn—which explains why this is the most passionate, honest, vulnerable, heartfelt letter in the Bible. The battle for hearts and minds is still on in Corinth. In particular, the leaders that Paul left behind continue to waver. So Paul writes in an attempt to persuade them to stick with him and the gospel.

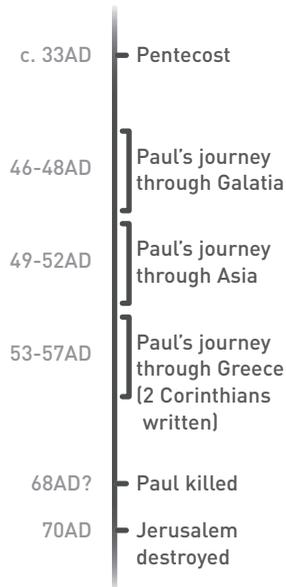
That's why I think this letter is the place to go in the New Testament for a description and embodiment of what gospel ministry is all about. For Paul, gospel ministry is what we all do. It is walking with, speaking for, and serving Jesus in all of life. This letter is written for all of us. 2 Corinthians takes us through how to live by faith in our broken world. It's the key to embracing our weakness and living in the strength which God himself supplies.



## BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does 2 Corinthians fit into the whole story of God's word?

### 2 CORINTHIANS 55-57AD



# 1

2 Corinthians 1 – 2

## BEGINNING WITH GOD



### talkabout

1. Why do you think church can be such a messy and difficult environment for people? What common problems can destroy a church if they are left unaddressed?

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### investigate

Paul is writing to a messy church with many problems in its leadership. In this passionate letter he is appealing to them to stick with him, and with the gospel message.

#### ▶ Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-2

2. What do the opening two verses suggest are some of the issues that need to be addressed in Corinth?

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#### DICTIONARY

**Apostle (v 1):** someone chosen and sent by Jesus to teach and serve the Christian church.

**Holy people / saints (v 1):** people God sets apart for himself. Christians.

**Achaia (v 1):** southern Greece (see map on p 69).

**Grace (v 2):** God's gift of forgiveness to people who don't deserve it.

3. Grace and peace are the twin marks of the local church, according to Paul. How does the gospel produce these key qualities?

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## getting personal

Have you grasped the fact that the church belongs to God (v 1)? Is that reflected in the way you speak about church; care about church; treat your brothers and sisters?



## investigate

### Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

4. Who comforts whom in these verses? And why do they need to be comforted?

- What aspects of God's character does Paul highlight here?

- How should our view of God and suffering change in light of these truths?



## apply

5. What is the worst thing you have ever suffered? Did you experience the love and comfort of God as you were going through it?



- How are we able to show the love and comfort of God to others who are in distressing circumstances?



## getting personal

Are you fearful about what may happen to you in the future—for example, your job and career, where you will live, finding a partner, your care in later life, or if you become house-bound or have dementia? How will you exercise your trust in God for the future and what it may contain for you? How might you use one or more of these verses to encourage someone who is currently going through trials?



## explore more

optional

### ▶ Read 2 Corinthians 1:12 – 2:11

*Why does Paul write so much to them about how his travel plans had changed, do you think?*

*What comes out of this section about how trustworthy and accountable Christian leaders should be?*



## investigate

### ▶ Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Paul compares his life and work to a Roman triumphal procession, where the defeated captives are being led by the victor with incense burners.

6. Who leads this procession and what is the aroma they spread?

### DICTIONARY

**Troas (v 12):** see map on page 69.

**Gospel (v 12):** Greek word meaning “good news”. The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ.

7. How do different groups respond to the smell of gospel ministry (v 15-16)?

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8. How do Paul's motives for ministry differ from the other preachers (v 17)?

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➔ **apply**

9. The Corinthians rejected Paul's authority and leadership because they thought him weak and unimpressive. What poor reasons might we use for not sitting humbly under those who teach us God's word?

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⬆ **pray**

Give thanks that you, both as an individual and as part of a church, have received the grace, peace and mercy of God.

Pray for those who you know are going through difficult times. Pray that you would be part of the way the Lord comforts them, and that God would be helping them to grow in their ability to help others.

Praise God for your church leaders, and ask him to help them become more trustworthy and reliable in their work.

