

**Purpose** To encourage class members to be true disciples of Jesus Christ through applying Paul’s counsel in 2 Corinthians.

**Preparation**

1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures:
  - a. 2 Corinthians 1:3–11; 4; 6:1–10; 11:21–33; 12:1–10. Paul teaches about overcoming tribulation.
  - b. 2 Corinthians 2:5–11. Paul admonishes the Saints to forgive each other.
  - c. 2 Corinthians 7:8–10. Paul teaches about feeling godly sorrow for sins.
  - d. 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. Paul exhorts the Saints to be reconciled to God.
2. If *New Testament Video Presentations* (53914) is available, show “Godly Sorrow,” an eleven-minute segment, during the lesson.
3. If you use the attention activity, bring a small amount of sand to class.
4. Suggestion for teaching: Leave time at the end of class to summarize what you have taught. A carefully planned summary can help class members organize and clarify what they have learned and consider how to apply it in their lives. (See *Teaching—No Greater Call*, page 81, for some methods of summarizing.)

**Suggested Lesson Development**

**Attention Activity** As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson.

Show class members the sand you have brought to class.

- If someone you trust handed you sand with the promise that it contained gold, what would you do?

Allow class members to respond to the question. Then read the following statement by Elder Henry B. Eyring about receiving counsel from prophets:

“Don’t discard the counsel, but hold it close. If someone you trusted handed you what appeared to be nothing more than sand with the promise that it contained gold, you might wisely hold it in your hand awhile, shaking it gently. Every time I have done that with counsel from a prophet, after a time the gold flakes have begun to appear and I have been grateful” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 35; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 26).

- What is the meaning of Elder Eyring’s statement?

Explain that the book of 2 Corinthians contains prophetic counsel that applies in our day. Paul’s teachings in this letter are similar to the teachings we often hear in general conference. Elder Eyring observed, “When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention [on them]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 25). Encourage class members to receive the counsel in this lesson and “hold it close.”

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This lesson is divided into four sections that focus on important topics in 2 Corinthians. Prayerfully select which of these topics to discuss with class members.

### 1. Overcoming tribulation

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 1:3–11; 4; 6:1–10; 11:21–33; 12:1–10. Invite class members to read selected verses aloud.

- Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was written after a time of great persecution when Paul and Timothy “despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Why were Paul and Timothy able to avoid despair despite being troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down? (See 2 Corinthians 1:3–5; 4:5–15.) Why are Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our best sources for comfort?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell assured us that Jesus Christ will help us through our afflictions:

“When we take Jesus’ yoke upon us, this admits us eventually to what Paul called the ‘fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings’ (Philippians 3:10). Whether illness or aloneness, injustice or rejection, . . . our comparatively small-scale sufferings, if we are meek, will sink into the very marrow of the soul. We then better appreciate not only Jesus’ sufferings for us, but also His matchless character, moving us to greater adoration and even emulation.

“Alma revealed that Jesus knows how to succor us in the midst of our griefs and sicknesses precisely because Jesus has already borne our griefs and sicknesses (see Alma 7:11–12). He knows them firsthand; thus His empathy is earned. Of course, we do not comprehend it fully any more than we understand how He bore all mortal sins, but His Atonement remains the rescuing and reassuring reality” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 13; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 12).

- How have Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ helped you during adversity?
- Paul expressed a desire to help others receive the same comfort he had received from God (2 Corinthians 1:4). How can we help others receive comfort from God?
- Paul thanked the Saints who had prayed for him and Timothy in their time of adversity (2 Corinthians 1:11). Why is it important for us to pray for each other? How have the prayers of others blessed you or someone you know? How are we blessed when we pray for others?
- How can the teachings in 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 help us during tribulation? (See also D&C 121:7–8.) Why is it helpful to see our trials from an eternal perspective? How can we learn to look at our trials from an eternal perspective?
- Paul told the Corinthians of the trials that he and many of the Saints endured because of their belief in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 6:4–5; 11:23–33). What characteristics did Paul teach that we should develop to help us endure trials? (See 2 Corinthians 6:4, 6–7.) How has one or more of these characteristics helped you during a time of trial?
- Paul said that the Lord gave him an infirmity—a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Why did the Lord give Paul this infirmity? (See 2 Corinthians 12:7.) What did Paul learn when the Lord did not take away his “thorn in the flesh”

as he had asked? (See 2 Corinthians 12:8–10.) How can our weaknesses help us receive strength from Jesus Christ? (See Ether 12:27.) How have you seen the truth of Paul’s statement that “when I am weak, then am I strong”?

## 2. Forgiving others

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 2:5–11.

- Paul admonished the Saints to forgive each other (2 Corinthians 2:5–8). Why is it important that we forgive others? (See Matthew 6:14–15; 2 Corinthians 2:7–8; D&C 64:9–10. Discuss how we—and others—are affected when we are forgiving and when we are unforgiving.)

President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“We see the need for [forgiveness] in the homes of the people, where tiny molehills of misunderstanding are fanned into mountains of argument. We see it among neighbors, where insignificant differences lead to undying bitterness. We see it in business associates who quarrel and refuse to compromise and forgive when, in most instances, if there were a willingness to sit down together and speak quietly one to another, the matter could be resolved to the blessing of all. Rather, they spend their days nurturing grudges and planning retribution. . . .

“If there be any who nurture in their hearts the poisonous brew of enmity toward another, I plead with you to ask the Lord for strength to forgive. This expression of desire will be of the very substance of your repentance. It may not be easy, and it may not come quickly. But if you will seek it with sincerity and cultivate it, it *will* come. . . .

“ . . . There is no peace in reflecting on the pain of old wounds. There is peace only in repentance and forgiveness. This is the sweet peace of the Christ, who said, ‘blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ (Matt. 5:9.)” (“Of You It Is Required to Forgive,” *Ensign*, June 1991, 2, 5).

- What can we do to become more forgiving?

## 3. Feeling godly sorrow for our sins

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 7:8–10.

- After hearing that one of his epistles had “made [the Corinthians] sorry,” Paul rejoiced (2 Corinthians 7:8–9). Why did Paul respond this way to the Corinthians’ sorrow? (See 2 Corinthians 7:9–10.) What does it mean to have “godly sorrow” for our sins?

If you are using the video presentation “Godly Sorrow,” show it now.

- What is the difference between godly sorrow and “the sorrow of the world”? Why is godly sorrow an important part of repentance?

President Spencer W. Kimball explained: “If one is sorry only because someone found out about his sin, his repentance is not complete. Godly sorrow causes one to want to repent, even though he has not been caught by others, and makes him determined to do right no matter what happens. This kind of sorrow brings righteousness and will work toward forgiveness” (*Repentance Brings Forgiveness* [pamphlet, 1984], 8).

#### 4. Becoming reconciled to God

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:17–21.

- Paul and Timothy counseled the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “Reconciliation is the process of ransoming man from his state of sin and spiritual darkness and of restoring him to a state of harmony and unity with Deity. . . . Man, who was once carnal and evil, who lived after the manner of the flesh, becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost; he is born again; and, even as a little child, he is alive in Christ” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:422–23).

- How can we become reconciled to God? (See 2 Corinthians 5:17–19, 21; 2 Nephi 25:23; Jacob 4:10–11.)

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#### Conclusion

Testify of the truths you have discussed. Encourage class members to remember and follow Paul’s counsel in 2 Corinthians.

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#### Additional Teaching Ideas

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use one or both of these ideas as part of the lesson.

##### 1. The “outward man” and the “inward man” (2 Corinthians 4:16)

- Paul spoke of the “outward man” and the “inward man” (2 Corinthians 4:16). What might these two phrases mean? How might the “inward man [be] renewed day by day”? (2 Corinthians 4:16).

##### 2. “Ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

- Paul said that he and Timothy were “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). What is an ambassador? (An ambassador is an official representative who speaks in behalf of the leadership of a country or organization. An ambassador works to establish good relationships between the people he or she represents and other people.) How were Paul and Timothy ambassadors for Jesus Christ? How can each of us be an ambassador for Jesus Christ?