



MONDAY 25 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:1-2

Plug In...

Paul knows the caricature going around about him. He's aware people say he vacillates: "face-to-face he's soft; more bravado when writing *from a distance*". Paul says any difference in intensity is not contingent on his bravery or "guts" but comes from him being like Christ; seeking to be gentle and humble.

Chew It Over...

Our interaction on social media can expose our identity issues. We can be two-faced. We observe others (even ourselves) speaking much more brashly and boldly online, yet, we would never say the same things to the person face-to-face. Watch how comments get more intense when coming from 'Anonymous'. Is that us? People accuse Paul of this same manoeuvre. Notice Paul says any perceived difference in approach or difference in intensity is grounded in imitating Christ. He does not shy away from the fact that this imitation can include face-to-face boldness if need be (v.2).

This challenges us to operate from the template of imitating Christ. Do you rely more on a *How-To-Win-Friends-and-Influence-People*-strategy or imitating Christ? Do our identity issues colour the way we relate, or are we able to set that to one side and imitate Christ?

Prayer Suggestion

Request that God will format our interaction strategies from imitating Christ. Ask that God gives us insight into each relationship and situation, that we will know what word is needed for that person right now. That it will come from a heart which desires to see them conform more to Christ than to any other worldly standard.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 26 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Plug In...

Paul does not look impressive. He's battle bruised, and in the context of the relationship it seems his ministry has been ineffective. The Corinthians church resist him; at points they haven't listened to him (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 5). Paul's goal is not that everyone sees he's won the argument. His battle is that people submit to Christ (v.5). Paul's weapon is the gospel of a 'crucified' man (i.e., humbled) raised up as Lord (the one to whom people must be obedient to).

Chew It Over...

It is so easy to just be about winning the argument. In so many conversations there is a power-play. Who is going come out on top? Who knows the most? Who wins the argument? Do you think it is possible to even preach the gospel in a manner where you are power-tripping? (I've got information that you don't have, *whack!*). People smell that and run a mile. What actions from Paul in 2 Corinthians can you point to that shows he has other goals to achieve than simply winning the argument?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that we draw on the love of God and can have compassion for people like Jesus does. May we speak the truth in such a way that it is winsome. May our actions and approach communicate deep love for human beings, whether a onetime conversation on the train, or an on-going relationship.



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 27 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:7-11

Plug In...

The Corinthian church developed a hierarchy of 'Christianity'. The criteria for calling someone a Christian, or a super-Christian, was being based on a set of external appearances not the claims of the gospel. The appearances may be things like, "wow, look at that guy speak, he surely has the Spirit in him". Or conversely, it may be, in the case of Paul: "Paul couldn't even get those so-called "sinners" to stop and repent, is the Spirit even with him?"

Chew It Over...

We are susceptible to going where the jazzed-up churches are, where the speakers are powerfully engaging – and concluding, well that must be where the Spirit has turned up. Even if faithful to our local church, we can still judge by external criteria and not the gospel itself. Do we make the mistake of equating the cool visuals on the screen, being made to laugh, to feel good, having a fun time, with what makes a church good and spirit-filled? Ask yourself next time when you perceive the service is flat, the preacher a bit monotonic, there's minimal graphics and videos on screen, why is it really that you are disengaging? Are you waiting to be tickled into attention? Evaluate, is the Bible open, is the content of Jesus' gospel spoken about? While there is no excuse for a preacher to be

deliberately boring, when the gospel of Jesus is preached and we are exhorted to remember and rejoice in that, the Spirit is with us. Absorb the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:7 again today.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that regardless of who is preaching, their level of stage presence, that God moves our hearts to go to church to hear Jesus, not "Mr X...", let alone to be entertained.



The Lakes

THURSDAY 28 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:12-13

Plug In...

Paul speaks to a dynamic in the Corinthian church whereby some are classifying themselves and comparing themselves against certain personalities. It seems like all the talk concerns someone's CV and achievements. The metrics being discussed are tied to individual personalities not to Jesus. Paul says any talk should be about what God has done. The focus is on what God has achieved in an area of ministry.

Chew It Over...

We can be quick to compare what's going on for with the likes of Tim Keller's church (Manhattan, New York – 3,000+), a John Piper, a Brian Houston, etc. We can start classifying our local scene against these big names and big metrics. We might not say it out loud, but we put ourselves on a scale relative to these churches. We also can pit our church over-against the church down the road simply based on external metrics (e.g., number of people coming, vibrant youth group). Next time you speak with a Christian from another church, seek to avoid comparison, but look for the gospel fruit in their patch and rejoice and boast together in the work the Lord is doing amongst them.

Prayer Suggestion

May we always attribute credit to the Lord. May we ask the Lord to raise up harvesters for the many fields. May we have eyes to see what the Lord is doing in the big and the small, may the Lord commend the work of all gospel-workers.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 29 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:14-16

Plug In...

Paul explains he's not about one-upmanship. He desires to see the field of the gospel expanded. That each gospel-worker works hard in their patch assigned to them, but works with the hope of multiplying. Multiplication of Christians is the outcome.

Chew It Over...

The problem with wrong boasting is it can be easily focus just on our own kingdom-building. Where can we include prayer support, even financial support for other fields? Foster a heart that wants to see the church of God expand. On the Central Coast, imagining if all existing churches had a person filling every seat that physically exists in their buildings. Under that scenario we still would not be able to say even 10% of Coasties are actively going to church (presumably Christians). Let us want to see all fields, all patches, grow so that we can raise up people to preach the gospel beyond our local borders.

At The Lakes we give to other church plants (e.g., Lake Mac Evangelical Church), and support mission endeavour's overseas.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for Lake Mac Evangelical Church. Pray for our missionaries (the Turveys in South East Asia; the Wrights in Fiji). Pray for the multiplication of Christians within all churches on the Central Coast.



The Lakes

WEEKEND 30-31 JULY 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:17-18

Plug In...

The 'boasting' language in chapter 10 can be confusing. One might say that Paul is boasting in the fact he doesn't boast! There is a quote here (10:17) from the Jeremiah 9:24 which qualifies what Paul means by boasting. Reading the full paragraph from Jeremiah 9 (vv.23-24) we see that Paul's boasting is only boasting in the Lord's strength, not his own; boasting in knowing that God is kind and merciful, just and righteous. It is boasting in the fact that anything that has been achieved is because of God's gospel mercy through Jesus Christ.

Chew It Over...

Think about the successes in your life, in your ministry. How can we craft our language to always reflect that we are pointing the spotlight back to God?

Prayer Suggestion

May we be humble and gentle like Christ. May our only boast be in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.