

LIFE GROUP SERMON SUMMARY QUESTIONS

2 Corinthians Series

These questions are for the **April 29, 2018** sermon, "Conscience and Character: When Critics Accuse."
Please read the sermon passage (2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4) together out loud.

Sermon Outline

WHILE ADDRESSING CRITICISM AS YOU SERVE . . .

1. Live out the character of Jesus as you await the coming of Jesus (1:12-14)
 - a. Paul was accused of . . .
 - i. moral shortcomings (bad behavior)
 - ii. relational shortcomings (selfish motives)
 - iii. theological shortcomings (false teacher)
 - b. But he appealed to the clear conscience that he and his friends had.
 - i. Your conscience can be evil (Heb 10:22), weak (1 Cor 8:12) or defiled (Titus 1:15)
 - ii. But it can also be purified (Heb 9:14), good (Acts 23:1) and clear (Acts 24:16)
 - iii. Let your actions, motives and words be searched by God's Word.
 - c. Paul was confident that he and his readers would be rejoicing on the day of our Lord.
2. Hold out the promises of God with integrity (1:15-22)
 - a. Rather than defending every charge, Paul went to his own general character.
 - b. Accused of "vacillation" because he changed his travel plans, Paul assures the Corinthians that the God he proclaimed to them is surely faithful and true.
 - i. God is faithful (18)
 - ii. All of God's promises find their "Yes" in Jesus Christ (20)
 - iii. God has guaranteed this work through the continuous work of his Spirit (22)
3. Carry out your mission from God with love (1:23-2:4)
 - a. If Paul had gone to Corinth, it would have resulted in confrontation and pain.
 - b. Sometimes, the presence of the one with the authority does not help the situation.
 - c. Paul corrected, but it was through anguish and tears, and with great love.

Life Group Discussion Questions

1. Based on #1, above: When you are in the midst of a personal conflict, where someone has brought an accusation against you, how does your conscience come into play? What is the difference between "conscience" and your own preferences or patterns? How is your conscience strengthened through godly friends? How is it weakened through ungodly friends?
2. Based on #2, above: Rather than get defensive (even when the accusations were false!), Paul brought the conversation back to this: "No matter what happened, isn't God faithful? And didn't me and my friends simply proclaim him among you?" Think through a current conflict in your life. How would the conflict be diffused if you could bring it out of the past, and out of the minutia, and bring it back to the substance of a shared relationship with a faithful God?
3. Based on #3, above: Paul changed his travel plans to Corinth because he knew that his presence would have made the pain worse. Talk about this (Augustine) quote: "As severity is ready to punish the faults which it may discover, so charity is reluctant to discover the faults which it must punish." How would more charity (love) help you as a friend, neighbor and parent?