

Devotional Guide and Reflections on 2 Corinthians 1:1 – 6:10

Mako Nagasawa
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Day One

Imagine yourself in a ministry context where you've made huge investments of yourself. Suddenly other people come in and 'wow' people because they have more impressive written resumes than you. Maybe they've even published books. How would you feel?

If you've experienced this in reality, how did you respond?

If you have fears about ministry this year, what are they?

Day Two

What's Paul feeling as he dictates 2 Corinthians? What do you think has happened to him? What evidence in the letter is there for that?

What accusations have been made about him? List some things below, but make references to the passages that say/suggest that Paul was criticized for being inadequate for this ministry:

Day Three

Look at 1:24. Why does Paul not respond with his authority? How can he take such an honoring attitude towards the Corinthians even after being hurt by them?

There seems to be an individual Paul has in mind in 2:5-8. Why might Paul not shame him publicly?

Why might it be tempting to respond with authority? Public shaming? Why is 'feeling superior' such a tempting option?

Day Four

List the passages in 2 Corinthians 1:1 – 6:10 where Paul describes himself as 'dying.'

Reflect on 2 Cor.4:11. What is the 'life of Jesus'? How is it manifested through 'dying'?

What are the ways Jesus has manifested his 'death' in you by ministering to others through you?

Day Five

Reflect on chapter 4 again. What are the ways Jesus has manifested his 'life' in you?

Describe a time or an experience similar to Paul's where you came to understand Jesus more.

Day Six

Reflect on 2 Corinthians 3. What kind of flavor would your ministry have if you did it in an old covenant style?

How does your life & ministry reflect the new covenant? How would you like it to more reflect it?

Day Seven

From 2 Cor.5:11-21, what does Paul emphasize about Jesus' death?

How does that help Paul resolve his sense of mission?

Day Eight

What are some images that Paul uses to describe himself in this section? Spend some time reflecting on these and carrying it with you in your mind. How does each image help you picture your relationship with Jesus?

- The fragrant flowers being thrown in Jesus' victory parade
- A living letter of Christ; the Spirit of the living God has written on your hearts
- A person unveiled, with a heart radiant and shining with the glory of Jesus
- An earthen jar with treasure inside

Day Nine

In 2 Corinthians 1:1 – 6:10, find all the occurrences of the phrase 'in Christ' or its complement, 'Christ in me.' Upon your first impression, why do you think Paul uses these phrases?

In 2 Corinthians 3:14, notice that Paul says that the veil is removed for people 'in Christ.' Paul knows that God wants him (he is 'in Christ') to treat the Corinthians (who are also 'in Christ') honorably even when they dishonor him. If you can anticipate something being hard about the next school year, how can 'being in Christ' and living in union with Christ help you?

Reflect on this phrase: union with Jesus. Why did that truth help Paul to deal with difficult ministry? How did he interpret his suffering?