

A GOSPEL-ORIENTED RESPONSE TO MISUNDERSTANDINGS

1 CORINTHIANS 1:12-2:4

LESSONS FROM PAUL'S EXAMPLE

What should you do when you're criticized and feeling misunderstood, especially by another believer? Remember all the Gospel teaches about who we were and who we are in Christ.

First, carefully examine your own heart for any sin. (1:12)

¹² For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.

Labor hard to reconcile with others. (1:13-14)

¹³ For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand—¹⁴ just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.

Give an honest explanation—and on top of that, live an honest life! (1:15-22)

¹⁵ Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. ¹⁶ I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? ¹⁸ As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No.

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

TRANSFORMED

Always aim at what's best for others—and for Christ's Church. (1:23-2:4)

²³ But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

^{2:1} For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴ For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

LESSONS FROM THE CORINTHIANS' MISUNDERSTANDING

What should we do so we avoid drawing incorrect conclusions about others, especially other believers? Remember the grace Christ has shown us—and show that same grace to others.

Give other people the benefit of the doubt. (1:23-2:1)

Be slow to believe accusations you hear about others. (1:17, 23)

Listen and seek to fully understand other people and their choices. (1:13)

Remember that our relationships are meant to be characterized by love. (1:14; 2:4)

A Gospel-Oriented Response to Misunderstandings

June 13, 2021

Open: What are some examples of ways people can misunderstand each other?

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

Discuss

1. In verse 12, Paul describes how he has behaved toward the Corinthian believers. What makes this list of characteristics so important for healthy relationships? How should Paul's past behavior influence how the Corinthians regard Paul and listen to his words?
2. How would you describe the relationship Paul hopes to have with the Corinthians, according to verses 13-14? Especially once misunderstanding has occurred between people, why is this so difficult to achieve? What is required of each party in order for full reconciliation to take place?
3. In verses 15-19, Paul addresses a misunderstanding on the part of the Corinthians regarding Paul not doing as he said he would do. (*See 1 Corinthians 16:5-9.*) Why is it important that Paul explain himself in this matter? How does it affect your relationship with others when they don't follow through on what they say they'll do? How should we respond in such a circumstance?
4. In verses 19-22, how does Paul make a connection between his character and the Gospel? How should this have helped the Corinthians arrive at a different conclusion than they apparently did? What is the danger in making assumptions about the motives and intentions of others?
5. Also in verses 19-22, Paul sees a connection between the promises of God in the Gospel and his relationship with the Corinthians. How does Paul try to emulate the character of God in his relationships? What other ways does the Gospel shape your relationships with other believers?
6. Paul reveals more about his reason for changing plans in verses 1:23-2:4. According to Paul, why did he alter his plans? How can we cultivate such affection for other believers? How should the Corinthian believers have responded to all that Paul said in this passage?

Apply: Is there any potential misunderstanding between you and another believer that you might be able to clarify for the good of your relationship—and for the good of the Church?

Pray: Ask God to heal wounds in relationships between fellow believers. Pray God would give us an abundance of grace for one another and a passion for the Gospel that fosters relational health.

TRANSFORMED

2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

^{1:12} For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. ¹³ For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— ¹⁴ just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.

¹⁵ Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace. ¹⁶ I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? ¹⁸ As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

²³ But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

^{2:1} For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴ For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. (ESV)