

RISKING ALL FOR LOVE**Paul's Concern for the Corinthians****2 Corinthians 12:11–21**

“We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.” 2 Corinthians 12:19b

Day 1: Read 2 Corinthians 12:11.

1. Why has Paul been put in the awkward position of having to point out the commendable aspects of his own life and ministry?
2. What phrase in verse 11 shows that Paul really doesn't have a “big head” about his accomplishments?
3. What impression does the derisive term “super-apostle” give you of the leaders who are trying to steal the Corinthians' affection from Paul?

Day 2: Read 2 Corinthians 12:12–13.

4. What are the marks of true apostleship that Paul points to for the Corinthians' consideration of the genuineness of his ministry?
5. Evidently, the Corinthians have been thinking less of Paul because he is “never a burden” (vs. 13) to them financially, but has supported his own ministry by a tent-making day job. What do you make of this strange psychology?

Day 3: Read 2 Corinthians 12:14–18.

6. Verse 14 reveals Paul's reason for refusing to be a financial burden to the Corinthians. What has he been trying to make perfectly clear?

7. More irony in verses 15–18. Put into your own words the case Paul is making. (See 8:6, 10–11, 16–23 to refresh your memory about Titus’ role in the offering for poor believers in Jerusalem.)

Day 4: Read 2 Corinthians 12:19.

8. Discuss the difference between a worldly, sinful self-defense and a godly self-defense.
9. It is evident from all Paul’s writings that everything he says and does, he says and does consciously “in the sight of God” (vs. 19). Discuss how your life would be different if you always practiced the presence of God in all your words and actions.
10. What is Paul’s primary concern in everything he chooses to say or do?
11. When the occasion arises that you need to correct a brother or sister who sins, how would the words you use be different if they were motivated by concern for his or her “strengthening”?

Day 5: Read 2 Corinthians 12:20–21.

12. In writing the letter to the church in advance of his next visit, what kind of encounter is Paul hoping to avoid?
13. List the sinful reactions Paul fears in verse 20, and draw up a list of the godly opposites to these.
14. Paul says it would “humble” him if he came and found the Corinthians unrepentant. Why would that be? (1 Cor. 4:15; 11:29)
15. Paul is not afraid of confrontation but does not relish it either. Discuss your own tendencies in difficult interpersonal situations. Is there anything you need to work on prayerfully?