



Have you ever started a project and gotten really close to finishing it, only to be told by a teacher, classmate, or boss that you've been doing something wrong and need to pivot and go in a new direction? Pivoting is something that happens all the time. We start going a certain way or doing a certain thing, and then we realize we need to change direction. Changing direction happens often, and sometimes we need people to speak into our lives and point out the problem.

Paul wrote several letters to the Corinthians, more than the two we have in the Bible. First, he wrote a letter we no longer have, then 1 Corinthians, then another lost letter, and finally 2 Corinthians. This is important because 2 Corinthians 7:2–16 is connected to one of those lost letters.

Paul's previous visit to the Corinthians had left him in a tearful state because of the way the church treated him (see 2 Corinthians 2:1). They had rejected his leadership. So he wrote another letter (the one we do not have) calling the church to repent and turn from their wrong ways. In other words, Paul was asking them to "pivot" and change direction. By the grace of God, many of them did; they had to pivot.

Sometimes in our lives, God places people around us to help us pivot in the same way. Paul was constantly calling the church of Corinth to change directions.

One of the key people God used in Paul's ministry was **Titus**, a trusted companion, co-worker, and friend. Titus traveled with Paul, helping to encourage churches, deliver messages, and communicate God's truth. He is mentioned several times in Paul's letters as someone faithful, reliable, and deeply committed to the work of the gospel. Titus also played a crucial role in helping the Corinthians respond properly to Paul's instructions and letters.

Icebreaker

Think of a time when you were doing something but then completely changed course (maybe cooking, making a planned purchase, schoolwork, or something else). What made you pivot?

Daily Devotions

Day 1: Read It

Read 2 Corinthians 7:2–16.

Explore It

1. **What three things does Paul say he and his team have not done to anyone?**
2. **In verse 5, what two types of problems did Paul face while in Macedonia?**
3. **Who does Paul credit as the ultimate source of comfort for the "downcast"?**
4. **According to verse 10, what are the two types of sorrow, and where does each one lead.**
5. **How many specific results of "godly sorrow" does Paul list in verse 11?**
6. **What is Paul's final conclusion in verse 16 about his relationship with the Corinthians?**

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Friendship

Read 2 Corinthians 7:2–7.

Something I've always believed is that it's not about what you do, but who you do it with. When you're with the right people, even ordinary things can become extraordinary. Some of my favorite memories from high school happened in my advanced food class. Sure, learning about food was fun, but what made it truly special were the people in the class. My three closest friends were there, and we would laugh and goof around the entire time. School can be a tough place a lot of the time, but having those friends made that class an absolute joy to attend every day.

From the very beginning, the Bible makes it clear that we need people in our lives. God says, "It is not good for man to be alone," and this isn't just about romance. We need to surround ourselves with people who love God more than they love us. It's wonderful to have people who care about you, but if those around you don't encourage you to grow closer to the Lord, they can actually hold you back. On the other hand, the support of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is incredibly powerful. A good friend can take a difficult season and make it so much more bearable.

Paul had a great friend and ministry partner that made his season of ministry a little easier.

*"Verse 4 says, 'I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.' In saying this Paul is once again expressing the nature of true love, which allows him to rebuke the Corinthians freely if there is something they need to be rebuked for, and to do so as a friend. The opposite of this is when people go along with whatever is happening and pretend to be friendly to their face, when in fact what they are doing is far from praiseworthy and ought to be corrected."*¹

- 7. Paul overflows with love and affection for the Corinthians, even in the midst of conflict. What qualities in Christian relationships make it possible for love and encouragement to persist, even when things are difficult?**

- 8. Just as Titus brought comfort and support to Paul, how can the presence of a fellow believer encourage someone who is going through a season of struggle, fear, or challenge?**

- 9. Thinking about your own life, have you ever experienced that kind of comfort from someone else? How could you offer that same encouragement and presence to someone else in your faith community?**

¹ Musculus, Wolfgang. Commentary on 2 Corinthians.

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Regret

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8–13a.

There are many times in my life when I've sinned and looked back and thought, *"I wish I had done that differently."* We've all been there, where we are filled with regret and frustrated with how we handled something.

It's important to recognize that **not all regret is the same**. Sometimes we look back and wish we had made a different decision, even though it wasn't sinful. Maybe you wish you had captured a moment on video, taken an opportunity, or chosen a different path. That's just part of being human.

We actually see Paul do this in **2 Corinthians 7:8**. For a moment he regretted sending the painful letter to the Corinthians, not because it was wrong, but because he knew it would hurt people he loved. But once he saw that it led to their repentance, that regret disappeared.

But when it comes to **sin**, the Bible shows that there are really **two kinds of regret**, and we don't always distinguish between them: **worldly regret and godly regret**.

Worldly regret is when you feel sorry for something you did because it starts to backfire on you and leads to humiliation or punishment. It's the reflex of a proud or fearful ego. Pride will always regret making a fool of itself. And fear will always regret acts that jeopardize comfort and safety. So feeling sorry for something we have done is in itself no sign of virtue. But godly regret is the reflex of a conscience that has wounded God's ego, not its own. Godly regret grieves that God's name has come into disrepute. The focus of godly regret is God.

A second way to distinguish worldly regret from godly regret is that godly regret is owing to God's Word putting its finger on sin in our lives. Worldly regret is owing not to God's Word but to the attitudes of men whose praise we don't want to lose. We can feel extremely sorry for something we have done if we detect that the people around us think it is stupid or silly or reprehensible. The word of man not God becomes the criterion of guilt.²

So to put it all simply: Worldly regret focuses on ourselves, but godly regret turns our hearts toward God, convicts us of our sin, and seeks His honor above all else.

10. Describe a time you experienced worldly regret. Did that experience bring much life change?

11. Describe a time you experienced godly regret. What was the outcome?

12. In verses 8–10, Paul talks about going through a tough but healing conversation with the Corinthians. Can you think of a time when you had a conversation like that, hard but ultimately helpful?

² Piper, John. The Good End of Godly Regret. 1984. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-good-end-of-godly-regret>

13. What makes a hard conversation actually help someone? What has to be in the conversation for it to really make a difference?

14. What would need to happen for you to be willing to have a hard but helpful conversation in the future?

15. What would make you be willing to talk about something hard with someone if it could help you in the long run?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: God Can Restore Relationships

Read 2 Corinthians 7:13b–16.

Growing up, I had a friend who was as close to me as anyone could be. We hung out all the time and did so many fun little things together. But as we grew up, we started to drift apart. Our values changed, our respect for each other wavered, and eventually, I realized that I didn't really even like being his friend anymore. I shut him out of my life and wanted absolutely nothing to do with him.

At the time, he was struggling with a lot (some I knew, some I didn't), and instead of being the friend he needed and extending the grace he deserved, I left him to figure things out on his own. I thought little of this, but God was at work. God began pulling me back to him, and I started to see the error of my ways and how I had failed as a friend. God worked in my heart, but He also worked in his.

That summer, he went to Lake Ann Camp. God used that week to convict my friend and ultimately, He used it to bring us back together. We were able to see where we had been wrong, and God restored the friendship in a powerful way. I will never forget the day I went over to see him and realized just how completely God had healed what felt unhealable. The friendship felt broken beyond repair, and yet God's work made it whole again. It was an incredibly powerful reminder of His grace and restoring power.

Having expressed his joy over the Corinthians' solidarity with him (vv. 2–7) and their redemptive sorrow (vv. 8–13a), Paul now turns to celebrate their embrace of Titus (vv. 13b–16). Paul himself is comforted (v. 13a), but he is even more glad for what Titus has experienced. This reflects the logic of the gospel at work in human relationships.

Just as God's heart is to give (John 3:16–17) and Christ's central purpose is to serve rather than be served (Mark 10:44–45), the deepest joys in Christian discipleship are found in pursuing the well-being of others. Like children on Christmas Eve, who eagerly anticipate receiving gifts, parents often find their greatest joy in giving them (Acts 20:35). Paul experiences comfort in the Corinthians' faith, but his deepest joy comes from seeing Titus's joy.³

³ Huges, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word*, Article: More Beyond (2 Corinthians 5:1–10). 2012.

16. It's a beautiful thing to see those you love filled with God-honoring joy. Who is someone whose joy brings you joy? What joys have you noticed recently in their life?

17. Why might the Corinthians' obedience increase Titus' affection for them?

18. Is there a relationship in your life that needs to be restored? What next step might God be calling you to, after studying this beautiful testimony of restoration possible in Christ?

This study was written by Ethan Wentzlaff, based on the adult study by the VBC pastoral team.