



UNFILTERED

REAL FAITH IN A FAKE WORLD

What are You Devoted To?

For me, after the pandemic, I got super into the show *Survivor* (yeah, it's been on longer than I've been alive). I binged on an unhealthy amount of it. I was obsessed.

But I know I'm not alone in this obsessive behavior. I hope I'm right in saying that we've all had something like that. Maybe it's a new game you can't stop playing, a sport you suddenly go all-in on, the gym for like two weeks straight, or even learning something random off YouTube or TikTok. For a little while, it's your thing, you're all about it. And then...something else comes along, and just like that, your "devotion" shifts.

The truth is, we're all devoted to something. It might be sports, friends, popularity, comfort, or just doing whatever feels easiest at the moment. But devotion isn't just about what we get excited about, it's about what we stick with when things get hard or inconvenient.

That's what makes this passage so challenging. Paul shows us that real devotion to Jesus doesn't always look impressive or easy. In fact, sometimes it looks like real struggle, weakness, and hard sacrifices.

Icebreaker

Think about something you've been really committed to, maybe a hobby, a sport, a game, etc. What's something you've stuck with for longer than most people would, and why did it matter to you?

Daily Devotions

Day 1: Explore It

Read 2 Corinthians 11:1–33.

- 1. To whom is Paul intending to present the Corinthian church according to verse 2?**
- 2. In verses 5 and 6, what is one way Paul may not measure up to the “super-apostles”? In what way is he superior?**
- 3. In what three ways does Paul describe his approach to finances while ministering to the Corinthian believers, according to verses 7–9?**
- 4. Why is Paul playing out this dramatic expression that is so out of character for him, according to verse 12?**
- 5. What disguise might sometimes be put on by servants of Satan, according to verse 15?**
- 6. What does Paul say the Corinthians are already tolerating in verse 19?**
- 7. What does Paul say he will boast in, if he must boast?**

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Cheating

Read 2 Corinthians 11:1–6.

Cheating is a word we hear a lot. We might hear about someone cheating on a test, cheating in a game, or, most often for us, cheating on a boyfriend or girlfriend. Our culture tends to blur the lines, making some people the “villains” more than others, and it often leaves us wondering *what really counts as cheating*. There’s even a famous TV show where a couple argued over whether being “on a break” counted as cheating.

But the Bible doesn’t blur the line. It’s clear. The word the Bible uses for cheating is **adultery**, and Jesus even says in **Matthew 5:28**, “*Anyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”

Why is this important? Well, because in **2 Corinthians 11:1–6**, Paul is saying that the church in Corinth has, in a sense, cheated on Jesus.

In these first verses, Paul brings up the idea of marriage. The Bible often calls the Church (the people of God) the **Bride of Christ**. Christians are like a bride promised to Jesus, waiting for the day He returns. This shows how close and personal our relationship with Him is.

God’s love for us is so strong that it helps us notice when we’re turning to other things instead of Him. Just like cheating in a marriage is wrong, following false teachings, fake versions of Jesus, or anything else instead of the true gospel is called **spiritual adultery**. Even small doubts or putting our trust in the wrong things can be a form of cheating, because only God’s good news truly satisfies. This is exactly what the church in Corinth was doing, they were listening to the so-called “super-apostles,” who were false teachers, and following a watered-down version of Jesus instead of the real, authentic Christ.¹

8. What are some subtle ways the church commits spiritual adultery against Christ?

9. How have you seen a false version of Jesus being promoted? How do modern portrayals of Jesus distract us from the true Christ?

10. How do we identify whether someone is preaching a false message?

¹ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible. 2019.

Day 3 — Today's Theme: No Strings on Me

Read 2 Corinthians 11:7–11.

Have you ever had someone in your life who was such a blessing, treating you well and never really expecting anything in return? These people are invaluable. And honestly, maybe you're one of them.

Doing a favor for someone and not seeking recognition is easier said than done. Hopefully, we all experience the desire to bless those around us **with no strings attached**.

In Corinth, speakers who didn't charge a fee were often seen as amateurs. Paul sarcastically asks if he "committed a sin" by preaching for free, explaining that he supported himself through manual labor and gifts from other churches, which he humorously calls "robbing" so he wouldn't burden the Corinthians. While most teachers accepted payment, Paul chose to rely on other congregations, like the Thessalonians and Philippians, and worked as a tentmaker in Corinth (Acts 18:3), demonstrating both humility and dedication to those he served.²

Paul's refusal to accept money was a deliberate strategy to "cut off opportunity" for false teachers who boasted about their own status while exploiting the church. He served the church of Corinth with intense honesty and dedication.

11. Who has been a "no strings attached" blessing in your life, and how did their generosity or service impact you?

12. Paul worked hard and gave freely for God's Kingdom. How could you apply that kind of humility and generosity in your own life?

13. Why do you think it's often harder to serve without expecting recognition, and how can we grow in doing good with no strings attached?

² Balla, Peter. 2 Corinthians: Paul and the False Apostles. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/2-corinthians>

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Too Good to Be True

Read 2 Corinthians 11:12–15.

Have you ever heard something that sounded really good, but then you realized it wasn't true? At first, it seemed awesome, but later, when you thought about it, reality set in and you realized it was too good to be true.

There are many false gospels alive and well in the world today. Do we recognize them when we see them? Do we just "put up with" them when we come across them (2 Cor. 11:4)?

Jesus calls us to bear with one another, not to bear with false teaching. Too often, we are hard on people but gentle on falsehood. The New Testament calls us to do the opposite: be gentle toward people, hard on falsehood.

The true, authentic Gospel is... the good news that Jesus loves us, died for our sins, and rose again so that anyone who trusts Him can have a real, forever relationship with God. We cannot earn this; it's a free gift from God.

When we hear or read a gospel that needs people to look impressive to make it "good enough" (like in 2 Corinthians), or one that says we have to earn God's favor with good works (like in Galatians), we must reject it. We are called to run back into the arms of Jesus, renewed and encouraged by a gospel that may confuse the world's wisdom but cleanses our hearts.

The good news? With the true, authentic Gospel, it's not just good, it's too good to be true, and it's real. Jesus' love and forgiveness are real, and we can trust Him completely.

14. What is one voice in your life that promises "good news" but actually is empty of the true gospel?

15. How can we turn down those voices and turn up the one Voice of Truth?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Fool's Play

Read 2 Corinthians 11:16–21.

In our world, people are sometimes elevated to a certain level of acclaim and, simply by virtue of their status, are given free passes in other areas of life. We say things like, “I don’t care what they did; I just like their music.” The idea is that a person’s abilities or accomplishments outweigh the condition of their heart. Those we respect often earn a special place in our hearts, which makes it easy to defend them, even when they don’t deserve it.

The Corinthian church, for example, had welcomed “super-apostles,” false leaders who flaunted their gifts, skills, and letters of recommendation, presenting themselves as the gold standard of spiritual authority. Paul calls these men fools because they boast in their own strength, arrogantly claiming for themselves what rightly belongs to God.

Ironically, the Corinthians, convinced of their own wisdom, were captivated by these boastful men and ignored Paul’s legitimate authority. Recognizing that his normal appeals would not penetrate their misplaced admiration, Paul adopts the guise of a “fool,” using self-deprecating boasting and biting irony to shock them into awareness. His words are laced with sarcasm and rhetorical precision, pointing out that the very wisdom the Corinthians pride themselves on has made them vulnerable to leaders who enslave, exploit, and even physically harm them.

While this method of “foolish boasting” is not how Paul would ideally speak according to the Lord, it is a necessary corrective. It forces the Corinthians to confront their folly, rethink their standards for spiritual leadership, and ultimately redirect honor and obedience to God alone.³

16. Consider how Paul characterizes these “super-apostles” in verse 20. How would you identify these kinds of leaders in today’s context?

17. What do you think would cause a church to tolerate these kinds of leaders?

³ Casto, Trent. 2 Corinthians (Reformed Expository Commentary) (pp. 372–373). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Day 6 — Today's Theme: True Devotion is Not Easy, but It's WORTH IT!

Read 2 Corinthians 11:21–33.

“Nobody said it would be easy; they just promised it would be worth it” (Harvey Mackay).

This is true in lots of areas of life, like getting better at sports, studying hard for a test, building friendships, or practicing for a play. Nothing in life is truly easy. And the Christian life is no different. Following Jesus **will** be hard, but it is always worth it.

Paul's life as an apostle wasn't easy. In verses 23–27 he lists struggle after struggle after struggle. He isn't bragging about being tough. Instead, he is showing the Corinthians that **true devotion to Christ often looks like weakness, struggle, and wasted work** to the rest of the world.

Rather than trying to impress the Corinthians with how strong he is, Paul wants them to see the **real cost of ministry**, the ways his life was weak and full of challenges. Paul's devotion to Christ and to the church meant he was willing to face physical pain, rejection, and hard work to serve God faithfully.

It can be challenging to share the gospel with strangers or friends. Going on a mission trip can feel uncomfortable. Preparing to teach or disciple someone takes effort and focus. Because of this, we might find ourselves fighting the desire to be lazy or only think about ourselves, avoiding anything that requires hard work. Paul's service to Jesus included burdens we must be willing to bear: working hard, being hungry and thirsty, facing persecution, suffering physically, being rejected, having his freedom taken away, and carrying the emotional weight of investing in and loving people. Why would we expect anything less? ⁴

18. Where do you notice the temptation toward comfort, ease, or self-preservation in your spiritual life?

19. Where have we started thinking that following Jesus should be easy, quick, or always work out perfectly?

20. How much of Paul's suffering should we expect to be normal for Christians serving Christ today, and what might have been unique to him as an apostle?

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

⁴ Casto, Trent. 2 Corinthians (Reformed Expository Commentary) (pp. 381-382). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.