

Warm-Up Activity: Choose one and pursue as a group.

A. Read aloud the quotes below. Each person choose one, share the quote with the group, and explain why it is meaningful to you.

1) "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." **Martin L. King, Jr.**

2) "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost." **Billy Graham**

3) "Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching." **C.S. Lewis**

4) "The right way is not always the popular and easy way. Standing for right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character." **Margaret Chase Smith**

5) "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." **Helen Keller**

B. Thinking back on your life, share with the group a person (parent, coach, teacher, etc.) with outstanding character and how they demonstrated their great character to you.

Read and Discuss God's Word

Summary: In this chapter, Paul warns the Corinthian church to beware of those he calls 'super-apostles' who are not only critiquing Paul but also deceiving the Corinthian church with a false gospel. These people speak well, dress well, and live well—which the young church seems to find appealing—however, Paul states that the super-apostles are teaching 'another Jesus'. Paul is worried that the church is too easily being led astray, so he proceeds to prove he is a true apostle of Christ teaching the one, true gospel and that they should listen to him. Paul leans on his experiences, actions, and character to prove his claim.

1) Think of a time when someone falsely attacked your character. Please share with the group what happened and how you upheld your character?

2) Read aloud 2 Corinthians 11:1-33.

3) In verse 2, Paul states that he has a 'divine jealousy' for the Corinth church. How do you normally define jealousy? How can jealousy be a godly quality? Please give an example to support your answer.

4) In verse 3, Paul compares the deceit of the super-apostles to that of the serpent in the Eden which led to humanity's tragic fall from grace. This is a serious charge!

a. What was at risk for the Corinth church?

b. What are some ways that Satan attacks believers?

c. What false gospels are being used today to undermine the integrity of the present-day biblical Christian church?

- 5) In verses 7 to 15, Paul relates his generosity to the young church at Corinth.
 - a. What reasons did Paul give for not taking financial support from the Corinthians (see 11:7, 8, 9, 11, 12)?
 - b. You have heard the phrases *'if it's too good to be true, it probably is'*—and—*'you get what you pay for'*. If someone gave you something valuable for free and gave reasons like Paul (in question 5a), what about this person should you consider when deciding whether to believe them or not?
- 6) What is the difference between the manner in which Paul treated the Corinthians (11:9) and the manner in which the super-apostles treated the Corinthians (11:20)?
- 7) In verses 16-33, Paul tells about the trials and tribulations he endured to plant churches for the gospel of Christ. About this, Warren Wiersbe writes¹:

“While any other traveler could have suffered these things, Paul endured them because of his love for Christ and the church. His greatest burden was not around him, but within him: the care of all the churches. Why did he care so much? Because he identified with the believers. Whatever happened to ‘his children’ touched his own heart and he could not abandon them.”

- a. Consider your loved ones (family, spouse, children, closest friends, etc.); to what extent would you suffer—like Paul did—to care for them?
 - b. How about the unsaved who risk eternal separation from God?
- 8) Who in your life has made sacrifices so that you can be blessed spiritually? Share with the group your story involving this person.

Live it Out!

- Select one of the quotes in the Warm-Up Activity section and this week, live this out in all you say and do.
- Consider your loved ones and those you know are unsaved. Pray for the motivation, knowledge, endurance, and the character of Paul as you point them to Jesus.
- If something difficult happens this week, pray to God to show you the right thing to do in response and remember that *sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same!*

Closing Encouragement

“Getting into the stride [of walking] with God means nothing less than union with Himself. It takes a long time to get there but keep at it. Don't give in because the pain is bad just now, get on with it, and before long, you will find you have a new vision and a new purpose.”²

¹ Wiersbe, W.W. (1994). “Be Encouraged: God Can Turn Your Trials into Triumphs”, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

² Chambers, Oswald (1935). “My Utmost for His Highest”, Barbour & Co, Uhrichsville, Ohio.