2nd Corinthians

Series: Tough Love

August 5, 2018

Message 1

**Goals for a Mature Ministry**

2nd Corinthians 10

*Guests - Handout designed with you in mind - Info and notes especially for you - won’t call or visit -*

*Growth Track - Step 1 Next Week!*

*Generosity -*

*Notes on Handout and in YouVersion App*

**Intro:** Goal setting is a great thing - you should have a target in life -

What do you want and how are you going to get there?

Paul is addressing a conflict in Corinth … remember that even though we read these letters as Scripture, they were first very personal letters. They have been preserved by the Holy Spirit for us to learn from, but this is a very personal and intimate communication between the Apostle Paul and a church that he loves very much - so in his love, he is going to speak very strongly with them!

Some issues addressed: What is Paul’s goal for this church? What is his goal for his own ministry? How do they intersect? Paul started the church in Corinth - they have gotten off track -

One reason is because false teachers have come in and the people have been deceived by their teaching. Teachers are teaching things that are contrary to God’s Word - telling the people they can live contrary to God’s ways - and they are claiming to be speaking for God when they are not!

Paul needs to get the church back on track because this is an eternal matter - This is not a matter of minor differences of interpretation - they are being taken off the road to heaven.

Something called the church is in danger of not being part of the Church. It’s really in danger of becoming a cult - something that says it’s Christian, but it’s not.

In the church today, sometimes we set goals - numerical goals …

* number of people who make decisions for Christ
* number of people who complete Growth Track
* Number of people who lead small groups
* Starting a certain kind of ministry by a certain time

Some of these goals are beyond our ability to control -

I think Paul is telling us here that there are some deeper goals than the ones we often set for ourselves.

**Big Idea: What are the goals for a mature ministry?**

**> Goal 1: Destroy the obstacles that keep people from knowing God.**

2nd Corinthians 10:1-6 - Now I, Paul, appeal to you with the gentleness and kindness of Christ— though I realize you think I am timid in person and bold only when I write from far away. Well, I am begging you now so that when I come I won’t have to be bold with those who think we act from human motives.

 We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. And after you have become fully obedient, we will punish everyone who remains disobedient.

1st purpose of our church: Know God …

Mark 4:26-29 NIV - He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ***All by itself*** the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

There can be many obstacles that keep people from knowing God - …

* Poor building conditions
* Being unwelcoming - inhospitable
* Poor music
* Poor preaching
* Poor communication
* Poor children’s and student ministries
* including misuse of gifts … all kinds of crazy things were going on in their services -
* Lord’s Supper - was a love feast - some didn’t get served - some got drunk!

Paul encouraged people being filled to the Holy Spirit - everywhere he went - He wanted people to have the power of God - He looked for a sign - He looked for the same sign of Acts 2 … He believed that when people were filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, that they wouldn’t be able to express it in their own language - they would be so filled with ecstasy, that their words wouldn’t be enough in their praise to God, so the Holy Spirit would give them words and language beyond their understanding -

This still happens today! It’s awesome! I encourage you to be so filled with the Holy Sprit that your language isn’t enough and God has to give you more language -

More than that - it is POWER - power to live a holy life … power to witness … praying in the Spirit builds faith … can give greater insight into the Scriptures - much more than just “speaking in tongues” -

However- Paul had to caution the Corinthians that their exuberance in this gift, and their desire to use this gift so that others could notice their great spirituality - was becoming a hindrance to people who were not yet Christians coming to know God -

1st Corinthians 12:23 - …if unbelievers or people who don’t understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy.

1st Corinthians 12:5-6 - I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.

 Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful.

1st Corinthians 12:9 - It’s the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don’t understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space.

1st Corinthians 12:18-20 - I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

 Dear brothers and sisters, don’t be childish in your understanding of these things.

Every area of ministry that we can think of - seen - unseen - heard - unheard - all of it can either be a help or a hindrance to others coming to know God! The seed (the Word of God) when it is delivered, will produce the fruit all by itself - if we will remove the hindrances from it taking root and growing!

We want to help people discover the gifts God has given them - when you serve in areas of your gifts, you will enjoy it, you will love it, you will be good at it, and obstacles are removed from people coming to know God.

Growth Track …

If you are on a Dream Team, one of your biggest goals is to serve in such a way that any obstacle to people coming to know God is removed!

Paul is talking specifically here about obstacles of the mind - arguments people make to not follow Christ -

2nd Corinthians 10:4-6 - We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

What kind of obstacles and arguments do people make for not following Christ?

What kind of obstacles did you make before you came to Christ? Most likely those are the kinds of obstacles the people you know make.

Paul says we can’t just win these arguments with better reasoning - we need the power of the Holy Spirit -

We need to pray -

21 Days of Prayer … Thursday Prayer -

21 Days of Prayer … Thursday Prayer -

Be smart - learn - reason - speak the truth with love - don’t just argue - but ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that changes hearts and minds -

John 16:8 - And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

**> Goal 2: Recognize genuine ministry.**

2nd Corinthians 10:7-12 - Look at the obvious facts. Those who say they belong to Christ must recognize that we belong to Christ as much as they do. I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But our authority builds you up; it doesn’t tear you down. So I will not be ashamed of using my authority.

 I’m not trying to frighten you by my letters. For some say, “Paul’s letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!” Those people should realize that our actions when we arrive in person will be as forceful as what we say in our letters from far away.

 Oh, don’t worry; we wouldn’t dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!

Accusations against Paul by false teachers:

* He’s fickle
* He’s weak - he lack charisma - no “gravitas” in person
* He writes hard letters - hard to understand - sounds mean
* He’s not a very good speaker in person -
* He doesn’t accept support - does everything on his own
* He used others to take money from the Corinthians
* He is overzealous about some things
* He’s power hungry
* He’s a deceiver
* He’s corrupt

There are people today who seem to make it their business to attach true ministry -

We need to have the discernment of the Holy Spirit to recognize true and false ministry -

#1 - know what God’s Word says …

* If someone’s message is true, but their life is false - they are a false teacher.
* Don’t be deceived by “prophetic words from the Lord” that cannot be supported by Scripture!

Pray for wisdom to be able to recognize genuine ministry.

**> Goal 3: Judge spiritual authority by its results.**

2nd Corinthians 10:13-15 - We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you. We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.

 Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done…

What spiritual authority should you submit to? Where do you see the results of ministry that the Bible tells us we should see? What is happening in the life of the leader?

Hebrews 13:7- Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 - Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

I have to live by this! This is the mirror I have to look in!

I’ve been here long enough - I’m far from perfect - I haven’t come close to seeing what I have believed God wants us to see -

But as far as my life goes - and the results of my life - I’m comfortable with my record - I have to say this - this is the teaching of the Word of God: judge my life -

Perfection? Not on your life - too many people here know me too well for me to ever get away with claiming that lie - but have lives been changed as a result of the ministry?

**> Goal 4: Growing faith that extends ministry to new places.**

2nd Corinthians 10:15-17 - …Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended. Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else’s territory. As the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.”

Are we taking the ministry to other places?

Yes - through missions - Vanuatu - India - Paris - Chile - Philippines - Seminary in Europe - TexMex Border - planting new churches - several local ministry partners -

Would the Lord have us do more?

* Another campus?
* Planting and releasing a new church?

This has always been my desire -

The only reason not to is maintaining a small church mentality. As long as we offer life-giving relationship groups, we should have all the blessings of relationships that we need -

Beyond that - we need to be extending the ministry - that is what Paul is teaching here.

**> Goal 5: Seek the Lord’s approval - not others.**

2nd Corinthians 10:18 - When people commend themselves, it doesn’t count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.

Don’t believe everyone’s press releases -

Don’t believe everyone’s ministry reports -

Let the Lord lift people up.

Missionary in the Philippines …

Lots and lots and lots of people like this -

I see reports of Sundays all the time - number of people coming to the Lord -

I can only hope those numbers are true - but then I wonder what happens to the people after that?

This is not about us - we want people to come to know the Lord - I want to celebrate the wins - but I don’t want to paint a picture of something that doesn’t exist.

We are not trying to have our own parties - we are not trying to have an experience that only pleases us - We are not here to just make ourselves feel good.

Discipleship and growth is a part of what we do - but the end result of that must be that those who grow and mature will bring others to know the Lord, not just look for a spiritual experience to serve themselves -

We just want people to come to know the Lord.

**Invitation** - if watching by video pray with us.

Connection Card - if watching on video - let me know via email.

**Blessing**