



June 12 & 13: Overcoming Hurt

Overview

Everyday life is filled with the challenges of relationships, kids, finances and job stress. Sometimes we may feel like giving up and quitting. But the Bible encourages us to never quit in the Christian life. As we continue our journey through *2 Corinthians*, we will learn how we can move beyond just surviving to really thriving!

Goals of the study guide:

- To see that even though we may stumble and fall, with God's help we can get back up again.
- To realize that our highest call is not about us, but it is about reaching out and helping others.
- To learn to focus on eternity and see things with God's perspective.

Key points:

- Resilient faith based on the life of Jesus in us helps us to keep going in the difficult times.
- When we see that the message of Christ is true and needed by others, it helps us to keep going.
- This life around us is only temporary. The unseen things are going to last forever.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

This is the age of burn out, cop out and drop out. Most of us have had the thought, "What would happen if I just took off?" Jesus told a parable about Christians who would drop out of the Christian life.

Matthew 13:3-6, ³A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. (NLT)

Jesus said there would be some Christians exactly like that. They would begin the Christian life and look impressive for a while, but when the thrill wears off and the heat of suffering is on, they will be gone.

Matthew 13:7, Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. (NLT) They would start the Christian life, but they would be so enthralled with the cares and pleasures of this world that they would drop out.

But *Matthew 13:8* says, *Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop of thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! (NLT)* The Bible says we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Paul gives us three suggestions as to how we can overcome hurts.

1. Develop resiliency. *2 Corinthians 4:7-10*

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Paul knew stress. He knew the pressure of travel schedules, but he didn't allow the pressure to grind him down and crush him. Paul didn't have all the answers. He didn't always understand God, but he refused to yield to doubt. His enemies had ridiculed, beaten, stoned and imprisoned him. He'd been neglected by his friends, but he knew that God had not abandoned him.

In *Acts 14*, Paul was stoned in the city of Lystra, dropped outside the city and left for dead. The Bible says the disciples gathered around him and Paul miraculously got up. He went back into the city and then left for Derbe where he preached in that city and won a large number of disciples. *That is a resilient spirit!*

Paul did more than just endure his problems. He used them to promote the purposes of God.

2. Respond unselfishly. *2 Corinthians 4:11-15*

Paul wouldn't lose heart because he was so convinced that he was helping other people.

2 Corinthians 4:12, So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. He endured for the benefit of others.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14, ¹³It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. Paul was so certain that God raised Jesus from the dead, and he was so certain that if other people put their faith in Christ they would be raised too, that he just would not quit.

2 Corinthians 4:15, *All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

3. Focus on eternity. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

2 Corinthians 4:16, *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.* Paul said, "Let's be honest ... we're wasting away, yet we're being renewed day by day." We don't quit because our focus isn't on this body, it's on the Spirit. Instead of developing the body, we develop the soul. This outer case we live in will dissolve altogether, but the Spirit inside is going to live forever. So we don't lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:18, *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* We think of the physical world as the real world ... the things we see and touch. That's the *unreal* world. We think the spiritual world is the unreal world, but that's the world that's going to last. It is so important to keep our eyes on the goal ... eternal life. We must focus on the unseen and not quit.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: Have you ever had an illness or injury that caused you to miss a sports event or something that was really important to you? How did it effect you, and how did you handle it?

Opening thought:

Everybody has had to miss some big event due to sickness or injury. It's never easy, but a big part of how the experience shapes us is how we react to the disappointment that comes from missing an anticipated opportunity. Use the personal stories from your group to get everybody thinking about what it means to keep going in the face of disappointment and frustration.

Read *Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23*.

1. What does this parable say about the different ways people may respond to the message of Jesus Christ?
2. What are some things that would effect the type of soil that each person is?
3. How can you guard against becoming a soil that doesn't bear much fruit?
4. What are some things that indicate that you are living a fruitful life? What can you do to be sure that your life is "good soil" that will produce a good crop?

Key points:

- The condition of our heart is the primary factor in determining what kind of soil each of us is. Do we stay receptive to the message and commands of Jesus, or do we choose the parts we like and ignore the rest? Do we keep cultivating a relationship with God, or do we easily slip into just going through the motions? These are the kinds of things that determine what kind of soil we are.
- Fruit is not necessarily just activity. A fruitful life is one that is looking more and more like the life of Jesus Christ. As we stay in close relationship with Him, we become good soil that will produce a crop of Christlike attributes and qualities as He works in our lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

1. Can you relate to the way Paul feels in these verses? Why or why not?
2. What do verses 8 and 9 say to you about the Christian life and the experiences you may face?
3. How can staying faithful in the middle of difficult times be a sign of the life of Christ in you?
4. How can you experience the life of Jesus in the midst of all the hurt and death in the world?

Key points:

- Becoming a follower of Christ does not mean that we will never face any difficult times. In fact, Paul had some terrible experiences because of his decision to follow Christ.
- The life of Christ in us means that we can rise above the difficulties of life. We may face all kinds of trials and struggles, but those things don't cause us to give up or quit on life. Christ helps us to overcome the stresses and difficulties in such a way that it actually becomes a testimony to others who don't know Christ and can't understand where the peace comes from.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and Philippians 3:20-21.

1. How can an eternal perspective help us to not lose heart as we face the hurts, pressures and difficulties of life?
2. How do you respond to Paul's comment that what is seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal? Do you live with that view of life and eternal things?
3. If you were to live as though the unseen things are the things that are going to last forever, how would that change your priorities and your life choices?
4. What does it mean to have a citizenship in heaven? How should that affect the way we view all aspects of life here on earth?

Key points:

- An eternal perspective helps us to see God's picture for our lives and for the world. Our culture bombards us with the need to live for the here and now, and that can cause undue pressure and strain on every aspect of life. If we look at the unseen as the thing that really lasts, then our priorities and motivations will alter significantly.
- Citizenship in heaven means that we are Christians first, and everything else—politics, sports, nationality, race—second. If everything that we do, say or decide has that reality in view, then our concept of life here will become very different. We will make every effort to live according to the laws and principles of our heavenly homeland rather than according to the pressures and priorities of this world—that is really not our home.



Take it home ... Practical Applications

This week take some time to look back at times when you have been hurt in your life:

- Have those things affected your relationship with God or with others?
- Is there any hurt or bitterness that you need to give to God?
- Spend some time in prayer and ask God to give you the grace to rise above the difficulties that life brings so that you may be a person that reveals the life of Jesus to others.

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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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