

# What To Do When Your Character Is Questioned

Student Guides

### Daily Bible Reading

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| Day 1 | 2 Cor. 10: 1-6   |
| Day 2 | 2 Cor. 10: 7-11  |
| Day 3 | 2 Cor. 10: 12-18 |
| Day 4 | 2 Cor. 10: 1-18  |
| Day 5 | 2 Cor. 10: 1-18  |
| Day 6 | 2 Cor. 10: 1-18  |
| Day 7 | 2 Cor. 10: 1-18  |

*Beginning in this chapter, the tone of Paul's letter completely changes. Thus far, it was as if all the problems he had encountered with Corinth were solved. All difficulties were worked out. Even in his exhortation to collect the offering for Jerusalem, Paul makes it clear his confidence in the Corinthians had not wained the least bit. Evidently, there was an influential group at Corinth who not only held contempt toward Paul but also who were swaying many to embrace fallacious views concerning sound Christian doctrine. The vicious minority hurled one charge after another toward Paul and his companions. And, for the sake of the church's health, Paul faced their insults head-on.*

## 1. Paul's Approach to the Conflict: a Soldier (vv. 1-6)

Paul begins his duel with his challengers by identifying his service as a Kingdom soldier in Christ's army (vv.1-6). Evidently, Paul's critics hurled toward him a charge of hypocrisy, alleging he was weak in personal appearance but brave when he wrote letters from a safe distance. Paul makes it clear that the Corinthians did not understand spiritual warfare. So, he deemed it necessary to offer some elementary instructions.

*First, Paul defines the war we wage.* The war that all believers fight is not with one another. The divisions the Corinthians experienced were but distractions from the real battle we face. When Christians fight one another, they are not fighting God's battle but their own.

*Second, Paul describes the weapons we wield.* Our weapons are not "carnal" but, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." We cannot win spiritual battles with fleshly weapons. What weapons are worthy for the spiritual war we wage? While Paul is not particularly detailed concerning our battle array in this passage, he lists them in Ephesians 6: 10-18.

## 2. Paul's Appearance for the Conflict: a Builder (vv. 7-11)

Apparently, some of the Corinthians were unimpressed with Paul's personal appearance (vv. 7-11). Some people wrongly assume one must be personally attractive to be effective for the Lord. The Corinthians mistakenly assumed since his "bodily presence" was "weak" and his speech "contemptible" therefore Paul was a coward for writing such bold letters while he was a safe distance from his accusers. Paul's response was twofold.

*First, the Corinthians failed to understand our true identity in Christ (v. 7).* Personal appearances are not what matters most. The fundamental question is, do we know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

*Second, the Corinthians did not understand the Christian's true authority in Christ (v. 8).* Our authority, Paul insists, is for edification, not destruction. That authority is in no way connected to our appearance. What really counts is whether we are working — building — for Jesus Christ.

### **3. Paul's Achievements in the Conflict: a Pioneer (vv. 12-18)**

Paul began with the image of a soldier and moved from it to the image of a builder. Now Paul focuses on the discovery of a pioneer.

*First, Paul chastised the Corinthians for their lack of understanding the commission the Apostles had been given. Corinth had been a pioneer effort to spread the Gospel only a few short years ago. The Corinthians had forgotten their roots.*

*Second, Paul corrected the Corinthians because they failed to understand the apostolic commendation (vv. 12, 18). They unfortunately possessed a habit of judging themselves in light of one another rather than alongside Jesus Christ. God never judges us by looking at our peers. Instead He judges us by what really counts: are we living obedient lives, lives directed by His specific directions to us. The only way we will be "approved" is living by His standards, not ours.*

#### **WRAP UP**

*The last thing Paul wanted to do was to engage the minority at Corinth. Yet for the church's sake, he faced his opponents head-on. More importantly, he was able to communicate to them and the entire congregation his battle was not with the conflicting minority. Instead his real battle was a spiritual one. He was a soldier in God's army, armed to take down strongholds and capture every rival thought against God. Paul's was a spiritual battle. So is ours.*