

RISKING ALL FOR LOVE**Fragrance of Life****2 Corinthians 2:5–17***“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ....” 2 Cor. 2:14***Day 1: Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–11.**

1. Reading between the lines, we learn that someone in the Corinthian church has “caused grief.” (vs. 5) It’s not certain who it is, but the best guess is that it is someone who has slandered Paul and impugned his authority as an apostle. How does the tone of verses 5 and 10 suggest this scenario?
2. Peek ahead to 3:1; 5:12–13; 6:8; 10:1–2, 7–11; and 11:6 to get an idea of some of the slanderous scuttlebutt abroad about Paul. What are his detractors saying?
3. Paul says that when someone causes trouble to someone in the church, he or she actually causes trouble to whom else? (vs. 5)
4. How does Romans 12:3–5 provide a model to demonstrate how the sins of one person radiate throughout the church?

Day 2: Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–11.

5. What does Paul say is enough now? (vs. 6) What should the church’s next step be? Why?
6. List three positive actions Paul commends to the church toward the offending brother. (vss. 7–8)
7. Paul is hoping (vs. 9) that the Corinthians will prove to be as obedient in forgiving and comforting the brother as they were in punishing him. Speaking personally, which do you think is the harder task?
8. What does Paul mean by linking the issue of forgiveness with the issue of Satan’s “schemes” (vs. 11)? (vss. 10–11) Discuss how a failure to forgive plays into Satan’s hands. Any examples from your own experience?

Day 3: Read 2 Corinthians 2:12–17.

9. Paul expected to meet Titus in Troas (an important port city and gateway to Europe on the Aegean coast) and learn from him how the Corinthians had responded to his severe and “tearful” letter (cf. 2:4) and whether they had repented of their rebellion. But for whatever reason, Titus wasn’t there, and Paul was distressed. What is one of the personal sufferings Paul would later list in his litany? (11:28)
10. There was Paul with an open door for ministry (vs. 12) and he didn’t take advantage of it because he had “no peace of mind” (vs. 13) when Titus didn’t show. Was he wrong to leave? What do you learn about the man Paul?
11. Where did Paul go when he left Troas? (vs. 13) What did he observe about the character of God when he experienced “triumph” (vs. 14) in another town after leaving an “open door” in Troas?

Day 4: Read 2 Corinthians 2:14–17.

12. Paul’s readers would have been familiar with “triumphal processions” (vs. 14) held in Rome to celebrate great military victories. Paul adopts this imagery to depict how God (the victorious conqueror) leads you and me (his “captives”) in his parade, to the praise of his glory. Why should we not be surprised when the procession of triumph is simultaneously one of suffering and humiliation? (Consider 6:7–10 and 1 Cor. 4:9.)
13. Why do you suppose the effect of a faithful Christian on the people around him or her is likened to a “fragrance” (vs. 14) rather than, say, a sermon?
14. What is the content of that “fragrance,” (vs. 14) specifically? (vs. 14b) How does this accord with Jesus’ saying about the chief blessing that man can receive? (John 17:3)
15. Why does the Christian’s “aroma” (vs. 15) attract some and repel others? (1 Cor. 1:18; vss. 15–16)

Day 5: Read 2 Corinthians 2:14–17.

16. How can we weak and sin-prone Christians be “equal to such a task” (vs. 16)? Find the key words in verse 17.
17. Verse 17 is Paul’s second reference to “sincerity” (see also 1:12), a theme that will be developed more fully later as he contrasts his ministry to that of false apostles who “peddle” (vs. 17) the word of God. What is Paul’s motivation as he brings the gospel of life to others?