



“Being Real, Not Phony”

Small Group Plan

I once heard Jim Woodroof say, *“if you compare yourself to people you will either feel ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ and neither is true. But if you compare yourself to God you will just feel ‘humble.’”*

Today it is common to dress to impress, display achievements to establish personal power, and carefully hide any physical flaws.

It is more important than ever to investigate Paul’s source of personal strength and power, and to examine his style of life and ministry. It may be ancient, but it seeks to follow his Lord and Savior, Jesus.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- As a group, identify the following people:
 - Abraham Lincoln
 - Adolf Hitler
 - Johann Sebastian Bach
 - Rodney Dangerfield
 - Bill Gates
 - Albert Einstein
- Briefly, how would you compare yourself to each of these people?
- Did it feel awkward to do so? Explain.
- Why do people compare themselves to others? What are they trying to gain?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

2 Corinthians 10:7-18

⁷ You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he. ⁸ For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. ⁹ I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. ¹⁰ For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” ¹¹ Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present. ¹² We do not dare to

classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. ¹³ *We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you.* ¹⁴ *We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.* ¹⁵ *Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand,* ¹⁶ *so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory.* ¹⁷ *But, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."* ¹⁸ *For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.*

"YOU ARE ONLY LOOKING ON THE SURFACE"

v. 7

- Why do some people reach conclusions after only a quick survey?
- When you look at the "surface" what are you actually looking at?
- What were Paul's "surface" disadvantages (v. 10)?
- How can looking only on the surface mislead us?
- Why are both political and religious followers often attracted to leaders who look good on the outside, when they know very little about the inside?

"THE AUTHORITY THE LORD GAVE US"

v. 8

- What does Paul say is the source of his authority?
- What is the real purpose of religious authority?
- How can you tell when someone is abusing their authority?

"FOR EVEN IF I BOAST SOMEWHAT FREELY"

v. 8

- How does Paul avoid being prideful of his gifts and authority on one hand, and denying them on the other hand?
- How does he find the balance?

"WHEN THEY MEASURE THEMSELVES BY THEMSELVES"

v. 12

- Why would someone use himself as his own measuring stick?
- How would they go about it?
- Paul says this is "not wise." Why is it foolish?

“LET HIM WHO BOASTS BOAST IN THE LORD ”
v. 17

- Count the number of times the word “boast” occurs in Vs. 7-18.
- What is wrong with the boasting of Paul’s antagonists?
- Why does Paul endorse “boasting in the Lord” but forbid all other boasting?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How do you usually respond to someone who is criticizing you?
- When has someone’s criticism actually helped you to grow?
- How is seeking God’s approval better than trying to outperform others?
- What usually happens when you compare yourself to others?
- What does boasting in the Lord sound like?
- How would you summarize the differences you see between Paul’s style of ministry and that of his opponents?
- How does Paul determine success in ministry?
- Close by asking for God’s wisdom and guidance in the use of any gift, ability, or authority He has given us.