2026 Q3 L12 Discussion Leader Notes: "Dealing With False Teachers"

Opening Introduction:

In 2 Corinthians 10 through 13, the Apostle Paul faces a severe crisis. A group of charismatic, deceitful false teachers had infiltrated the church, attempting to undermine Paul's authority and lead the believers astray with "another Jesus." Paul recognized this was not merely a disagreement over leadership styles; it was a spiritual war with eternal stakes. To protect the church, Paul demonstrates how to firmly tear down spiritual strongholds while maintaining the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Opening Poll:

When someone teaches something that sounds spiritually "off," what is your typical reaction?

A. I immediately argue and try to correct them.

B. I silently disagree but say nothing to keep the peace.

C. I research the Scriptures to see what is true.

D. I listen to see if maybe I'm the one who is wrong.

E. I just smile, nod, and slowly walk away.

Opening Engagement Story:

Imagine hiking in a dangerous, fog-covered mountain range. A confident man dressed like a park ranger approaches your group. He speaks with authority, carries a map, and says, "You're headed the wrong way. Follow me—I know a shortcut." Relieved, you follow him. But an hour later, the path becomes treacherous, and you realize he is leading you away from safety and deeper into the wilderness. Spiritual frauds do the exact same thing in the church. They look the part, but they lead people toward spiritual destruction.

Day 1 Afternoon: Dealing With False Teachers

Main Theme:

When false teachers distort the gospel of Jesus, people's eternal salvation is at stake.

Poll:

Why are false teachings so incredibly dangerous to a local church?

A. They cause endless divisions and arguments.

B. They distort the true character of God.

C. They slowly lead people away from salvation.

D. They damage the church's witness to the outside world.

E. They make leadership meetings incredibly long and stressful.

Opening Illustration:

The church is not a playground; it is a battlefield. Paul didn't view false teachers as well-meaning people who just had "different opinions." He saw their deception as a direct, spiritual attack designed to destroy the church.

Set the Scene:

Paul addresses the crisis by reminding the Corinthians that human tactics—like political maneuvering, yelling, or public smear campaigns—are completely useless in a spiritual battle.

Read the Text:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- An admission of our physical reality: "we walk in the flesh."
- A contrast of methods: "we do not war after the flesh."
- A contrast of weapons: "not carnal" versus "mighty through God."
- The target of these weapons: "the pulling down of strong holds."

Guided Discussion:

- What does it mean to "war after the flesh" when dealing with conflicts in the church? (Allow discussion)
- Why do human weapons (like anger, gossip, or manipulation) fail to change someone's heart? (Invite multiple responses)
- What are the divine, "mighty" weapons God gives us to pull down spiritual strongholds?
- How can we rely on God's weapons rather than our own fleshly reactions when someone attacks our faith? (Ask follow-up: Have you ever seen a "carnal" reaction ruin a spiritual conversation?)

Discovery Insight:

Spiritual battles cannot be fought with worldly weapons. When facing false teachings, we must rely entirely on the divine power of God's Word and prayer to demolish the deceptive strongholds that hold people captive.

Christ Connection:

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He did not rely on human arguments or fleshly power; He used the ultimate spiritual weapon, repeatedly declaring, "It is written."

Life Response:

Identify one argument or lie the enemy is trying to plant in your mind this week, and counter it by memorizing one specific promise from Scripture.

Encouragement Bridge:

We have divine weapons at our disposal. Now let's see how Paul models using those weapons with the perfect attitude of Christ.

Day 2: Spiritual War

Main Theme:

True spiritual warfare combines the gentleness of Christ with the boldness to tear down lies.

Poll:

How does the world typically define a "strong" and effective leader?

A. Someone who dominates the room and speaks loudly.

B. Someone with an impressive title and a flawless resume.

C. Someone who never backs down from a fight.

D. Someone who leads by quietly serving others.

E. Someone who has the most wealth, followers, and influence.

Opening Illustration:

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, true power was measured by dominance, boasting, and rhetorical flair. Because Paul didn't put on a flashy show or act arrogant, his critics mistook his gentleness for weakness.

Set the Scene:

Paul begs the church to listen, balancing his deep pastoral love with his divine authority to confront and capture every destructive lie that opposes the knowledge of God.

Read the Text:

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ... Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Corinthians 10:1, 5, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- Paul's approach: "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."
- The aggressive action: "Casting down imaginations" and "every high thing."
- The ultimate goal: "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Guided Discussion:

- Why did the Corinthians mistake Paul's "meekness and gentleness" for weakness? (Allow discussion)
- How can a Christian be simultaneously gentle with people, but completely ruthless with false ideas? (Invite multiple responses)
- What does it practically look like to bring a negative or deceptive thought "into captivity"?
- What "imagination" or lofty opinion in modern culture is currently exalting itself against God? (Ask follow-up: How can you take your own anxious thoughts captive to Christ today?)

Discovery Insight:

Godly leadership does not require arrogance or a domineering personality. We are called to embody the meekness of Christ while fiercely using the truth of God to dismantle any lie that tries to steal our devotion to Jesus.

Christ Connection:

Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart," yet He boldly overturned the tables in the temple and fearlessly confronted the hypocritical teachings of the religious elite.

Life Response:

When a negative or unbiblical thought enters your mind today, literally pause and say out loud, "I take this thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

Encouragement Bridge:

We must guard our minds against lofty opinions. Let's see how the false teachers were feeding their own

egos through a dangerous game of comparison.

Day 3: Boasting in the Lord

Main Theme:

Comparing ourselves to others is a foolish game that only breeds spiritual pride.

Poll:

Why is it so tempting for believers to compare themselves to other people?

A. We want reassurance that we are doing okay.

B. We use others to validate our own worth.

C. It makes us feel better about our own hidden flaws.

D. We are naturally competitive by design.

E. We spend way too much time looking at social media.

Opening Illustration:

Imagine running a race where everyone gets to draw their own finish line wherever they want. In ancient Corinth, teachers constantly bragged about their status, measuring themselves against each other to prove they were the "most elite." It was a spiritual popularity contest.

Set the Scene:

Paul calls out the false teachers for their arrogant self-promotion. By quoting the prophet Jeremiah, he redirects the church to the only valid source of boasting.

Read the Text:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise... But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (2 Corinthians 10:12, 17, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- The foolish action: "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves."
- Paul's verdict on this behavior: they "are not wise."
- The ultimate command: "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Guided Discussion:

- Why is measuring our spiritual progress against other people's lives so incredibly dangerous? (Allow discussion)
- How does the modern church sometimes fall into the trap of "comparing themselves among themselves"? (Invite multiple responses)
- What does it mean practically to "glory [boast] in the Lord" instead of our own accomplishments?
- Where in your life do you feel the heavy pressure of comparison? (Ask follow-up: How does glorying in what God has done set you free from the comparison trap?)

Discovery Insight:

True ministers do not compete for the spotlight or measure their worth against others. The Christian life

is not a talent contest. If we boast about anything, we must boast entirely about the grace and power of God.

Christ Connection:

Though Jesus performed the greatest miracles in history, He never sought human status or His own glory, declaring that He only did the will of the Father who sent Him.

Life Response:

Every time you are tempted to compare your life or ministry to someone else's this week, intentionally pivot and express gratitude for one specific thing God has done for you.

Encouragement Bridge:

When we stop looking at others and look to God, our vision clears. But we still need sharp discernment, because evil rarely looks evil.

Day 4: False Teachers Identified

Main Theme:

Evil rarely looks evil; it usually disguises itself as an angel of light.

Poll:

What makes a false teacher so difficult to spot in the church today?

A. They usually mix a lot of truth with a little lie.
B. They are often charismatic and incredibly likable.
C. They promise people exactly what they want to hear.
D. They look deeply spiritual, righteous, and holy.
E. They confidently use the Bible, but out of context.

Opening Illustration:

If poison came in a bottle labeled "Deadly Poison," no one would ever drink it. The enemy knows this. The most dangerous lies in the church are never presented as evil; they are wrapped in beautiful, spiritual language that appeals to our desires.

Set the Scene:

Paul reveals his deep, agonizing fear that the Corinthians are being seduced by "another Jesus," just as Eve was deceived by the serpent in the garden. He pulls the mask off the invading teachers.

Read the Text:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ... For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-14, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- Paul's fear: "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
- The historical parallel: "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty."

- The deception: "false apostles, deceitful workers."
- The ultimate disguise: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

Guided Discussion:

- Why is it so much easier to be deceived by an "angel of light" than a terrifying monster? (Allow discussion)
- What does Paul mean by the "simplicity that is in Christ," and how do false teachers usually corrupt it? (Invite multiple responses)
- How can a church protect itself from "deceitful workers" who look and sound like genuine apostles?
- How do we balance having a loving, trusting community with having sharp, biblical discernment? (Ask follow-up: Are you currently testing the media and messages you consume against the Word of God?)

Discovery Insight:

Satan’s greatest attacks on the church often come from within, disguised as righteous, eloquent, and exciting ministry. We must anchor ourselves deeply in the Scriptures so we are not seduced by counterfeits.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who speaks the pure truth, warning His flock ahead of time that dangerous wolves will come to them dressed in sheep's clothing.

Life Response:

Take one popular spiritual teaching or idea you have heard recently and intentionally test it against the clear teachings of the Bible.

Encouragement Bridge:

If polished speech doesn't prove a leader is genuine, what does? Paul shows us the shocking resume of an authentic apostle.

Day 5: Sufferings for the Sake of the Gospel

Main Theme:

The ultimate proof of a spiritual leader isn't their stage presence; it's their scars.

Poll:

If you were looking to follow a spiritual leader, what kind of resume would impress you the most?

A. A long list of massive successes and victories.
B. Glowing recommendations from famous influencers.
C. A record of severe hardships they endured for the cause.
D. Proof of their advanced education and theological degrees.
E. Their ability to deliver a flawless, moving speech.

Opening Illustration:

The false "super-apostles" in Corinth constantly boasted about their eloquence, their status, and their profound visions. In response, Paul decides to "play the fool" and boasts about something completely different to prove he is the real deal.

Set the Scene:

Paul lists his credentials. But instead of citing degrees and titles, he lists his beatings, shipwrecks, and suffering for the church, proving that true love sacrifices.

Read the Text:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck... In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Corinthians 11:23-25, 27, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- A sarcastic opening: "(I speak as a fool) I am more."
- The evidence of ministry: "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent."
- The severe physical toll: beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, weary, hungry, cold.

Guided Discussion:

- Why would Paul list his humiliating beatings and imprisonments as proof that he was a true apostle? (Allow discussion)
- How does the "resume of suffering" completely destroy the false teachers' obsession with looking successful and wealthy? (Invite multiple responses)
- Why does modern Christianity sometimes wrongly equate suffering with a lack of faith?
- How does reading Paul's list of hardships change your perspective on the minor inconveniences you face for your faith? (Ask follow-up: How can you view your current trials as a privilege for Christ's sake?)

Discovery Insight:

Authentic faith is proven by a willingness to suffer and sacrifice for Christ, not by living an easy, comfortable, and celebrated life. A true minister serves the sheep at great cost to themselves, while a false teacher exploits the sheep for their own gain.

Christ Connection:

Jesus did not prove His love for us from a throne of absolute comfort, but through the agony, stripes, and scars of the cross, bearing our suffering to secure our salvation.

Life Response:

Pray for believers around the world who are currently facing physical persecution, beatings, and imprisonment for the gospel today.

Encouragement Bridge:

Paul endured all of this because he desperately loved the church. Let's look at his final, passionate plea to the Corinthians.

Day 6: Appeal to the Unrepentant

Main Theme:

A spiritual reality check is essential to make sure our hearts still belong to Jesus.

Poll:

How do you know for sure that your faith is genuine and growing?

A. I feel a deep, emotional connection to God.

B. I strive to obey all the commandments.

C. My life is visibly bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

D. I rely completely on the grace of Jesus every day.

E. I go to church and participate every week.

Opening Illustration:

A car needs regular maintenance checks to ensure the engine doesn't blow up on the highway. We don't check the oil because we hate the car; we check it because we want it to survive the journey. Paul tells the church it's time to open the hood and do a deep spiritual diagnostic.

Set the Scene:

After exposing the false teachers, Paul turns his attention back to the church members. He warns them that he is coming for a third visit, and he issues a powerful, blunt challenge for them to evaluate their own hearts.

Read the Text:

"For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would... lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings... Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 12:20; 13:5, NKJV)

(Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- Paul's fear of their condition: "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings."
- Two urgent commands: "Examine yourselves," and "prove your own selves."
- The target of the examination: "whether ye be in the faith."
- The desired realization: "how that Jesus Christ is in you."

Guided Discussion:

- Why is "examining ourselves" so much harder than examining the flaws of the people around us? (Allow discussion)
- What does the presence of "envyings, wraths, and strifes" indicate about a person's true spiritual condition? (Invite multiple responses)
- What does it mean to "prove your own selves" to see if you are truly in the faith?
- If you were to take a completely honest spiritual diagnostic today, what would the Holy Spirit reveal? (Ask follow-up: How does knowing "Jesus Christ is in you" give you the courage to repent?)

Discovery Insight:

We must regularly and honestly examine our own hearts to ensure we are truly abiding in Christ and not just playing religion. True faith is not a title we claim; it is the living presence of Jesus Christ transforming us from the inside out.

Christ Connection:

Jesus dwells within every true believer, providing not only the grace to repent when we drift, but the divine power to live a totally transformed life.

Life Response:

Take ten minutes of total silence today to "examine yourself," asking God to reveal any hidden sin, pride, or strife that needs to be surrendered.

Encouragement Bridge:

As we close out our study of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, let's remember that the ultimate goal of all correction is restoration and love.

Day 7 Summary

Main Theme:

Dealing with false teachers requires spiritual discernment, divine weapons, and an unshakeable focus on Christ.

Poll:

Which of this week's lessons challenged your spiritual walk the most?

A. Tearing down strongholds with divine weapons (Spiritual War).

B. Stopping the comparison game (Boasting in the Lord).

C. Spotting the "angel of light" (False Teachers Identified).

D. Embracing hardship for the gospel (Sufferings).

E. Honestly evaluating my own heart (Examine Yourselves).

5 Weekly Takeaways:

1. **Divine Weapons:** We cannot fight a spiritual war with fleshly anger or human manipulation; we must rely on the mighty power of God to pull down strongholds.
2. **Boasting in the Lord:** Comparing our spiritual lives to others is foolish and breeds pride. All glory for any success belongs entirely to God.
3. **The Disguise of Evil:** Satan and his false teachers do not usually appear sinister; they present themselves as angels of light. We must fiercely guard the pure gospel.
4. **The Resume of Scars:** An authentic minister of Christ is marked by their willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the sheep, not by their polished image or wealth.
5. **The Reality Check:** We must consistently examine our own lives to ensure we are truly in the faith and that the transforming presence of Jesus is active within us.

Final Reflection Question:

Considering the spiritual warfare happening around us every day, what is one specific lie or "stronghold" you need to demolish with the truth of God’s Word right now?

(Pause for responses.)

Closing Appeal:

This week we learned that the church is a battlefield for souls. When false teachers distort the gospel, eternal lives are at stake. But we are not left defenseless! God has given us divine weapons to tear down every lie. Let us stop comparing ourselves to others, refuse to be seduced by polished counterfeits, and boldly embrace whatever suffering comes our way for the sake of the gospel. Above all, let us continually examine our hearts, making sure that Jesus Christ is truly reigning within us.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for giving us the divine weapons we need to fight the enemy's lies. Give us the discernment to spot false teachings and the humility to constantly examine our own hearts. Keep us anchored in Your pure gospel, and help us to boast in nothing but Your amazing grace. We ask this in Your holy name, Amen.