



2 Corinthians 12

Paul's Vision and His Thorn

¹I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. ⁵I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

LIFE Community Leader's Guide

Sunday, November 26

Big Idea: During times of weakness, we can know the all-sufficient grace of God.

Key Verse: ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Opening Question: When was the first time you put together a resume? What job were you applying for? Did you get it?

Study/Discussion Questions:

- In Chapters 11 and 12, Paul puts together a resume. In it he is 'boasting' about himself. Why is he doing this? (ch 11 v.1-6) What are some of the things he boasts about?
- How does Paul characterize the leaders who were causing trouble in Corinth? (ch 11 v.3-6)
- He ends this long section of his letter by talking about a 'thorn in his flesh' (ch 12 v.7-10). Why do you think he finishes with this paragraph? Does Paul sound more comfortable talking about his strengths or his weaknesses?
- Although Paul doesn't identify exactly what his 'thorn in his flesh' is, what do we learn about the bitter reality that he faced?
- How does Paul view Satan's part and God's part in his 'thorn'?
- When Paul says 'when I am weak, then I am strong', what do you think he means?
- Have you experienced a time when a weakness in your life has helped you see the 'sufficient grace' of God more clearly?
- In verse 9 of chapter 11, Paul says that the Lord told him, "my power is made perfect in weakness." What is it about weakness that enables the power of God to be made 'perfect'? What aspect of God's work demonstrates that most clearly? (*the birth, life, and death of Jesus*)
- What kind of stories are more compelling to you - stories of miraculous healing, or stories of someone who finds strength during times of weakness? Why?
- What does verse 8 tell us about the importance of prayer during times of pain and suffering? Does Paul make any connection between the amount of his faith and the likelihood of healing in this verse?
- In his message, Pastor Bryan outlined three essential elements when dealing with our own 'thorn':
 - **Ask** God to take it away— "three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away"
 - **Accept** God's sovereign will— "there was given me a thorn in my flesh"
 - **Appropriate** God's grace— "my grace is sufficient for you"
- Which elements of this process have you experienced? Which of these do you find difficult?
- On Sunday, Bryan told to story of Joni Eareckson Tada and interviewed Nancy Leland, a GC missionary who is recovering from serious automobile accident. What did you take away from the example of their stories.
- Is there someone in your life who demonstrates to you the truth of this portion of scripture?