



Thorns: From Weakness to Strength

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

OPEN

Everyone has been suspect and victim to the stick of thorns—whether roses or picker bushes, in a garden or on a hike, you personally or one of your children, perhaps sticking you or your dog or favorite ball. There are thorn stories in us and around us. Think for a second and share any “thorny stories” from your past.

DISCUSS

Thorns can be understood in life as those things that cause vulnerability and weakness in our lives. Whether something in our character, something brought on by our own actions, or circumstances beyond our control, thorns appear in life.

Read about the Apostle Paul’s thorn in the flesh: 2 Cor 12:1-10.

What does Paul NOT do in response to those challenging him?

Paul said he *pleaded* three times to the Lord for the thorn to be removed from him. What does this tell you about Paul and his thorn?

Paul in 12:9 says *Therefore* with a sense of resolve even though his thorn and weakness was to remain. What does it take for a person to say *therefore* with resolve when circumstances don’t change?

God’s grace is sufficient. While this may be true, *trusting* in God’s sufficient grace is altogether different.

What is your understanding of *grace*?

Does this understand provide enough for you to place you life’s trust in it as sufficient?

Does how you are engaging the thorns in your life suggest you are trusting in God’s grace?



When grace does not seem to be enough, we respond (or resist) in different ways such as: over-performing in our strengths (masking our weakness), withdrawal (hiding from others because of our weakness), boasting (deflecting our weakness), or destroying self or others (distracting from our weakness). Have you done any of these as a way to compensate for weakness in your life?

How do we come to trust in God's sufficient grace in our thorns and weaknesses (even when circumstances do not change)?

It would be great if trusting was a light switch in the mind, heart, and soul we could flip on. It would be great if trusting was a set of five principles we could apply to instantly trust in grace...to say *therefore*. It just is not that easy.

At the very least, you will find *surrender* at the heart of God's grace in your life.

Spend the remainder of your time sharing your stories of how you have trusted in God's grace or share your thoughts as to how a person learns to surrender their thorns and weaknesses to God.

What have you learned from the weekend message and your group's discussion?

YOUR NEXT STEP...

Memorize 2 Corinthians 12:9 this week.

But he (Lord) 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.

In your prayers, ask the Spirit to reveal your thorns and where you experience weakness in life (vulnerability).

Therefore...how will you respond to God in the face of your thorns?

Who is one person (or group) you could invite into your journey of thorns and weakness?