

Grateful, Week 4

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of Nov. 22nd

NOV 22ND SERMON SUMMARY

GRATEFUL EVEN IN OUR TRIALS (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

God is at work in our trials. He has meaning and purpose in them. They help us to grow to become the disciples and followers of Jesus that He created us to be.

We can be grateful in our trials because:

- **Trials make us who we are; they are a part of our story** (v. 7-8). Trials cause us to grow and depend on God; He uses them, and we are better because of them. We don't have to pretend to like them, and God doesn't always do what we want, but we can trust Him.
- **Trials connect us to God's grace and power, and to God's bigger story** (v. 9-10). Trials cause us to let God in to help us, and God's grace and power are revealed and perfected in our weaknesses. God uses our trials to bless and impact others, when we let Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read 2 Cor 1:3-7 (below):

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. **5** For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. **6** If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

1. Re-read the passage a few times. Jot down and discuss what you notice about the following:
 - How is God described?
 - There are several words used for "trials". What are they, and how are they different?
 - What can you infer about Paul's situation, and his relationship with the Corinthians
- 2a. According to this passage, what is the purpose of our trials?
 - b. How do we benefit or bless others in our trials? Share an example, if you can.

Read 2 Cor 12:7-10 (below):

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But 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. **10** That 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.

3a. According to this passage (and the message), what are some purposes in our trials?

b. How have you experienced God's grace and power in your trials recently?

c. When you think about your own spiritual growth, do you agree that our greatest periods of spiritual growth are usually related to trials? Why or why not?

d. How can trials be an opportunity for us to talk about our faith or share the gospel?

PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

4. Is there a "thorn" in your life right now? How can you trust God in it?

5. Which word describes your normal response to difficulty: gratitude or complaint? How can you become a person who responds with more gratitude, and less complaint?

6. How is God speaking to you about being grateful:

- In this Thanksgiving season?
- In becoming a grateful person, continually, genuinely, regardless of the circumstances?