

BEYOND THE WEEKEND

For the sermon on March 2-3, 2013
"Weakness"



Welcome to *Beyond the Weekend!* The experiences below are designed to connect with the weekend message and fit a variety of learning styles. They provide additional readings from other sections of Scripture such as the Old Testament, Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles (letters). Take 20-30 minutes each day and enjoy your pursuit of God!



Prefer e-mail? ***Beyond the Weekend*** is also available via daily e-mails, which include links to the Scripture (both written and audio), the sermon video, and a weekly blog post. To sign up for the daily e-mails, go to adabible.org/btw.

Day 1 2 Corinthians 12.7-10 | Humility in Success

What would you consider to be your greatest "success" spiritually? Perhaps you've led someone to Jesus, served in a difficult, cross-cultural situation, broke some sinful habit, or walked with someone through a tough stretch of time. Paul not only suffered for the gospel, he also healed the sick (Acts 14.8-10), received multiple visions (Acts records six), and preached by direct revelation from God (Galatians 1.11-12; Ephesians 3.3).

There was certainly good reason, and probably ample opportunity, for Paul to exalt himself. However, Paul recognized that he too was prone to the normal struggles of life—especially a constant temptation to pride. In fact, he says the reason he was given "a thorn in the flesh" (which some scholars believe to be an eye ailment of some type), was to "keep [him] from becoming conceited" (2 Corinthians 12.8).

Obviously, "success" is not bad in and of itself. The question is: *What effect is it having on you?* The temptation is to allow your success and achievements (no matter what environment: work, home, church) to become a breeding ground for pride and arrogance, no matter how well intentioned. Today's reading tells us God can use physical ailments to cause us to slow down, reflect, and evaluate ourselves spiritually. Take a few minutes and identify a recent "success" which has led to some amount of pride in your life. Confess this to God and look to him for humility in the midst of both success and pain.

Day 2 Judges 7 | Our Source of Dependence

If there is one trait that identifies most Americans, "self-reliance" would be near the top of the list. Because of our wealth, education, and access to technology, we often think there is nothing we can't achieve. "Just Do It" was not only a slogan for Nike; for many of us it summarizes our daily motivation.

Scripture is clear, though, that our ultimate dependence is on God. We need him for everything. He knows that, but he wants us to know it as well (he knows our propensity for pride when we do well). Such was the case as the Israelites were defending themselves in Canaan. In today's reading, Gideon (a rather pathetic leader sent to rescue the nation) is told to reduce his army from 32,000 men to 300 (typically, not an advisable strategy)! The reason: *God didn't want them to say, "My own strength has saved me"* (v. 2). Using 300 men and the "weapon" of trumpets, God achieves a great victory for them.

On what are you depending—education, popularity, athletic ability, wealth, possessions, social status? Recognize that everything you have, all of it, comes from the hand of a gracious God; and no matter how skilled or shrewd you are—you are ultimately dependent on God for everything. Today, listen to the song "None But Jesus" by Hillsong ([search youtube.com](http://search.youtube.com)), and recommit to depending totally on God.

Day 3 Psalm 147 | Source of Resiliency

We've spent the past several weeks understanding the need to be resilient in our faith. The ability to "bounce back" was demonstrated by Paul time and again. But how do you become resilient? How is this trait developed?

One thing we know is that we cannot become resilient just by trying to be resilient. Your resiliency will not increase at all by declaring every morning, "Today I will be resilient!"

The author of Psalm 147 tells us the source of resiliency: **God**. He is "mighty in power" (v. 5), he "sustains the humble" (v. 6) and he "delights in those who fear him" (v. 11). Like so many things in the spiritual journey, we only find resilience indirectly as we walk with God. Today, read this psalm prayerfully. As you read, underline the lines that speak to you. End your time expressing a desire for "the resilient life" but recognizing it will only come from knowing him (John 17.3).

BTW Blog

Ada Bible Church staff and leaders share how God is meeting them through the sermons. BTW blog posts are hosted on Sabea, our blog for spiritual formation, and go live on Wednesdays.

This week we hear from Brian Vander Ark, Senior Pastor of Family Ministries.

adabile.org/sabea



Day 4 James 1.2-4, 12 | The Purpose of Pain

Paul recognized that God was using his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12.7) for redemptive purposes. God was using Paul's trial and his pain to shape his character to be more like Jesus. We see the same thing later in the New Testament when the Apostle James tells us to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance...so that you may be mature and complete..." (James 1.2-4).

We need to internalize this teaching before we experience trials and pain. It is much more difficult to accept when we're in the middle of it. C.S. Lewis perhaps said it best, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 91). Today, go to adabile.org/sabea, and read "Grace In Trials" by Doug Redford (will be live on Thursday). It includes a Puritan prayer you may find helpful.

Day 5 Matthew 26.36-46 | Delight in the Journey

You can probably identify many "delightful" times in your life—birthdays, reunions, vacations, or holiday gatherings. Paul's list is different. His "delights" catch us by surprise: *weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, difficulties* (2 Corinthians 12.10).

These "delights" helped Paul identify with Jesus, who "for the **joy** set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame..." (Hebrews 12.2). Today, revisit the emotional scene of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. First, read the story in Matthew 26.36-46. Then, watch the scene play out in "The Passion of the Christ" (search "The Passion of the Christ In the Garden" on youtube.com). Jesus delighted in God's will even when it meant great pain. Thank God that you too can delight no matter what you face.

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Questions or Comments | Contact Tim Nelson, pastor of spiritual formation at tnelson@adabile.org.



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