

# small group **discussion**

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

## lean in

What are some undesirable gifts you've received? What do you do with a gift you really didn't care to receive? Re-gift it? Take it back? Stuff it in a closet? Use it anyway?

## look down

This week we conclude the series, *The Resilient Life*. Before you jump into this week's passage, spend some time talking about the impact this series has had on you. What have you learned? How has this material challenged or encouraged you? How is God working in you?

**Read 2 Corinthians 12.1-6 together.** What amazing things did Paul experience as described in these verses? If you were Paul, would you be tempted to brag about this... at least a little bit? Why does Paul refuse to boast?

**Read 2 Corinthians 12.7-10 together.** Paul says he was given a "thorn in the flesh." Many scholars believe this could have been a problem with his eyesight. However, Paul never really tells us what it is. How does Paul describe what it's like to live with this "thorn"? Where did it come from?

What was Paul's first reaction to this thorn? How did God respond? What was Paul's final conclusion about this thorn?

## look in

Suffering and difficulty come into our lives from a variety of sources. It appears from Scripture— such as the passage you just read—that God can be one who gives us situations of pain and hardship. He can allow it and sometimes he even produces elements in our lives that are hard for us to endure. How do you feel about God placing or allowing "thorns" in your life? Does this bother you in any way? Explain.

Paul prayed three times for God to remove his thorn. Asking God to relieve you of pain and struggle is good and natural. What is something (past or present) you've pleaded with God to take away from you?

God chose not to remove Paul's thorn. Instead, he said that his **grace would be enough** for him. Grace means favor—undeserved favor. How can God's favor put someone's thorns into perspective?

Paul said after God chose not to remove his struggle, he found delight in his thorn (weakness). It seems that he began to view this thorn as a gift. What did this gift produce in him? What did Paul receive because of the thorn that he would not have received if God had removed it from him?

Think about some of the thorns in your life—the ones you've asked God to remove but he has chosen not to give you relief. Are you able to see this thorn as a gift? Are you able to see any good that God is producing through your pain?

Spend some time praying for each other. It's a good chance that someone in the group is struggling with something significant. Remember, it's ok to ask God for relief! Remember to ask for God's sufficient grace in the situation and to ask him to do a good work with or through the pain you're suffering.



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