

**Pray for your time together in God's Word!**

**Read the passage out loud as a group.** Option: Give the group 5 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

**This Week's Passage**

**Scripture Reference**

**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**

*New International Version 1984*

**Paul's Vision and His Thorn**

<sup>1</sup> I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I 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. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—<sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. <sup>5</sup> I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup> Even 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, <sup>7</sup> or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.

**Discussion**

**Ask the Group:** What about this passage stood out to you?

*Leaders' Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the “observation” level*

**Ask the Group:** Why does Paul say there is nothing to be gained by boasting in visions and revelations (vs. 1)?

*Possible Answers: Visions and revelations can't be verified by anyone. This also can be self-serving and could come off as spiritual superiority. Ultimately, we are not responsible for any visions or revelations we may have, God is, thus we have no reason to boast.*

Optional: You could also take time to compare this to the tangible things that Paul tells the Corinthians to boast in at the end of chapter 11.

*If people in your group are asking questions about the “third heaven,” It may refer to paradise or what people would usually consider heaven. The first heaven would refer to the earth's atmosphere, and then second heaven would refer to outer space. Try not to let this part of the passage lead to a bunny trail.*

**Ask the Group:** Looking at verse 5, why would Paul boast in his weakness?

*Possible Answer: You can boast in your weakness because it highlights what God has done in your life and prevents you from being conceited.*

**Ask the Group:** Verse 7 talks about God giving Paul a thorn in his flesh. Why was this given to Paul?

*Possible Answer: In order that Paul would not be conceited.*

- **Ask the Group:** Have there been times in your life where you felt God has given you a thorn in your flesh (afflictions)? If so, what?

*Leaders' Notes: As a leader, you may want to open by sharing a personal experience from your own life.*

- **Ask the Group:** What did you learn about God and yourself through this experience?

**Ask the Group:** Paul says he pleaded with God 3 times that the thorn be removed (v. 8). Has there been a time in your life where you pleaded with God like this?

- **Ask the Group:** How did you respond to God's answer?

**Ask the Group:** Based on verse 9, what do our weaknesses teach us about our relationship with God?

*Possible Answer: In those moments we are able to recognize our need for God's grace. In realizing this, we grow closer to God.*

**Ask the Group:** What are some practical ways that we can delight in our weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties?

*Possible Answers: Take time when we are struggling to recognize that we need God. Bring our struggles and hardships to God. Focus more on what God may be trying to teach you through this hardship. Share your weaknesses with other people in order to be encouraged.*

*Leaders' Notes: We are able to delight in our weakness knowing that our life on earth is temporary and God has a greater purpose. (Matt 5:12 "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.")*

### **Gospel Application**

**Ask the Group (small or large):** Is there an area in your life where your boasting has made you conceited?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** How can you seek out humility in light of this?

**Ask the Group (small or large):** How can you delight in your weaknesses this week?

*Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out during the week to encourage your group.*

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

**Ask the Group (small or large):** Are there times when you think it is acceptable to boast?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** Is there something in your life that you need to stop boasting about, in that it does not build up others or glorify Christ?
- **Ask the Group (small or large):** Is there something in your life that you can or should boast about this week?

**Ask the Group (small or large):** Who in your life has sacrificed greatly for your spiritual and/or general well-being?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** What can you do to thank that person?