

THE MAGNIFICENT

# grace

OF GOD

SESSION SIX: EMPOWERED BY GRACE

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." 2 Corinthians 12:9

*connect* Open your group time by creating an environment in which you may begin to develop a community of connection. Get to know one another through sharing prayer requests and experiences that provide members with an opportunity to engage.

**CONNECTING IN PRAYER:** Begin your time together with prayer and praise.

**CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER:** When you hear Paul's phrase: "When I am weak, then I am strong," what comes to mind?

*grow* Watch the DVD for Session 6 now. Use the space below to record your thoughts, key points and questions you would like to either remember or discuss.

**GROWTH THROUGH UNDERSTANDING:** Other than Jesus, Paul is considered to be the most spiritual and influential person recorded in scripture. He was used by the Lord to write most of the New Testament. Paul was a member of the highly favored tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and in fulfilling his purpose as an apostle to the gentiles he was provided with the privilege of experiencing many great revelations. However, in the midst of Paul's greatness, he was given a thorn in his flesh that constantly tormented him throughout his life.

In this session, Dr. Evans highlights several things that helps us better understand the biblical concept of Paul's thorn. First, the Greek definition for the word thorn means "splinter or needle". Paul's affliction served as a splinter or needle that constantly nagged and irritated him. It was a problem that would not go away. Secondly, Dr. Evans points out that there are two sides to Paul's thorn. On one hand the devil is the source of Paul's torment, while on the other hand his torment is allowed by God (2 Corinthians 12:7). Also mentioned in this

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session is the purpose of the thorn. God allowed the devil to torment Paul to keep him from committing the potential sin of exalting himself (2 Corinthians 12:7). Lastly, even though Paul did what every Christian is commanded to do and that is to pray for deliverance, God chose to give Paul the grace to endure the thorn rather than removing it (2 Corinthians 12:8-9a).

Dr. Evans makes it clear in this session that with grace comes power. The reason Paul had the power to endure his pain was simply because of God's sufficient grace. God allowed Paul to be tormented by this thorn so that he would learn to utilize God's power in the midst of his weakness. Paul had reached a place in his walk with the Lord where he would "boast about his weaknesses" (2 Corinthians 12:9) and be "well content with weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:10) so that the power of Christ would be made manifest in his life.

# NOTES

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**GROWTH THROUGH DISCUSSION:** As you dive into the heart of Dr. Evans' teaching, utilize the following questions to generate discussion among your group.

1. How do you reconcile the fact that a holy and loving God often allows His children be tormented by the devil?
2. Thorns can manifest in different forms such as financial, physical, emotional, or spiritual. What thorns have you either experienced in the past or are currently experiencing? In what ways did they nag and irritate you?
3. Has there ever been a time that you consistently prayed for God to change something in your life, but instead He chose not to grant your request? If so, what was that experience like?
4. Share with your group a time when God manifested His power in the midst of your weakness.
5. In what ways have the thorns in your life helped shape your walk with the Lord?

*serve* Now is the time to apply the wisdom of what you have learned to your life, as you express the depth of your relationship with God through service to Him and others.

**SERVING GOD:** Now that you understand that God's strength is made perfect in your weakness, what will you do differently the next time you are given a thorn?

**SERVING OTHERS:** This week, instead of complaining to God about the thorns of your life, share your testimony with others about how God has empowered you in the midst of your weaknesses.

THE DAILY

Grace Guide

DAY ONE

**MEDITATE: Read James 1:2-4**

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

**MOVE:** Take time now to praise God for when your life is interrupted by a problem or circumstance you didn't plan or see coming; because it is through these unfortunate situations that we are developing spiritual maturity and becoming more like Christ.

Live out God's Kingdom principles here on earth by putting feet to your faith. Over the next 5 days, utilize the Daily Grace Guide to help you meditate on God's word.

DAY TWO

**MEDITATE: Read Hebrews 12:2**

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

**MOVE:** If you are in the midst of a challenging time, remember to always keep your eyes, mind, and heart on Jesus. He is our perfect example of how to patiently endure the problems we encounter in life.

DAY FOUR

**MEDITATE: Read 1 Corinthians 10:13**

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

**MOVE:** When we face the common trials of this life, be assured that God will not bring on us more than we can handle. Write down the trials you are facing and bring them before the Lord in prayer. Our faithful God has promised to give us the power to escape and endure them.

DAY THREE

**MEDITATE: Read Isaiah 41:10**

“Do not fear for I am with you, do not be dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

**MOVE:** Make a decision that today you will not allow your fears to paralyze your faith. Always remember that your loving God has promised to be with you and help you through the challenges of life.

DAY FIVE

**MEDITATE: Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9**

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

**MOVE:** Although you may have faced a number of trials and problems in your life, stop and praise God now that you are still here! God has demonstrated His grace and mercy by not allowing your afflictions to destroy you.