



2 Corinthians 11:21b-33 (NIV)

2 Corinthians 12:7b -10 (NIV)

We have permission to ask God to _____.

God has permission to _____.

God may choose to showcase His power on the stage of _____.

The miracle of sustaining grace begins with:

“_____.”

study questions



Use these questions in your community group time to dig deeper and discover how you can apply today's message to everyday life.

INTRODUCTION

Christ is alive. We Christians believe that. God is real. We Christians believe that. He has the power to change the world, heal our ailments, set us free, and a whole lot more! We Christians, almost by definition, believe that.

Then why do we so often face, what the Apostle Paul calls, *thorns*? What is the purpose of such hard things? Could it be that Jesus uses thorns to make some of the greatest displays of his supernatural power possible?

This seems to be Paul's view, and therefore is meant to be a real and experienced promise for those of us who are Christ's followers. This is certainly the pattern of “weakness to glorious strength” Jesus proclaimed loud and clear in his passion.

The tough part, even the trick, is to experience the assurance of his sustaining power and grace in the midst of the *thorn*. Just imagine what life could be like this side of eternity if we really did.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Looking back on your life as a Christ-follower has there been, or does there continue to be, something, someone, or some fact that has annoyingly stuck around you like Paul's *thorn*? What is it and (if it's not obvious) what makes it difficult? Have you ever sensed the power of Jesus in the midst of it?
- In the message Dwain said, “*God's lack of cooperation is not an argument for or against His existence.*” What do you think that means, and how is it true or not?
- Remembering that Paul is being kind of sarcastic in *playing by the same rules* as false teachers who had come to the Corinthian church, **ask someone in your group to read 2 Corinthians 11:21b through 12:10.**
 - What does this passage tell you about Paul's life? What did he think of miracles?
 - In 2 Corinthians 12:7-8, Paul uses moving language to tell us some very personal information. Why do you think he chose to be so revealing?
 - In verse 9 and the end of 10, he tells us a promise God gave him about his “thorn.” What is that promise? Do you think it's for us too? And how does it work?
 - Knowing what you know, do you think Paul would say that a miracle based on a “no” is even better than a miracle based on a “yes” to our prayers? Which would seem more powerful?
- How can the people of your group be praying for you this week? Is there a “no” answer you've been grappling with? How can we help each other get to “not my will, Lord, but yours be done?” Pray on that.

MOVING FORWARD

The thorny parts of your life may mean Jesus has evil right where he wants it. His followers can be assured that if we trust him we will see miracles we didn't think possible. Pray through that. Ask him if your heart is there. And ask for the strength to trust him and look for his supernatural power in the least likely place in your life.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“When I am weak, then I am strong” 2 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV)