

# **11 CALIFORNIANS**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# **NINE: THORN**

**Either with a group or on your own, use the following questions to explore Bible passages and apply insights from the video session.**

What stood out to you from the video?

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

1. Describe a moment from your life when you felt silly or embarrassed in front of others. How do you feel as you relive that memory? What did you learn about yourself during that circumstance?

2. What opinion do you hold of Paul as you read through the difficulties he encountered as he preached the gospel throughout the world? Why do you think Paul goes to such great lengths to describe the turmoil he experienced? What was he trying to convey to the Corinthians?

3. Why do people typically avoid talking about their weaknesses? Why are we obsessed with promoting our strengths instead?

4. What are some creative ways by which we can take a circumstance where we appear weak or foolish and use it as an opportunity to share the good news?

## Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

5. Many scholars disagree on the nature of Paul's "thorn." Some argue that it was a physical ailment, like a limp or glaucoma. Others argue that it was a constant temptation to sin that Paul couldn't quite shake. If you were in Paul's place, what would your personal thorn be?

6. What is the difference between how Satan viewed the thorn he sent to Paul and how God viewed the thorn? What does this teach us about the difference in God's point of view and Satan's point of view?

7. Describe your thoughts and emotions as you read the following words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." How does God join us in the midst of our pain?

8. Share a time when you pushed through a difficult period of life and came out stronger on the other side. What confidence do we gain by knowing that God empowers us in moments of weakness and struggle?



## DEEPER STUDY QUESTIONS

### Read Mark 14:32-42

9. The cup that Jesus talks about in this story is a symbol for the punishment of the sins of all mankind. Jesus asks God to take the cup away from him. How does this story strike you, to see that Jesus did not want to go to the cross? Why do you believe that Jesus chose to do the Father's will rather than his own?

10. How do these stories of weakness influence later stories of triumph? How does this story about the garden of Gethsemane change your view of the story where Jesus ultimately rises from the dead?

## A PRAYER FOR SERENITY

The following is a remarkably famous prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr entitled "The Serenity Prayer." It has been used to great success in programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs. Move slowly through this prayer, reading each word purposefully and meditating on each phrase, as we strive to accept the painful moments of life with grace and strength.

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it;  
trusting that You will make all things right  
if I surrender to Your will;  
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.

---

***Every time we find ourselves in discomfort... It's an opportunity to meditate and pray and be in the present moment with God. It's an opportunity to learn how to be okay, regardless of whatever situation we're in. It's an opportunity to find peace even while everything around us is chaos.***

**KYLE WELCH**

---