

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 Serving with a Limp

Warm Up

What is your reaction to miraculous or supernatural testimonies? Are you excited by them or a little sceptical? If you have a testimony of God's power in your life, do you share it reluctantly or with enthusiasm?

Background and context

The Corinthian Church had been infiltrated by false teachers who were challenging Paul's integrity and his authority as an apostle. He had been accused of stealing money collected for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul is defending himself and his ministry, by asking his readers to match his personal life, which was always honourable when with them, with his message of salvation. He is forced into 'boasting' not about his spiritual experiences but about how he has suffered for the Gospel, and how he has been given a "thorn" to keep him from becoming conceited. It has taught him to rely on God's grace.

Thinking it through: Main discussion/activity

READ 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. What are the surprising things in the passage? What is new? What don't you really understand?

1. **Read v1-4.** It is likely that the 'Man in Christ' Paul speaks of is himself. Why do you think he refers to this incident in the third person?
2. The Third Heaven is the presence of God, (the first two being sky and space). He describes being given insight into heavenly things. Why does Paul speak of this to the Corinthian church?
3. Paul refuses to give details of his vision, but instead shares about his weakness. Why do you think this is?
4. **Read v7.** We don't know what Paul's thorn was. What purpose did it serve? Why is that important? How does **James 4:6** help?
5. Paul calls his thorn a '*messenger of Satan*' what do you think this means?
6. Paul pleads with God to remove his 'thorn'. What is God's response?
7. What lesson can we learn from the way God dealt with Paul and Paul's response?
8. Paul, one of the greatest early church leaders, was not perfect, he struggled! How should that give us hope and encouragement when we do not feel 'up to the job' God has given us because of our failings or weakness?
9. Which other Biblical characters had dreams and visions? Were they 'perfect' in their life?
10. Why does God choose to use flawed characters to fulfil His purposes?

Discipleship and Application

11. When God chooses to speak to us through dreams and visions, how should we respond? How will we know if it is God speaking?
12. Can you testify to the truth of "*My grace is sufficient for you*"? Share a testimony.

Try to leave 15-20 mins to talk about prayer needs of the group and to pray.

There are many creative ways of praying together: writing prayers, using candles as a focus, reading prayers or praying for each other in pairs.