

INTRO

- Share about a time you asked for something and got a hard “no.” How did you respond?

READ

2 Cor 12:2-4, 7-10

REFLECT & RESPOND

Paul pleaded three times for his “thorn in the flesh” to be removed. We’re not entirely sure what exactly the thorn was, but Jesus denied his prayer and instead responded, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

Q: Have you experienced God saying ‘no’ to something you deeply desired? How did that impact you?

Why We Suffer

Ps Gabe outlined four reasons we suffer:

- We are in a spiritual war
- We and others make bad choices
- We live in a broken world of sin and death
- We love, and love makes us vulnerable

Q: Which of these resonates most with your life right now?

Q: How does knowing there are different causes of suffering help you process your own struggles?

Looking For Grace

So, what do we do with all that? Paul not only normalizes suffering (we shouldn’t be surprised by it), but also encourages us to seek God’s grace in it.

Here are seven ways God’s grace shows up in our suffering:

- Connection (we share comfort)
- Dependence (learning to rely on God)

- Perspective (seeing eternity in light of present trouble)
- Revelation (suffering reveals our true character)
- Transformation (pain leads to change and repentance)
- Humility (weakness keeps us from pride)
- Glorifying God (our weakness highlights His power)

Q: Which of these “graces” have you personally experienced?

Q: Which one is hardest for you to see when you are suffering?

Does it feel like there is a current “thorn” in your life? Perhaps instead of praying it away, as Paul did, ask God how He might be using it to form you.

Q: How can we as a group help each other notice God’s grace more clearly and support one another?

Look for one practical way to extend grace to someone else this week.

PRAY

- Pray for one another: specifically for God’s grace to be seen and received in the midst of weaknesses, hardships, or unanswered prayers.