

# SMALL GROUPS

Growing in Christ

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Week of November 5, 2017

### BIG IDEA:

I can choose to trust God no matter what.

1

### GETTING STARTED

What is your biggest fear?

2

### LOOKING BACK

How have you seen God at work over the last week?

Looking back on Sunday, is there anything that stood out to you, confused you, or challenged you?

(See Big Idea above)

3

### MY STORY

What makes it difficult to trust God?

Have you ever taken a step of faith where you saw God show up?

4

### DIGGING DEEPER

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NLT)** <sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. <sup>8</sup> Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. <sup>9</sup> Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

We don't know exactly what Paul meant by a thorn in his flesh. Maybe it was a physical disability, a mental illness, or a persistent temptation or compulsion. Sometimes God relieves us from those things, and sometimes He doesn't. According to Paul, what are some possible reasons for God to leave us in a particular struggle?

Taking pleasure in difficult circumstances runs totally contrary to how we think most of the time. How would you explain verse 10 above in your own words?

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul took time to describe his own difficult circumstances, and then admitted his own struggle with a thorn in his flesh. Why do you think it is important to have a personal testimony to share?

# 4

## DIGGING DEEPER (CONTINUED)

**Job 1:18-22 (NLT)**<sup>18</sup> While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: “Your sons and daughters were feasting in their oldest brother’s home.<sup>19</sup> Suddenly, a powerful wind swept in from the wilderness and hit the house on all sides. The house collapsed, and all your children are dead. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.”<sup>20</sup> Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship.<sup>21</sup> He said, “I came naked from my mother’s womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!”<sup>22</sup> In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.

What responsibility does God have, if any, for bad things that happen to us? (By the way, professional theologians have argued about this forever, so don’t worry so much about being right; just share what you think.)

What do you appreciate about how Job handled himself during a horrifying situation?

What does your response to difficult circumstances show you about your own trust in God?

Recent studies in Wisconsin show a direct correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and health threats in adulthood, including: higher rates of depression, increased health risk behaviors (e.g. sexual promiscuity, smoking, binge drinking), poor general health, and occurrence of chronic health conditions ([https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Documents/WisconsinACEBrief\(2011-13\)WEB\\_9.16.pdf](https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Documents/WisconsinACEBrief(2011-13)WEB_9.16.pdf)). The specific adverse childhood experiences included in the study were:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Physical abuse                                 | 5. An incarcerated household member   | 7. Violence between adults in the home |
| 2. Emotional abuse                                | 6. A household member who was chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal | 8. Parental separation or divorce      |
| 3. Sexual abuse                                   |   |  |
| 4. An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household |   |  |

58% of Wisconsinites had at least one of these adverse experiences before they turned 18. How do you think ACEs could affect someone’s efforts to become a better disciple of Jesus?

What practical steps can the church take to help prevent ACEs from happening in our own community?

How can acknowledging ACEs help the church become better at accomplishing our mission?

# 5

## BRINGING IT HOME

“ACEs can disrupt healthy development, causing changes in the brain which can result in diminished learning capacity, reduced ability to form healthy relationships, and faulty emotional control” (Wisconsin ACE Brief, 2011-2013). We don’t choose our circumstances, but we can find resilience and healing as we trust that our Heavenly Father is preparing a safe home for us with Him forever.

# 6

## PRAYER REQUESTS