

PRODIGAL

CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2)

Community Group Study Guide 2 Corinthians 12:1-10– Week of January 16, 2021

Introduction

- How are you doing with the follow through on your New Year's Resolution? Where are you looking for power to fulfill it? Where are you looking for power to be the tree of Psalm 1 whose leaves "do not wither"?
- We tend to turn to the Lord for hope, love, joy, and peace, but we should also look to him for "power."
- Power is a huge part of Christianity: God is omnipotent; he is all-powerful. His word is power; when God speaks his word always accomplishes its intended effect. The center of Christianity is about the transcendent and omnipotent God taking on flesh, bearing infinite wrath on the cross and resurrecting from the dead so that all of his children might have eternal life. The lives of all those who are truly saved by grace through faith in Christ should expect that their lives be transformed by God's power.
- Matthew 9:16-17 provides powerful imagery of the kind of transformation that God's rule and reign brings into a believer's life. It tears up and bursts all of the "old man" to make way for the "new man."
- 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 provides vision and understanding for how God uses his children in power. God "always" leads us in "triumphal procession." Instead of capturing us and leading us to our death, Christ captures us, forgives us and commissions us to spread his rule and reign after the ultimate victory has been won. When our gospel call is accepted by others his intended effect goes forth, and when it is rejected by others his intended effect is still going forth.
- Do you want a life of power in Christ? Do you want Christ's power to faithfully steward all that God throws your way in 2022?
- *2 Corinthians 12:1-10 teaches us that in order to see God's power manifest in your life: (1) Remember the Works of God, (2) Be Realistic About God's Discipline, and (3) Let Christ's Power Rest on You.*

Remember the Works of God (v1-4)

- In these verses, Paul speaks in third person, admits that he didn't really know what happened (whether he was in or out of the body), acknowledges that he was "caught up" to heaven by something outside of himself, and appeals to God's knowledge of what occurred (through the use of "God knows") in order to recollect the moment when God moved most powerfully in his life. Paul denies credit for the experience, and clearly voices that he'd rather be known for his weaknesses later in the passage. By "boasting" in this manner, Paul masterfully defeats his opposition who truly boasted about God moving powerfully in their lives.
- Paul shows us that we can derive much encouragement and see god's power manifest in our lives in the present by remembering and cherishing the moments when God moved profoundly in our lives in the past.
- Recollecting when God first moved, and other later times that God moved in our lives in the past gives us greater faith to believe that he will move in our lives today. This was a practice of the prophets (Isaiah 63:7) and psalmists (Psalm 77) of the Old Testament.

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand that Christ's power manifests itself in our weakness.

Heart

To trust that Christ will give us the grace we need when we step out in our "weakness" for the sake of his name.

Hands

To step out in faith to accomplish great things for Christ's glory, and to be receptive to the humility and other lessons he gives us through thorns.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Membership 101** meeting will be held **this Sunday, January 23 at 1PM**. Interested parties should RSVP here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/membership>

Sign up to join a **service team** here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve>.

We will announce the re-scheduled date of the next **Baptism Seminar** this Sunday.

- Ask: What do you remember about the time/period in which you were saved? How did God's power transform your life in that period? What sin did he help you conquer? What was your engagement with the Bible like in that period?
- If nothing comes to mind, perhaps you're not walking with Christ. One cannot have his power move in his life without truly being in Christ. Turn to him, repent of your rebellion against his power, confess your sin, and believe that he will give you his saving and sanctifying power going forward.

Be Realistic About God's Discipline (v7-8)

- After Paul had the greatest experience of a living human being in history, God rapidly brings him down to earth with the giving/gifting of the thorn. It was more shocking than returning to Boston after a trip to Florida in mid-February.
- Upon receiving the thorn Paul asked God to remove it. When God's answer was no, Paul had the wisdom to understand that the thorn truly was from God and was given to humble him.
- When God gives us thorns in our own life, we shouldn't stoically receive them as facts of life, but realistically identify them as thorns .
- There is a lot of debate about what the thorn was. Honest commentators admit that we can't know specifically what it was. What we can know is that the thorn caused pain and frustration that affected every area of Paul's life, that he really wanted to get rid of it and that he prayed diligently to get rid of it.
- The thorn was not given to punish Paul, but to humble and help him grow. God provided it as a means of loving, fatherly discipline (Hebrews 12:5-6).
- Why does God use such means to humble us and teach us? In the flesh, we don't have hearts to receive such lessons when all is well in our own strength. It's only when we're weakened and can see our daily need for God's grace in our lives that we are open to learning from him and relying upon his power.
- To identify what might be a God-given thorn in your life, list out those things that you are constantly asking the Lord to remove from your life. Meditate over how God might be using such a thorn to humble you and sanctify you.

Let Christ's Power Rest on You (v9-10)

- Paul teaches us in verses 9 and 10 that power in the Christian life manifests where we least expect it. Christ's power manifests itself in our weakness.
- Christ's response to Paul teaches us to rely on God's grace on a day to day basis. When we trust him to satisfy us and empower us daily, his rest and power comes over us.
- He does this to get us to rely on him more, and to show the world that it's actually his power working through us accomplishing his purposes.
- We can look upon God with bitterness and anger for growing us in this way, limiting the peace and power that we have in Christ and the effect of our witness, or accept it with thanksgiving and accomplish much for his kingdom (like Paul).
- When we boast of our weaknesses in Christ, his power truly rests on us. We get power and peace that the world cannot take away. While working for his sake, and experiencing such power, we can gracefully and faithfully steward weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for his glory.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

1. Does anything from the sermon or text stick out to you in a fresh manner?
2. In what area of your life do you want God's power to bring transformation the most?
3. In this passage, Paul tells about the time when God moved most powerfully in his life. Does engaging with this passage remind you of the time/period when you were saved? Or of a similar occasion or period in your own life? How would you describe your experience of God's power then? What lessons do you take away as you reflect on these experiences?
4. Why does God give believers thorns?
5. What does it mean to be realistic about God's discipline? What could we be missing out on in our relationship with God if we simply write off all challenges and pains as "parts of life"?
6. Are there things that you identify as thorns in your life? What benefits in your faith have you derived from living with them?
7. **Read verses 9 and 10.** What lessons stick out to you from these verses?
8. How is Christ's power on display when we serve him in our weakness?