

## Paradox - Power Through Weakness

IceBreaker: Did you ever have a possession (like a car) that you felt that God used it as a way of humbling you?

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.*

**(2 Cor. 12:2-4)** - Paul was not *permitted* to tell about the heaven (paradise), probably because he would have something to brag about (because he saw it and others didn't). What one thing(s) in your life (that you accomplished or that you have) do you tend to brag about or that give you a good reason to brag?

- **Sometimes to keep humility in my heart God puts a “thorn” in my side** – “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.” **(2 Cor. 12:7)** – Paul's thorn was placed there to humble him. Do you have a “thorn” in your life that humbles you? Explain.

¶ **Some “thorns” can drive me to that “if only” prayer to God** – “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.” **(2 Cor. 12:8)** – Are you tempted to pray “if only” prayers? When do you tend to pray those types of prayers? Look to your past and ask yourself if those prayers were effective?

*So He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. (Matt. 26:44) –*

¶ **Helplessness doesn't equal hopelessness** – “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” **(Psalm 31:24)**

- **Paradox of power: I find God's strength only in the face of my weakness** – “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” **(2 Cor. 12:9a)**

Explain a situation in which you were completely helpless? Did that helplessness equate to hopelessness? How could that situation have been used as a showcase for God's power? What would it take to implement this perspective the next time a helpless situation arises?

¶ **The will of God will never leave you where the grace of God cannot keep you** – “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. **(2 Cor. 9:8)**

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:15-16)*

- **My “thorn” is not about removing pain, it's about reshaping perspective** – “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” **(2 Cor. 12:9b-10)**

*...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:23-24)*

On a spectrum, where one side is total maturity where you *delight in weakness* and the other side being total immaturity in which you have displeasure in weakness, how would you place yourself on that spectrum right now? Have you moved towards maturity recently? What could you do to move even further in maturity?