

## ***A Primer for the Suffering***

### **“The HOW of Suffering”**

#### **GETTING STARTED**

ICE BREAKER: Tell about an actual thorn OR a figurative thorn that caused you pain.

KEY THOUGHT: ***Move from begging to boasting***

#### **GETTING THE POINT**

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-7

1. Why does Paul first describe his revelation in the third person, before shifting to first person?
2. According to verse 7, what was the purpose of the “thorn in the flesh,” and how does that purpose relate to the idea of boasting?
3. What are some possible interpretations of Paul’s “thorn,” and why do you think Scripture leaves it undefined?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

4. How does the Lord respond to Paul’s request for his thorn to be removed? How does the first part of His response relate to the second?
5. How does Paul’s attitude shift from verses 8 to 10? What does this reveal about his understanding of suffering and weakness?

#### **GETTING DEEPER**

Read Matthew 26:36-39, 42, 44

1. What do you make of the fact that Jesus prayed in these verses three times, & Paul did too?
2. How does Jesus’ prayer shape the way you think about unanswered prayers or struggles?

#### **GETTING PERSONAL**

1. What is a “thorn in your side” right now, and how have you been responding to it?
2. When you pray about your struggles, do you tend to ask God to remove them, or to work through them? Why?
3. Paul suggests that thorns can cultivate dependence, humility, and even celebration. Which of these is hardest for you, and why?
4. Paul moves from begging for relief to boasting in weakness. What would it look like for you to “boast” in your weakness?

#### **PRAY...**

*that we will come to boast in our weaknesses because they bring us closer to Christ.*

***GP Groups: Know ♦ Care ♦ Encourage***