

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Called in Suffering

February 16 & 17, 2019

Fire is a familiar biblical metaphor for the shaping influence of hardship and suffering. And so is “wilderness”. The witness of both God’s Word and God’s people is that we sometimes discern our calling in the midst of a difficult situation over which we have no control – the loss of a loved one, a job transition, a serious illness. This perspective brings hope in difficult times, and bears witness to God’s power to work to bring light into even the darkest of situations.

SCRIPTURE TEXT : 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

This is an intriguing passage from Paul’s deep engagement with the church in Corinth. He explains the hardships of his life in the previous chapter and in chapter 12 is really working on another matter – how weakness is a gift. *The thorn in the flesh* is a challenge to Paul’s strength and self-sufficiency. Biblical scholars are not entirely certain as to what Paul’s ailment was. The bottom line, however, is not what the ailment is, but what it represents. It humbles Paul. This humility, this forced weakness, removes the basis for boasting. The key verse in the passage is 12:9 “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” That is – God’s power; God’s grace. The theological key in this passage is: who God calls are those who have suffered; those who don’t have it all together; those with no great reasons to be praised.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How has Paul’s “thorn” affected his life?
- Have you had a time in your life when you experienced this “forced weakness”? What was that like?
- How has God worked in and through you during a time of weakness?
- What will you do to further develop trust in God during times of weakness?
- Verse 9 says “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” How does this make you feel? Why?

APPLICATION: This week, take the time in a moment of weakness or suffering to remember that it is a gift and allows us to see God’s power and grace at work.

*Additional Resource: The Stories We Live by Kathleen Cahalan**

**This sermon series is based on concepts from Cahalan’s book. This week’s sermon and study guide following along with Ch. 7.*