

ICE BREAKER

What's the most painful "small" injury you've ever had? A splinter, bee sting, stubbed toe?

LOOK BACK

- Does your pain tend to push you toward God or pull you away from him?
- Have you ever been disappointed with God because he didn't do what you hoped he would? What did that do to your relationship with him?

LOOK UP

- Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Unanswered prayer is not proof of weak faith. What stands out to you about God's response to Paul?
- "My grace is sufficient for you..." What God provides for today is enough for today. How would it change your day to trust God just for today?
- "My power is made perfect in weakness." Paul saw his weakness as a place where God shows up. How might that change the way you see your own pain?
- Read Hebrews 4:15-16. How does knowing God suffered himself change the way you see your own pain?

LOOK AHEAD

- What "thorn" have you asked God to remove?
- Have you been asking for his presence as well?
- Are you willing to trust him enough for today?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Pray "give me enough grace to stay faithful for today" as you go throughout your week.

SUMMARY

Pain and suffering are a powerful influence in our lives, and the pressure isn't ending us, it's changing us. When we hurt, we ask why. Why does God allow this? Why me? Our "why" question has a "who" answer. Riley once woke up with a MRSA infection that left his face badly swollen. His mom had to drain the sore with her fingers in his mouth, in tears and apologizing the whole time. His answer was, "It's okay, Mom, keep going." He wasn't angry, because he understood she wasn't the source of the pain. She was part of the healing. Often we can't see the broader story, but Scripture gives us one that helps with ours.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul describes a thorn in his flesh. Three times Paul begged God to take it away, and the answer was no. Unanswered prayer is not proof of weak faith. God said no to removing the thorn and yes to giving himself: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The word for Christ's power "resting" on Paul means to pitch a tent and camp out, so his power arrives as presence. Jesus also prayed three times in Gethsemane and heard no. He didn't fix sin and death from a distance. He came in and suffered it himself, because he loved us.

MAIN TAKEAWAY

God doesn't always remove our pain, but he never removes his presence. Trust him enough for today.

CONVERSATION TIPS

- **Listen Well.** Give others your full attention, and listen to understand rather than to respond.
- **Share Honestly.** Be open about your thoughts and questions; none of us have all the answers.
- **End with prayer.** Share requests around the group, then close your time together in prayer.