



## IN WEAKNESS, WE ARE STRONG

This week continued our new series in the book of Judges. Chapter 6 follows the story of the Israelite army as they are led by Gideon, a military leader and judge who led the Israelites as they conquered enemy armies in the Promised Land of Canaan despite impossible odds. This is where the helplessness of God's people becomes a platform from which His goodness and glory shines.

As parents, we are often acutely aware of our own helplessness. But God does not call us to “do better” or ignore our struggles. Through the story of Gideon, we are called to recognize His grace in our families despite our imperfections. As we journey through this series together, it is our prayer that your family will learn to boast not in yourselves, but in weakness that shines a greater light on the God who has saved you and redeemed you by His strength and mercy.

**\*\*Parents, due to the cancellation of services because of weather conditions, we have posted the sermon online for you to watch at home. Visit [mercyhillgso.com/messages](http://mercyhillgso.com/messages) to stream the sermon and then read the story together with your family.**

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### ***DISCUSSION STARTER***

#### **What's a thorn in the flesh?**

This week we're going to read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 as he writes about having a “thorn in the flesh.” In order to make this concept real, this activity will help us understand what exactly Paul meant by this statement. To get started, look around your house to find a pair of gloves (ideally gardening gloves or thick winter gloves) and a large button-up shirt from your closet.

Have a family member put on the pair of gloves to start. Their challenge is to put on the button-up shirt and button the top three buttons with their gloves on. To make it even harder, have the family member also unbutton the buttons and take the shirt back off again to complete their turn. Have fun challenging one another or even adding a timer to spark some healthy competition around the table.

So what happened? Chances are, you had a lot of trouble trying to button the shirt up with those thick gloves on your hands. And trying to slide your arms in and out of the sleeves might have been tricky too. Just like you had a hard time completing the challenge because the gloves got in the way, Paul also had a hard time completing his mission for God because of the thorn in his flesh. This weakness he struggled with reminded Paul that the church in Acts was not successful because of anything he had done on his own, but because God was at work through him.

There are lots of ways in which God has created us to be uniquely gifted and talented people, but because we are human, we are also weak in some areas of our lives. This week we're going to explore why we should not be ashamed of these weaknesses, but boast in them because they highlight the power and strength of God working through us.



## **READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10 (NLT)**

6 If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, 7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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## **TABLE TALK**

These questions are designed to help students learn about the Bible story or passage you just read with them. Use them at dinnertime or in the car to talk about what you're learning in community group or find a specific time for your whole family to work through these questions together.

### **1. We all have things that we struggle to do or understand on our own. Can you each share an example?**

Whether it's moving heavy objects during a building project or needing help to complete tricky math homework, come up with honest examples that reveal your individual weaknesses or shortcomings.

### **2. What weakness is Paul referring to in verse 7?**

We are not quite sure. It could have been some physical suffering or injury that Paul suffered from. It could also have been a weakness within Paul that was difficult to deal with. The Bible does not specifically tell us - but we know that God gave him this weakness in order to keep Paul humble.

### **3. How does this weakness keep Paul from becoming prideful?**

Paul was reminded by his weakness that he is only a human, and therefore imperfect. It reminds him that God is the one with perfect strength and great power to work things in this world for our good and His glory. Paul is reminded that God is the one in control of building His kingdom, and that Paul is invited to be a part of the process.

### **4. How does God respond when Paul asks Him to take away this weakness?**

God tells Paul that "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." He is telling Paul that he does not need to be Superman or have it all together to be used by God. Actually, God uses weak and limited people to accomplish all sorts of incredible feats in the Bible (think of Moses, Jonah, the Disciples..). We were never made to be superheroes on our own. Instead, we are ordinary people being used by an extraordinary God.

### 5. How do other people see Jesus through us when we boast in our weaknesses (v.9)?

When we talk about how we are weak, it shows that we are imperfect people with limitations. Then, as we are successful or accomplish goals in our lives, we know these things only happen because of the power and grace of Christ - nothing that we have done on our own. And as people around us look in on our lives, our weaknesses become opportunities to point to God's handiwork!

### 6. How does the gospel show us our weakness and God's strength?

Apart from Jesus, we have no power to rescue ourselves from sin and death. The only one who could stand in our place, take our punishment, and come back to life was Jesus Christ. The gospel shows us that at our weakest and most sinful, God chose to send His Son to be our rescuer and die in our place.



## APPLY IT THIS WEEK

### So that all may hear...

As people, we are prone to become prideful and worship ourselves. Without reminders of our helplessness apart from God (reminders like having your army shrunk to 300) it is easy to think we succeed on our own strength. This week, as a family, be aware of who we praise when good things come into our lives. Are we praising ourselves or are we praising God?

Around the dinner table at night, help each other to think of good things that happened throughout the day. Then, create opportunities to praise God for being in control of those events and circumstances. For example, if a student gets a good grade or a parent completes a work project, thank God for giving you the intellect and brainpower to achieve these goals. If you can, help each other to see how, apart from the gifts or movements of God, we could never have achieved or gained these things. Read John 15:5, James 1:17, and 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 for encouragement in these conversations.

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## PRAYER TIME

Use these prayer points to pray throughout the week...and to keep the conversation going about the topic being discussed. Be open to your child about ways in which you are praying through these issues.

### 1. Prayer 1

Thank God for giving us weaknesses to remind us of His strength and power in our lives.

### 2. Prayer 2

Ask God to keep reminding us to be humble and to praise Him in all circumstances.

### 3. Prayer 3

Pray for someone in your life who needs to hear the good news of the gospel in order to see that they do not need to be ashamed of their weaknesses.

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## ***LESSON & MEMORY VERSE***

This section will return next week, January 15.

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## ***READING PLAN***

We want to see our children learn to love reading the Bible. Therefore, we've laid out a Bible reading plan that goes along with the The Gospel Story Bible. We have these Bibles for sale each week. I would highly encourage your family to pick one up if you do not already have one and follow along in our yearly reading plan.

This week - in The Gospel Story Bible - read story #2 - "God Created Man and Woman" found on pg.4. Read this story several times during the week.