



DISCUSSION GUIDE

'OVERWHELMED' - Lessons from Paul

GETTING STARTED

How do we typically explain feeling overwhelmed? What are things we tell ourselves when we feel overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed and anxious?

QUICK REACTIONS FROM THE MESSAGE

How would you summarize/paraphrase the message in your own words?
What point/idea resonated most with you? Why?

Describe what you know of how Paul has encountered overwhelming obstacles in his life and ministry?

How can we minimize pride as something that God desires to deal with us?

In what way did Paul become ruthlessly honest with what was the reason for the thorn in his flesh?

What can we learn about Paul praying that God would remove this thorn?

How can we learn to accept God's NO? Has this happened to you? What may happen when we refuse to move towards acceptance?

How did Paul "reinterpret" the meaning of the thorn in his flesh?

What may God be asking us to reinterpret in our lives (that hurts), but God may be doing for our good?

EXPLORE THE PASSAGE [2 Corinthians 12:1-10]

(Yes, these questions can seem silly, however, good discussion and interpretation of the Bible begins with having a proper understanding of the basic facts; who, what, when, and where in the text.) Work through this quickly, the answers are fairly obvious.

Who was the man in Christ whom Paul described? (12:2)

Why did Paul tell the Corinthians about his vision, despite his misgivings? (12:2-4)

Why was Paul reluctant to speak about his vision? (12:3-6)

What happened during the revelation Paul described? (12:4)

Why did Paul refrain from boasting? (12:6)

For what reason might Paul have become prideful? (12:7)

What prevented Paul from developing a proud spirit? (12:7)

Why did Paul have a "thorn"? (12:7)

Who was responsible for giving Paul a "thorn in the flesh"? (12:7)

What was Paul's response to his "thorn"? (12:8, 10)

What purpose can a thorn have in our lives? (12:9)

QUESTIONS THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEXT

What are some weaknesses that you find difficult to live with?

What can we learn from Paul's example about dealing with things we would rather not have?

How can you allow the Lord's power to take over where you are weak?

How does the Christian perspective on power and weakness differ from that of the world?

In what ways can you imagine that our weaknesses become an opportunity for God's power and grace to shine?

What does it mean that God's grace is sufficient? How would that make a difference?

What new perspective may God be offering you that you consider is an obstacle?

APPLY THE PASSAGE

What do we learn about God and about ourselves in these passages?

What do you need to stop, start or do differently as a result of reading this passage?

How can we pray for each other?