



Growth Group Questions
March 1, 2026
“Life Is Fragile”

CONTEXT

The people in Corinth were “wowed” by people who had deeply moving and powerful spiritual experience that they would talk about. Paul recognized the danger of this because the experience could become more important than the God who allowed the experience to happen.

More than likely, people in the Corinth church were wondering why Paul had not had an experience like this, although his conversion experience on the Damascus Road in Acts 9 was dramatic. Perhaps he had talked about that in Corinth, but he had not shared about his experience of being caught up to “paradise” and hearing inexpressible things. For the Jewish people of Paul’s day, the first heaven was the sky that we see, the second heaven is outer space, and the third heaven was God’s dwelling.

Even though Paul had this kind of experience he does not believe it is helpful in building up the church. Note how little he says about his experience. Paul says he could boast about it, but in the long run that kind of boasting is not helpful. Private spiritual experiences can easily become spiritual status symbols that divide people rather than unite them.

Paul then moves to the thorn in his flesh that torments him. The word used here for thorn could also be translated stake, the kind of stake used for impaling, or a sharp instrument. The word used for “torment” in verse 7 has to do with being punched. No one is certain what this “thorn” was, but whatever it was it caused Paul discomfort and discouragement.

Paul pleads for the thorn to be removed but God does not take it away. It is in this realization that Paul is reminded that God’s grace is sufficient for him because God’s power is made perfect in weakness. Paul moves from boasting about the vision he had to wanting to boast about his weaknesses so that the power of Christ might rest on him and the church would see what it looks like to follow Jesus.

Broken Femur by Diane Dammeyer
San Diego, CA July 28, 2020



SCRIPTURE AND QUOTES

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

¹I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. ⁵I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, ⁷or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Psalms 73:21-26

²¹When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, ²²I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. ²³Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. ²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

C.S. Lewis – *The Problem of Pain*

“...Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pains: it is God’s megaphone to rouse a deaf world”

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,^[a] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

QUESTIONS

1. In Hebrews 4:16, we are told to “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” What is the difference between mercy and grace?
2. What does the phrase “my grace is sufficient for you” mean to you personally?
3. What does it mean that God’s “power is made perfect in weakness”? (2 Corinthians 12:9)
4. How can God’s grace make a person strong?



5. How can we cultivate a spirit of contentment and trust in God's grace when our prayers for relief are not answered the way we want?
6. What Bible verse(s) provide encouragement for you when you are feeling weak?
7. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, the Apostle Paul says that he delights in his weaknesses, hardships and difficulties. How can our weaknesses be seen as assets or blessings in disguise?
8. In his sermon, Pastor Paul used a quote from CS Lewis on pain. What do you think Lewis was trying to convey in this quote?

PASTOR PAUL'S SERMON QUESTION

1. How does knowing that you can approach God's throne of grace with confidence help you deal with discouragement?
2. Ask God to give you a word of encouragement. What word is He giving you?

