

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace and strength during times of pain and struggle.

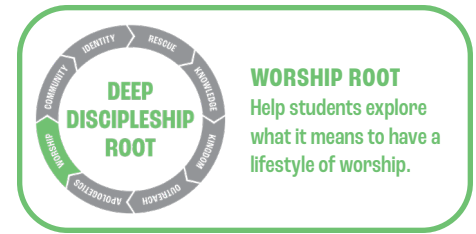
SCRIPTURE

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

OVERVIEW

Today we are starting the first lesson in our When Life is Hard series and focusing on the Worship Root. Difficulties can help us experience God's grace and grow in our relationship with him. This is why *disciples of Christ rely on God's grace and strength during times of pain and struggle*.

FACILITATOR NOTE: We've given you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.



OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What has been one of the hardest struggles you've faced in your life?
- When have you had to rely on God?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

- Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace and strength during times of pain and struggle.
- Like a splinter in the bottom of our foot, we will face struggles causing us to limp through life. However, God gives us the strength and grace needed to get through them.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-8 and discuss 1-2 of these questions:

7-10 minutes

- Why do you think the Bible never tells us what Paul's thorn was?
- What types of struggles did Paul experience because of his relationship with God?
- How do you think struggles can help us grow in our relationship with God?



Say something like: God places tests in our lives for us to stay humble before him and rely on him fully. He doesn't give them as a punishment but opportunities to shape us into people who trust in his grace and strength. When we go through struggles, it's a chance for us to run to God for his help and grace.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How can the grace God provides change the way you react to pain and suffering?
- How can rejoicing in your struggle change your perspective and experience of that struggle?
- In what ways has God's strength helped you through a recent struggle?



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: We don't have what it takes to get through the pain and suffering of this world on our own. However, we can endure and push through with God's grace and strength. We can even rejoice and celebrate our trials. We can do this because we know God's grace is much bigger than any struggle we will ever face. We are able to walk through difficulties with an attitude of worship because God gives us the grace needed to sustain us.

CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5–7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how you've relied on God's grace and strength during a difficult time.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Example: Bethany Hamilton was a rising surf star until a shark attacked her at the age of 13. The encounter resulted in the loss of her left arm. It seemed that her dream of ever becoming a professional surfer was over. However, she is a dedicated Christ-follower who relies heavily upon her faith which gives her a source of truth, hope, and strength. Through the grace of God, she continued surfing. She even accomplished her dream of becoming a professional. More importantly, she has used her platform as a professional surfer to encourage others and share her faith. Her story of enduring a painful struggle with the help of God's grace continues to impact people all over the world.¹

- How do you think Bethany's faith helped her get through this struggle?
- How can God helping you to push through struggles be an encouragement to other people?

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2–3 minutes

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace and strength during times of pain and struggle. *Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.*



APPLY IT

5–10 minutes

Identify a struggle in your life and consider how that struggle can help you rely on God's grace. Once you do, rejoice in that struggle by telling a trusted friend what it is and how it is helping you grow spiritually.

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



MAKE LIFE APPLICATION



HOLD STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE

FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.

CLOSING

PRAYER

2–3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks. *Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"But 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)

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¹ "Bethany's Story | Bethany Hamilton." *Bethany Hamilton*. 2019. <https://bethanyhamilton.com/biography/>.

