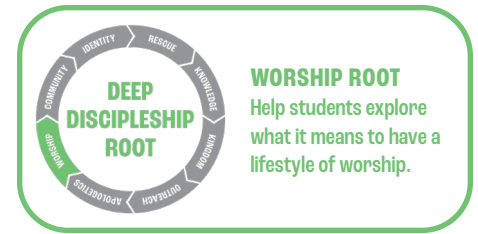


MARK OF A DISCIPLE

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

SCRIPTURE

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from the **Game Library** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—choose a screen game from the **Game Library**
- **Ice Breaker**—Tell us the story behind your coolest scar.

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist (e.g., YouTube, Spotify, etc.).

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYSCbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES Title Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

GAME LIBRARY

Look in the **Intentional Programming** folder included in your download. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

VIDEO

Show **SERIES Bumper Video** or **SERIES Intro Video** after the last worship song. This will give the students something to focus on while the band leaves the stage and you step onto it.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: Everyone goes through difficult times

Read or have someone in your group read 2 Corinthians 12:7

One of the Enemy's sneakiest tricks is making us think we are the only ones who struggle with trying to live like Jesus. But the apostle Paul, probably the greatest example we have of a Christ-follower, faced adversity and hardships.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about a time you faced a huge obstacle or choose an **object lesson** from the Worship Root.

Because our world has been stained by sin, we all go through struggles.

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint** OR the **Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- 2 Corinthians 12:7
- Point 1

OBJECT LESSON LIBRARY

Look for the **Object Lessons** in the **Transformational Discipleship** folder included in your download.

POINT 2: God is our primary source of help

Read or have someone in your group read 2 Corinthians 12:8

When Paul was in trouble, he turned to God. Our friends, family, and small group leaders are great options to seek advice and help. Many times God uses these people to speak to us. But our first option should always be the Lord.

SLIDES (optional)

- 2 Corinthians 12:8
- Point 2

POINT 3: Grace and power through trials

Read or have someone in your group read 2 Corinthians 12:9

Three different times Paul asked God to *remove* his hardships. Instead of getting rid of Paul's problems, God gave him grace and power to get *through* the struggle. This was to Paul's benefit. Avoiding trials doesn't make you stronger, only going through them brings strength.

ILLUSTRATION: Share a **personal story** about a time you got stronger after going through a difficult process. (Example: Lifting weights, training for a race, studying for an exam)

Going through all the hardships Paul faced made his faith incredibly strong. And because he had God's grace and power, he could push through any adversity.

SLIDES (optional)

- 2 Corinthians 12:9
- Point 3

POINT 4: Content in Christ

Read or have someone in your group read 2 Corinthians 12:10

The word *content* means "to be satisfied," and it's been said that contentment is the secret to happiness. When Paul understood that God was with him during the hard times providing His amazing grace and power, Paul was content with whatever came his way. Paul was actually able to be "glad" during his struggles because it brought him closer to Christ.

SLIDES (optional)

- 2 Corinthians 12:10
- Point 3



CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

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

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide your Small Group Leaders with a copy of the **Small Group Break-out Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- What struggles are you facing that you need God's grace and power to get through?
- How do you think these trials will make you stronger?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR** the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don't rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider the difference God can make in the difficulties they face.

PRAYER

Close by praying or invite someone to pray for your group.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS**Build Meaningful Relationships**

- What has been one of the hardest struggles you've faced?
- When have you had to rely on God?

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- 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 has God's strength helped you through a recent struggle?
- How can rejoicing in your struggle change your perspective and experience of that struggle?
- How do you think struggles can help us grow in our relationship with God?

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- How can the grace God provides change how you react to pain and suffering?
- How can God helping you to push through struggles be an encouragement to other people?

PRAYER

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks.

Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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