

1 **In 2 Corinthians 4:1, Paul says that “we have received ministry by the mercy of God.”** Read 1 Timothy 1:13-16. What are some of the key terms Paul uses to describe his former life?

⚙️ *Compare your experience with God's mercy to Paul's. Without glorifying our sin, what terms describe your life before you came to know the mercy of God?*

♥️ *How does frequent remembrance of your need for God's mercy help you better understand the ministry God has given you?*

2 **God has built the concept of future glory into our world.** What areas of life have you seen this principle at work? One example would be the countless hours and thousands of dollars to earn a degree that you hope will help you in your future vocation. What others have you experienced personally?

⚙️ *What does it look like practically to find endurance through temporal difficulty by focusing greater and lasting reward help?*

♥️ *Are there any sufferings that you are struggling to see are worth it? Share them as a group and pray for each other, that the prospect of future glory would far outweigh the temporal sufferings of this life. Encourage one another by applying Eph 3:14-16, 2 Cor. 4:16-18, 1 Peter 1:6-7, 4:13 to the specific situations in your group.*

3 **In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul is responding to false teachers who claimed that he was weak and not what they expected from someone who claimed to be an Apostle.** Paul's response in 2 Cor. 11:16-32 was to share what validated his Apostleship, but instead of boasting in those, he chose to boast in his weaknesses (2 Cor 11:30-12:10). How is our brokenness as Christians actually a good thing? Consider what Paul says in 2 Cor. 4:7.

📖 *How does Paul's message of God triumphing amid human weakness embody the principle of Christ's crucifixion. See 1 Cor. 1:27; 2 Cor. 10:3; 11:30; 12:5, 9; 13:4, 9.*

♥ In what ways do you become discouraged by your weaknesses and frailties? Instead of living in integrity about them, what are you most tempted to do?

♥ What are some ways that your weakness and frailty can showcase God's glory while you still seek to live a life of integrity?

4 **What do we know about Paul that gives him an authentic voice on the topic of suffering?** What sufferings had he experienced and how did he talk about them? Consult 1 Cor. 4:9-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-29, Colossians 1:24, 2 Tim. 2:10 for specifics.

⚙️ *Personal suffering equips a person for greater ministry in other's lives. What is the link between experiencing suffering and equipping for ministry? Read 2 Corinthians 1:4 and 4:13-15 for help.*

🗣️ *Interact with the following quote: "When you've passed through your own fiery trials, and found God to be true to what he says, you have real help to offer. You have firsthand experience of both his sustaining grace and his purposeful design. He has kept you through pain; he has reshaped you more into his image. . . . What you are experiencing from God, you can give away in increasing measure to others. You are learning both the tenderness and the clarity necessary to help sanctify another person's deepest distress." - David Powlison, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, 166.*

5 **Read 2 Corinthians 4:10-15.** Discuss the connection that Paul makes between the sufferings you are experiencing and your proclamation of the gospel message. Hint: note the "so that's" in verse 10-11.

⚙️ *What are some necessary aspects of suffering well so that unbelievers can see the light of Christ in you?*

🗣️ *Who has God put into your life or on your heart to reach with the Gospel? How specifically has God positioned you to show off the life of Jesus and speak of what you believe in? Trusting God to work, is there a creative way to share Christ this week? Spend 3-5 minutes right now thinking and praying about how they could know more about Christ from you. Write out your plan.*