



The primary symbol of Christianity is the cross. In the time of Jesus, the cross had symbolized something very different from our understanding. The cross represented the power of Rome and the awful death that awaited anyone who dared to challenge Roman authority. For this reason, Paul writes in II Corinthians 2, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.” Through Jesus’ sacrifice, a symbol of death became a symbol of life.

*Jesus turned the world upside down. How does his teaching in verse 13 challenge the way our world often defines “greatness”? What do the actions of Jesus teach us about God’s character and his understanding of what it means to truly love?*

*For whom would you be willing to lay down your life?*

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**GPS for Families**

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“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.” *II Corinthians 12:9*

At the end of this year, spend some time with your family reflecting on the ways God has been “big enough” for you. This scripture tells us that God’s grace is enough. We don’t have to be perfect because his power is made evident in our weakness. What a relief this is!

Discuss this with your family and list ways that God was strong when you were weak. Talk about the times you prayed for help and the times you doubted God. Remind everyone that God loves us even when we doubt him. And Paul says we can even brag about our weaknesses because that is when God can shine! You might even talk about all of your weaknesses — the areas you struggle, the issues that make you stumble. This is healthy to admit to others, especially your family. Ask everyone to pray for each other in these areas of imperfection.

Finally, pray a prayer of thanks for the ways in which God was big enough for your family this year. Make it part of your New Year’s celebration or have a special dinner to acknowledge our big God. He loves us deeply despite our weaknesses and imperfections, and that is a great reason to throw a party!

We opened up the year 2011 with an important message series entitled *God Is Big Enough*. Over the course of this year, around 150,000 wristbands affirming that simple truth have been distributed to people all around the world. These four simple words have become for us our shared affirmation and a source of continual encouragement and hope. In those first few days of that campaign we said, “We want this simple phrase to be our guiding truth for 2011.”

In these last days of 2011, we are going to return to five of the GPS readings that have been selected from that four-week series which started the year. As you read this week, it is our prayer that you will be blessed by the reminder of all that God has done to sustain and carry you in 2011. Whatever this next year may bring, we declare *God Is Big Enough*.

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PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power because you created all things. It is by your will that they exist and were created. I have learned and am learning that I can cast my cares on you and love you with a whole heart. As I give you thanks for this past year, I trust you with the year to come, for I believe you are big enough for the journey ahead as I celebrate your faithfulness in the last. You are my God! Amen.*

The Israelites' journey out of captivity in Egypt into the land of God's promise was one that took more than a generation. The mantle of leadership carried by Moses had been passed to Joshua, and in the first few verses of chapter 4, the Lord instructs Joshua on how to prepare for this long-awaited moment of crossing into the promised land.

*Joshua instructs 12 men to "take up 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan." What is the purpose behind this instruction? What does Joshua say these stones will represent?*

*How does our remembrance of God's faithfulness help us to trust God with our present and our future? Looking back over your own journey of faith, what moments are most important for you to remember as experiences of God's faithfulness? Today, take time to thank God for his faithfulness in each of these moments.*

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Psalm 121 opens with the question, "Where does my help come from?" In the second verse of that same Psalm we find this response, "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." Where do we find help and strength? In today's text, Paul argues that the power of God is revealed most fully as we invite God into our weaknesses.

*No further explanation is given to indicate what Paul meant by his "thorn in my flesh." The specific details are not as important as the realization that we are all in need of God's grace. In what areas of your life are you most aware of your need for God?*

*What do you think God meant by his response to Paul when he said, "My grace is sufficient for you"? In what way might these words bring you hope today?*

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James Bryan Smith writes, "The primary thing God wants from us is not improved moral behavior (which will come), but to love God because he first loved us." God certainly cares about the way we choose to live, but faith is grounded in God's act of amazing grace and the life we live in response to that unearned gift. Romans 5 reminds us that we are powerless to save ourselves. Salvation is never earned. It can only be received.

*Paul says that God's love is "demonstrated" by the fact that he died for us "while we were still sinners." What do you think Paul means by this statement? What is he trying to convey about the nature of God's love?*

*Life change can be fueled in two ways — guilt or grace. According to this passage, which should fuel our transformation? Why? Which is fueling your life right now?*

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Psalm 111 says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The notion of fearing God gives us trouble. We associate fear with being vulnerable to physical danger or harm which seems to conflict with the God Jesus describes in the Gospels. In C.S. Lewis' famous book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, one of the characters describes Aslan, the great lion who represents God in Lewis' allegorical tale, in this way. "He is not safe, but he is good."

*In these eight verses, what does the Psalmist say God will do for us? What words does the Psalmist use to describe God?*

*Verse 12 reminds us that God has fully removed our transgressions from us. Has guilt tried to convince you that your sin has not been fully removed? What might God want to say about that?*

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