

EXPERIENCE THE POWER AND PRESENCE OF GOD AUGUST 21, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Do you feel broken, stressed, and/or distressed by the struggles of life? You're not alone. In John 16:33, Jesus warned his disciples, and by extension, us, that *'In this world you will have trouble.'* Jim Mannarino shared on Sunday that God's power is real, He is engaged with you in real time, and He loves you beyond measure. It can sometimes be difficult to remember that in the midst of suffering. But when you're able to submit in obedience, His power and presence can sustain you despite your circumstances. Jesus knew that, too – He finished His statement in John with, *'But take heart! I have overcome the world'!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss with your group some of the adversities you are experiencing right now. Have you asked God, "Why me"?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-8. Fill in the chart below, listing our circumstances and how the power of God sustains us (the first one is done as an example):

HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCE	GOD'S POWER
We have this treasure in jars of clay	Power comes from God, not from us

3. In verse 7, Paul says that the "treasure" (the message of salvation through Christ) is in 'jars of clay'. God takes salvation through Christ, something of great value, and places it in you and me, something as ordinary and temporary as clay pots. What does this word picture tell you about God's nature and His relationship with you?

4. Can you relate to Paul's circumstances in verses 7 and 8? Why or why not?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:9-17. What does Paul mean in verse 10 that we 'carry around in our body the death of Jesus'? (Hint - see Romans 6:6 and 2 Corinthians 1:5.)

Study Questions for Community Groups

6. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. How do you think Paul was able to consider his list of suffering in chapter 11 as ‘light and momentary troubles’ (4:17)? If what happened to Paul actually happened to you, would you consider it ‘light and momentary’?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 4:18 along with 2 Corinthians 5:7, Romans 8:24, and Hebrews 11:1. How can you fix your eyes on what is not seen?

APPLICATION

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What can you do to learn to look at suffering/trouble as an opportunity to rely on God’s power?

SCRIPTURE

⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ¹³It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself. ¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 (NIV)