

LINKS PLAYERS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR JUNE 28, 2013

HOW GOD MOVES US

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take [this thorn] away from me. (2 Corinthians 12:8, NIV)

STACY LEWIS, the top American in the women's game entering this weekend's U.S. Women's Open, has not always had life so good. The 28-year-old came to success slowly because of significant compromises in her back.

Lewis has scoliosis, a curvature of the spine. In her teen years, doctors took firm measures to attempt to correct what was wrong. The most restricting of these was a hard plastic brace that Lewis wore for more than six years. While she was directed to wear it all day, every day, she was granted one arena of reprieve: the golf course. For this reason, Lewis spent as much time playing golf as she could and recently told Gold Digest, "If I'd had a healthy back, you might not have heard of Stacy Lewis."

What's your scoliosis? That is, what is the matter of great difficulty that God has set in your way in order that you might take the path that leads to his plan for you?

Maybe you've never thought of it this way. Most of us don't. Most of us take one look at trouble and hightail it in the other direction. The more ascetic among us may hang in there, but we generally complain our way right through the process.

Paul famously wrote of "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from the enemy" that annoyed him to no end. I mean that literally, for when he prayerfully went to the Lord and asked for relief, God told him only, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I must admit that I would have been inclined to say, "I'm sorry, Lord, but that just is not a satisfactory answer." Paul instead turned God's response to praise: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Sometimes we count on personal strength because we have convinced ourselves that this is the only way to get through a demanding situation. Paul came to the opposite conclusion. Trouble leads to God's triumph in us, for it causes us to see what he is really doing in our lives: infusing his power into our weak state.

Opening questions: Beyond the difficulty

Think of examples—among personal friends as well as athletes and other famous people—where someone has overcome a significant challenge and found a greater triumph on the other side. To what extent did God's "real work" become apparent in the eventual outworking of the person's life?

Preparation for greatness

Read 1 Samuel 26:1-25. What difficulty did David face in this account?

How did he exercise integrity in the midst of this trouble?

What blessing did Saul pronounce over David in verse 25? How did God order the course of David's life so that this was true?

In what ways would you say that Saul's pursuit of David contributed to his ability to lead God's people in later years?

Read Psalm 18:1-19, which David wrote at the time of Saul's pursuit of him. What was the general tone of David's psalm? What were some of his specific praises?