



THE CHURCH OF THE  
**ADVENT**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 1:12 – 2:11

**Summary:** In ancient Corinth, boasting and self-promotion were commonplace. People would have spotlighted their strengths and minimized their weaknesses in order to bolster their power and reputation, much like today. Paul, however, boasts about his weaknesses and in so doing exemplifies how the Gospel turns power upside down. Paul faced humiliation, suffering, scorn, and rejection in Corinth. Nonetheless, he continued to boast in the simple truth of the Gospel and in the sincerity of his relationship with the Corinthian church.

Paul also explained that his ministry was motivated by his deep love for the Corinthians, not his earthly reputation. He was willing to suffer, look weak and foolish because he had been so utterly transformed by the grace of God, who himself endured humiliation, scorn, suffering, and death in Jesus Christ. Paul then exhorted the Corinthians to do likewise – to extend grace, forgiveness, and mercy to the members of their community that had previously criticized Paul. Paul's example challenged the church in Corinth and the challenges us today to see our faith not as a one-time decision in the past but as an ongoing dependence on God's grace in the present. This grace may look like weakness, but in truth it has the power to heal the world.

- Questions:**
1. What is power? How do you get it? What does it look like? What is weakness? What does it look like to lose power?
  2. How do our beliefs about power, our desire to protect our reputation, and our fear of humiliation shape the ways that we relate to our friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and enemies?
  3. How may God be challenging you to risk your reputation and endure contempt in order to extend grace to those who have wronged you?
  4. What does it look like for us to live all of life in response to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and the grace and love that God is pouring into our lives? How does that transform our priorities? Our boasting? The way we see our enemies? Our beliefs about power and weakness?

**Prayer:** Pray that God would reveal the ways that we glory in our strengths and avoid our weaknesses. Meditate on how all of God's promises find their "yes" in Jesus and how he transforms our understanding of power. Pray that God would help you embrace your weakness and the simple yet profound truth of the Gospel.

**Do:** Reflect on the ways you reflexively seek to cover up, minimize, or avoid your weaknesses. Pray about and discuss these with a friend or core group over the next week. Reflect together on how God may use this weakness to demonstrate his redemptive grace and discern specifically how you can embrace rather than evade this weakness.