

Seeing Yourself As the Victim

CONNECT

Think of a time in your life when you felt like you were the victim. What were the circumstances? How did you respond? Did your response help?

DISCUSS

Have someone read 2 Corinthians 4:7–12. As you listen, are there any words or phrases that especially strike you? What questions come to your mind about what it says? Is there anything that is confusing? Encouraging?

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4:7–12 ESV)

- Christian mentioned three unhelpful ways in which we tend to respond as victims:
 1. We're self-centered. "It's about me."
 2. We're eager to blame. We ask, "Whose fault is it?" rather than, "What can I do to resolve the situation or move forward?"
 3. We feel powerless. We give up rather than taking responsibility for seeking a solution.

Which of these responses do you see in yourself? Would you add any other unhelpful responses to this list?

- Why do you think we tend to respond to adversity in unhelpful ways? What ideas do you have for how we can help ourselves and each other to respond in better ways?
- Paul chose to see himself as a vessel rather than a victim. He viewed himself as a "jar of clay" with a "treasure" inside. As a "jar of clay" he was inherently weak and brittle, and he had to rely on God. Can you think of a time when you were feeling particularly weak or brittle? How did you handle that situation? If you chose to rely on God, what did that look like? How did it turn out?
- Sometimes God uses the adversity we face to prepare us to help others when they go through the same or similar difficulties. How have you seen God use you to help others? How has God used others to help you when you've gone through difficult times?

PRAY and PERSONALIZE IT

- What unhelpful responses to adversity do you want to change?
- What obstacles in your life would you like to choose to see as opportunities?
- How can we pray for you?
- Do you know someone you can encourage this week because God has brought you through a similar difficulty? Feel free to share discretely a little of their story so we can pray for you and for them.