Sufficiency is God’s grace for all  
August 9-10, 2012

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.
Plan one to two icebreakers for the purpose of mixing around and getting group participation or getting acquainted.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.
Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead people into God’s presence. During this time, cell leaders will encourage cell members to listen to the Holy Spirit and release the words of strengthening, encouragement, and comfort they have received for the cell group, the church and nations. Upon each word shared, the cell leader will lead members by thanking and praising God for His promise and/or praying aloud together for the needs, etc.

During this time, the cell leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for: (1) the mission organization or daughter church that the cell group adopts (2) the church ministry needs (3) blessings for new comers, the sick.

MISSION ORGANIZATION: __________________, their needs: ______________
(Please contact the church if you don’t know the needs of the mission organization.)

CHURCH MINISTRY:
1. Equipping Class: Power of prayer @ 1pm every Sunday, room G5
2. English Committee Meeting: 8/13 @ 6:30pm, Conference room
3. Leader/Coworkers Retreat: 10/12-13
4. Mission Conference: 10/19-21, Cindy Jacob

III. WORD, 45 mins.

A. Sharing from last Sunday’s message.
   1. What is the main message from last Sunday sermon? What did God say to you from the message?
   2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Discussion Topic: “Sufficient is God’s grace for all”

Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 12:1-13
Memory Verse: Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “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. (2 Corinthians 12:1-13 NIV)

Introduction
Throughout the Scripture, the appearance of “grace” runs totally 55 times, revealing God’s heart in blessing His people. Christians all the time are drawn and aspired by His grace. In its origin meaning, the word “grace” encompasses blessings, salvation, and the favor from the Divine One. It has also become the assurance of strength bestowed to His people, so that we can depend on it and rejoice in all kinds of circumstance. However, it is meantime essential for us to count the blessings. For the more we do, the more grace we are to receive, and the more grateful we become! We give our thankfulness for the grace received. Paul, however, gives his even for a “thorn” inflicted on his flesh. Here the “thorn” can be afflictions from the environment or infirmities of the flesh. Somehow Paul maintains his gratefulness to the Lord in the treacherous journey of his ministry, leading to the result of God’s power greatly revealed through him. Now let’s learn the precious lesson of “Sufficient is God’s grace”.

I. Extraordinary grace experienced by Paul —His Visions and Revelations from the Lord (2 Cor 12:1-6)

1. Grace is merely from God (2 Cor 12:1). Paul has kept such an amazing secret for himself for the past 14 years. Had it not been the urge to guide the fledging church, so the Corinthians could distinguish real apostles from the false ones, he probably would have kept it for the rest of his life. Meanwhile he doesn’t forget to emphasize that it is out of God who has graciously imparted the visions and relations to him. Therefore, he can only count it as a grace instead of his own merit.

2. The experience of being lifted to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2-3)

Paul uses the third person to refer himself, likely with the attempt to lower rather than to elevate himself. He receives the divine vision and revelations which were turned into the serving power and the lifetime commitment for the Lord’s Kingdom. The experience enables him to persevere in face of difficulties without faltering. “I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven” was his ultimate defense in front of King Arippa (Acts 26:19).

3. Hearing the inexpressible things (2 Cor 12:4-6)

“The inexpressible things” are told in a language which cannot be understood by human. “Things a man is not permitted to tell” means one is not allowed to reveal its content. Paul experienced such great spiritual encounter but kept it for himself, for he understood God’s heart as well as
weaknesses of human beings. He avoided boasting of it for any vanity reasons.

II. Even the thorn in Paul’s flesh was counted as grace (2 Cor12:6-10)

1. God not only gives grace but also thorns at the same time (2 Cor. 12:7): Paul’s visions was mysterious and supernatural. The exclusive experience God gave him can be easily interpreted into a privilege. Therefore God also put a thorn in his flesh to remind him of staying humble.

2. “Thorns” make people humble (2 Con 12:6-7) : Paul’s extraordinary gift could be a problem. He might be over exalted by others or he might think too much of himself and became arrogant. The thorn on his flesh from God serves as a constant reminder and it must have been a nuisance. He kept on pleading God to take it away. However the thorn also served as a protection for the rest of his life.

3. Thorns make people look up to God. (2 Cor 12:8): Attempts are made to explain what the “thorn” was. Some guess it was malaria, epilepsy or sort of eye disease (Galatian 4:13-15). No matter what it was, it must have been continuously troublesome and it interfered Paul’s daily life. God has denied his repeated pleads in order to keep him reminded. Paul needed to stay in a close relationship with God all the time so that many can be strengthened through his faith.

4. Thorns are received as God’s grace (2nd Cor 12:9-10)
   Three times Paul asked God to take away the thorn, and three times he was denied. The Lord instead promised to cover him with sufficient grace and to make His power reveal through him. Paul ended up becoming one the most valuable tools in the whole Christian history. Jesus too asked the Father for 3 times to remove the cup, but eventually he yielded himself completely to the Father’s will. His prayer says: “Your will be done instead of mine, Father”. He took the cross and died on it, completing the salvation and blessing for all who put faith on Him. Sometimes we ask for things in urgency and our prayers become very fervent. When God doesn’t grant us what we want, He still loves us the same. He has a purpose in maturing our lives after trials and turmoil.

III. Believers are drawn close to God because of the grace (2 Cor 12:11-13)

Paul knew that the church of Corinthians were still at the fledging stage. In spite of all the miracles performed by the Holy Spirit through Paul to show them Paul’s identity as an accredited apostle, the Corinthians still believed in what the false apostles said. They attacked Paul, rejecting him as a real Christ’s apostle. Paul made a living by making tents instead of becoming their financial burden.

Had he not stood firmly in God’s grace, he could have never preserved to bring up the early church with all his teachings and persuasion. The thorn has shaped Paul to learn God’s heart, to appreciate it and to do His will accordingly for the establishment of the Corinthian church!

Questions:

1. Why did Paul conceal such a great revelation instead of boasting of it?
2. What was Paul goal when he finally decided to let the secret out?
3. Why did the Lord deny Paul’s request to have the thorn removed?
   What kind of encouragement did the Lord give him in order to comfort him? Did it really work in bring him the strength he needs? Do you want to share your own experience of God’s comforting?
4. How can we grasp the unfailing grace of God as our everlasting promise? Have you been convicted of such a promise in your personal experience?
5. How do you react when you are misunderstood? After finishing today’s passages, Share your insight and revelation.

Prayers:

Dear Lord, We thank you and give you our praises, for your grace is sufficient. It exceeds what we conceive and what we want. Please grant us a heart of humility so that we may live our everyday in a deep communion with you. We want to be revived by the power of your grace, and we say this in the name of Jesus. Amen!

IV. Work (Pray for each other), 10 mins.

Please break into group of 2 or 3 to pray for each other’s needs.