

Above All

"Serve In Strength"

Week 3 – May 29, 2022

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:11

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Who comes to mind when you think of a strong person? It could be a real person or a fictional character. Share with the group.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

In 1 Peter 4:8-11 Peter tells what mattered to him most as he encouraged followers of Jesus in the first century church. He wrote with a sense of urgency about a number of things- true priorities. We were challenged to love others deeply in week 1, and in week 2, challenged to use whatever gifts we have been given to serve others.

This final week is about serving – but not in our own strength. There is a strength, an empowering and enabling strength, that is available to us from God which allows us to do things and to have impact that we could not have on our own.

"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."
1 Peter 4:11

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. There is a strength God provides that when manifested, astonishes people, because they do not expect it. They "didn't think they had it in them"... because they don't. Peter served with the strength God provided. Read **Acts 1:4-5; 8** and discuss.
 - a. Have you ever considered yourself to be ordinary on your own, but extraordinary with God's strength? Why or why not?
 - b. What barriers get in the way of embracing God's strength?
2. Any fully surrendered and spirit-filled person will always be able to do more than expected. God delights in using ordinary men and women, infused with his Spirit and power, to do great things. Read **1 Corinthians 1:27-31** and discuss.
 - a. If Holy Spirit power is required, why would we leave home without it?
 - b. What things in your life could be surrendered that would give you greater capacity to do great things of impact?
3. Acts 4:13 concludes that "these men had been with Jesus". This is *how* we serve in strength – being with Jesus. *Be with Jesus so that we can learn from Jesus how to be like Jesus.* Read **John 15:4-5** and discuss.
 - a. What are tangible ways you can abide in Christ, moving towards a God-centered and God-dependent life?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God we can do more when we rely on God's enabling. Thank God he is delighted in our dependence. Ask God to help you embrace this and live it out, to desire to have an impact we could not have on our own.

Above All

"Use Your Gift"

Week 2 – May 22, 2022

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: What is the worst gift you ever received?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

Building on week 1, we see that in order to love others deeply, we are given gifts to serve others. This is a matter of stewardship- leveraging what we are given for impact. Receiving the gifts given to us by God and putting them to use become expressions of and conduits of God's grace. The gifts God gives us are "spiritual" in that they are infused with the power of the Holy Spirit, and go beyond the stuff we "do in church". How can we embrace the great value of these gifts and grow desire to steward them?

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. God carries out his mission by divinely infusing giftings into us. Read **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**. What gifts are listed in this scripture? Do you believe the lists of gifts in the Bible was meant to be exhaustive? Why?
2. The fact that God gives us a gift does not mean we do not play a role in its development. Paul wrote these words to his apprentice Timothy: *"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."* (2 Timothy 1:6). How can you better understand your gift, get feedback, and learn from others with the same gifting?
3. Just as Jesus modeled our gifts (**Luke 22:27** and **Matthew 20:28**), when our gifts are employed they are tools in the hands of God for the good of others. In doing this, we are fulfilling the greatest commandment- loving God and loving those he loves. How can you use whatever gift(s) you have received to serve others?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we each receive gifts for the purpose of serving others, and when we do this, we are conduits of God's grace. Ask God the question that author Dallas Willard asks: Jesus, how would you live my life if you were me? Ask God to open your mind and heart to consider how he might be thinking about you- someone he created, loves deeply, calls and equips to join him in the transformation of individual lives, and of the world.

Above All

"Love Deeply"

Week 1 – May 15, 2022

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:8-9

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever volunteered for something you can't believe you agreed to do? Did it turn out to be a good experience or a disaster? Share the story!

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

The life of following Jesus, of serving God and others, has to be grounded in love. We love because he first loved us. How can we understand the glorious nature of God's love, the incredible value of every human being who is deeply loved by God, and the honor and privilege it is to love others with agape God-like love? When this is skipped over or undervalued, life becomes about duty to do the right thing and void of passion. God's love is the heart and soul of our faith, of Jesus, of life, and what makes life sustainable.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." 1 Peter 4:8-9

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. God's outrageous love and the importance he places on love is found throughout the Bible. Read **1 Corinthians 13:13**, **Galatians 5:6b**, **1 John 4:7-8**, and **John 13:34-35**, and discuss what is revealed about God's love. Then describe how have you experienced God's love in your own life.
2. Peter begins **1 Peter 4:8-9** with the priority to love, and he adds the word **deeply**. The verse tells us that our deep love will be evidenced in two tangible things: to cover sins by extending grace and forgiveness to others, and being a person who is characterized by a life of hospitality. We can simplify this as love, forgive, and serve.
 - a. What is the difference between being told you are loved and feeling loved?
 - b. Two things that position us to experience God's love are (1) pursuing God and (2) praying for it. Read aloud **Ephesians 3:16-19** as a prayer, changing the words "you" and "yours" to "I", "me", or "my". Take a moment to write this prayer down and pray it regularly over the next week.
3. The outcome of being deeply loved by God is loving others. When duty alone is driving our actions, our attitude is likely to suffer. Living loved means that we are ever mindful that we are loved by God, it is something we deeply experience from God, and our "hospitality" flows naturally from it. One of the greatest expressions of our love is when we give the gift of ourselves and our time to serve others. How could your life look if you lived a life of hospitality?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that he loves us so deeply that he powers our inner strength with his spirit and makes a home in our hearts when we trust him. Ask him to flood our hearts with his light so that we can deeply understand the confident hope he gives to his believers.