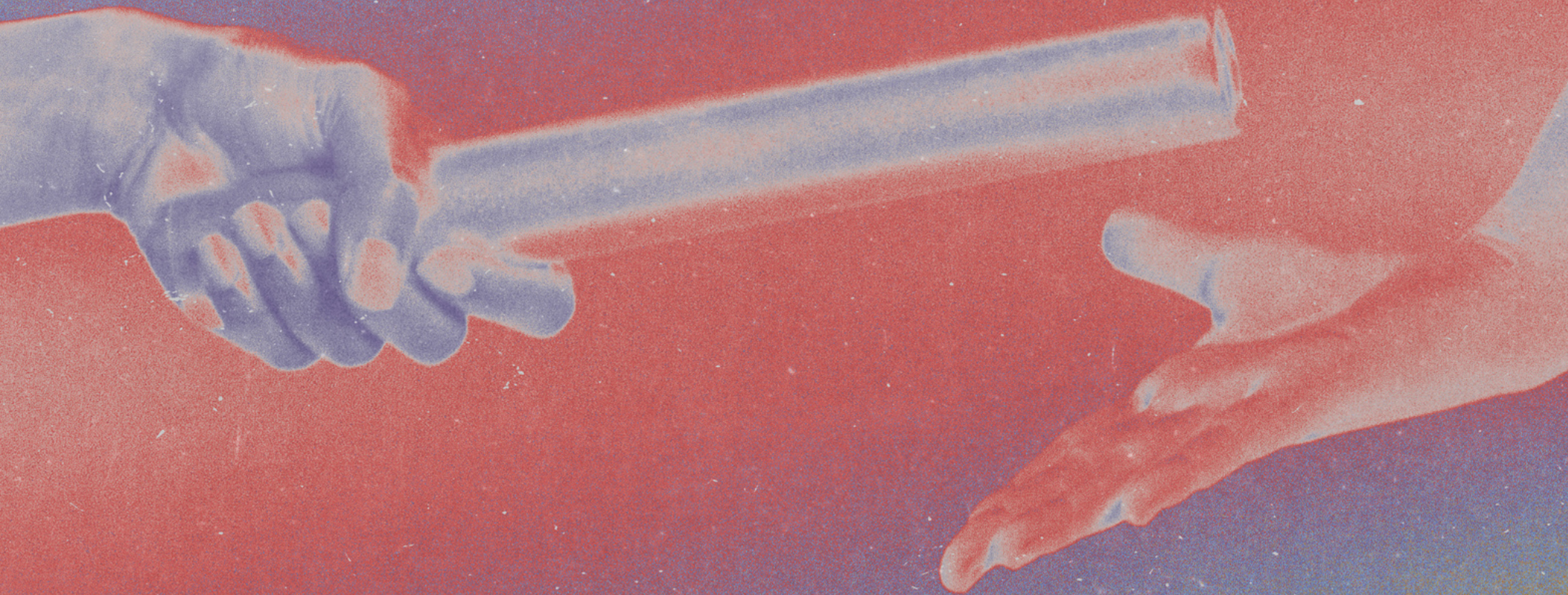




The Exchange



The Exchange

Week 1 : Day 1

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11

Okay, it's time to brag! What's one thing you're really, really good at? Now, there have been times in my life when it was hard for me to see value in my gifts. But fortunately, I've had people in my life who helped me develop those gifts.

We see this in the story of Paul and Timothy, two guys we can read about in Scripture. In the first chapter of the book 2 Timothy, Paul takes time to point out some of Timothy's gifts and encourage him to keep developing them, and to be bold about it too! But whether your gifts include speaking, serving, running, singing, writing, speaking in five different languages, or knowing more about comic books than anyone you've ever met, remember — the important thing is how you use your gifts for a purpose: to serve God and others.

We all have unique gifts that are valuable. Sometimes we just need a little help seeing how valuable they are. So let's all exchange some more wisdom, because we can help each other discover our gifts.

Week 1 : Day 2

Read Genesis 1:26-27

If you've ever been to a theme park with a friend group, there may have been one friend who's the planner. They know exactly what to do, from which ride to try first to where to stop for a bite! Then there's the free roamer who will try new things as they take their time. You might be the planner who knows exactly what you want to do in life, or you may still be figuring things out.

Trying to figure out what you're good at or how you can contribute to your community might feel like that trip to the theme park. Thankfully, we have a God who created us with specific intentions, skills, and gifts unique to us. Most important, we've been made in God's image. The qualities of God are reflected in us — from being innovative to compassionate and everything in between! When we get to know God, we have an opportunity to use those gifts.

What kind of gifts do you have, and how can you use them for God?

Week 1 : Day 3

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-12

We all have gifts. Take a second to think about some of your gifts. Then ask, how did you get these gifts? Was it because you worked hard to get your gift? Were you naturally gifted? No matter how you got your gifts, they all come from the same source.

The Bible says that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us our gifts. Some of us might share the same or similar gifts, and then you might meet someone who has a completely different set of gifts. No matter what our gifts are, we can all use our gifts together. When we do this we are united as one body, meaning we use our gifts for a common purpose, to love others.

What gifts do you have that you love using? Do you know your spiritual gifts? Take some time writing down what you think are your gifts and ask God to help you strengthen them.

Week 1 : Day 4

Read Galatians 6:1-3

When a parent asks you to help get the groceries from the car, are you a one-trip person? Do you load up on all the shopping bags because you refuse to take a second trip to the car? Despite anyone offering to help you, you might say, "No I got it!" only to spill the eggs or drop the milk!

We're not super-humans — sometimes we do need support from those around us.

One gift that we all have is to encourage others — especially when they're unsure of the gifts God has given them. It doesn't take fixing someone, but being there for people as they discover their gifts. It's an awesome way for us to grow together. When we feel the pressure of the responsibility that comes with the ways we are gifted, we can lean on one another to carry each other's burdens.

If you see a gift in someone else, how can you encourage them?

Week 1 : Day 5

Read Romans 12:4-8

In team sports, there are usually different positions people can play on each team. None of the positions are more or less important — they all contribute to the team. Have you ever joined a sports team and noticed that someone was really good at a specific skill? You might encourage them and let them know you see how much they're making the team great.

That's how we should be when we see others' gifts. Call out each other's gifts and encourage them to pursue them! When we give other people space to recognize and grow in their gifts, we're being good team members. It's so important to create platforms for other people and set up the spotlight so someone else can stand in it.

Make room for others and their gifts! Do you see people who have something to bring and are not being recognized? Take time to acknowledge them today.

Week 2 : Day 6

Read 2 Timothy 2:7-15

In a typical day, we probably have a lot of questions that can be figured out pretty easily with a Google search or a little internet stalking. But in our everyday lives, sometimes coming up with the right answer is a little more challenging. Whether it's a question about relationships, faith, or a decision you need to make, we all need help finding answers sometime.

In the book of 2 Timothy, chapter two, we read about a situation where Paul gave Timothy (the guy he was mentoring) some advice about how to handle a difficult situation. He gave him a lot of practical advice about what to do, but he also encouraged him to simply "remember Jesus" — to look to him as the source of all wisdom, guidance, and discernment. When we do, we can not only gain more wisdom from others, but we can share the wisdom we've gained with others too.

There is so much wisdom to be gained from the people around us because we can help each other develop discernment.

Week 2 : Day 7

Read James 3:16-18

Have you ever walked or driven through fog? The only way to navigate it is to move toward the spot that's right in front of you. You have that little voice in your head that says, "This is probably the best way to go." That's discernment — the ability to make good judgments.

James mentions that we gain wisdom when we notice the direction that God points us in. God is one of the greatest sources of discernment and wisdom, and we can trust the wisdom being offered is always for our good. God knows the direction our lives should be headed in, making it easier for us to see the clearest path when things get foggy. If we take a moment to consider the path we're on and the direction God is asking us to go . . . we may get pointed in a better direction.

Think about a time when you made a good judgment call. Was that God giving you discernment?

Week 2 : Day 8

Read James 1:4-5

Have you ever been stuck in a sticky situation? A time when you really just did not have a clue what to do? Everyone's been there, but what do you do in these situations? How can we gain more wisdom to make the right decision?

The Bible is a great place to start! It's full of great advice, and there's even an entire book full of advice and wisdom. One of the things God tells us is to lean on others! If you have parents, friends, counselors, or small group leaders in your life, these are all people you can turn to when you need more wisdom and discernment. God shows us who's around us to offer words of wisdom when we need it most. James reminds us in his letter that the only way to gain more wisdom is to ask!

Who do you have in your life that you can turn to when you need more wisdom?

Week 2 : Day 9

Read Psalm 119:9-11

Crocs and fuzzy socks? Red flag. Shorts in the pouring rain? Red flag. Interrupts every five seconds? Red flag. How do you recognize a red flag? Sometimes when we're in a situation that doesn't feel right, we can't seem to point out what exactly got us there, but we just know a misstep happened along the way. Avoiding red flags altogether is impossible, but we have the power to recognize them and choose what to do with them.

God gives us wisdom and discernment to judge these situations for ourselves. Without that guidance, life would be chaos. It would be impossible to navigate life without wisdom. But God is peaceful, kind, and loving — the Bible says we should chase those things. If a red flag pops up, it might be because it doesn't line up with what God has asked us to pursue.

What are some ways you're able to recognize red flags for yourself? How do you think God would have you face those situations?

Week 2 : Day 10

Read 2 Timothy 3:16

Is it possible to use outdated instructions to fix a brand new appliance? It might take some translation . . . but even then, the words on the page wouldn't match up with the appliance in front of you. The words wouldn't be reliable.

The people of Timothy's day were trying to face current problems and needed the reminder that God's words were reliable. The words of the past and the message of Jesus were cohesive — they went together — because God's words are living. No matter the generation, the wisdom we find is able to be applied to our present moment and the problems we face. Sometimes, that's hard to believe, but God's words really can help guide us.

Is it possible for you to use God's words as a guide if there are problems that come up for you this week?

Week 3 : Day 11

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-17

So listen. I know some of you might need a little convincing to believe the Bible actually contains the kind of help and guidance you need during difficult moments.

And that's okay! I really do get it. So stick with me — because I hope I'll be able to show you just how valuable Scripture can be in moments where life doesn't seem to come with clear instructions.

In the book of 2 Timothy (that's in the Bible), we have a letter from a guy named Paul to Timothy, a guy he was mentoring. To help Timothy remember how valuable Scripture is, Paul tells him it's useful for teaching, correction, and training. He also says it would "equip" Timothy for everything that was ahead of him. That's a pretty big promise, especially when life gets hard to navigate.

Sometimes it's confusing, unclear, and full of changes, but what never changes is the truth of God's words. And when we help each other better understand God's words, we help each other get equipped.

Week 3 : Day 12

Read Leviticus 23:21-22

If you go out to dinner and bring home the leftovers, do you make it a point to finish them later in the week? Some of us make a point to gobble them up the next day for lunch, while others forget about them and they ultimately go to waste. A restaurant isn't the only place you can find leftovers. Did you know that after a farmer harvests their crop, there is still a lot leftover that isn't harvested? Only, what's leftover isn't always wasted.

In the Bible, it talks about how farmers would let the poor come and pick up the leftovers to feed themselves. This process was called gleaning — gathering leftover crops from someone else. It also talks about gleaning from others spiritually, which would be gaining wisdom from someone who has lived experience. We have the great opportunity to learn from other followers of Jesus and glean from their experiences with Jesus. The Bible is full of examples where one person teaches another.

Have you ever gleaned an important lesson about Jesus from someone?

Week 3 : Day 13

Read Psalm 37:30-31

Do you and your friends ever get together to study or work on school projects? When you're studying the same thing, it makes sense to help each other understand the subject. Studying as a group keeps each other accountable, makes it more fun, and usually involves snacks! Working together can put a fun twist on your study habits!

When it comes to reading your Bible, doing it with others can be a huge benefit. You can read together in person or virtually. Whether that means getting together weekly, starting a reading plan on an app together, or joining a small group that meets regularly! Sometimes reading God's words can be confusing, but processing them with friends can help us understand. Even better, it helps us to create a habit that we can look forward to. When we study God's words as a group, important questions come up and those discussions ultimately help us grow.

Who's someone you could start reading the Bible with?

Week 3 : Day 14

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

Have you heard of an encyclopedia? See, before Google, people had a set of big books in their libraries that held the answers to all kinds of questions. Medical symptoms, car parts, and even animal facts. Now that answers are just a search away, we can feel overwhelmed with what we find when we search. Really, life's biggest questions — whose answers seem to be nonexistent or impossible to uncover — are tough to find, even with help from a search engine.

Life can present some difficult questions that don't have instant answers. God calls us to spend time in prayer to help us reflect on and process those questions. It takes a lot of time and patience. In those moments, we're given the Holy Spirit, who guides us when things seem unclear.

When there are difficult questions and you're searching for answers, the Bible says — the Holy Spirit will help you understand.

Write down something you're looking for answers to. Ask God to help you better understand what's going on.

Week 3 : Day 15

Read 1 Peter 3:14-16

Have you ever had to share in front of your class for a school project? Maybe you begin to sink in your seat with anxious thoughts, or maybe you can't wait to have the attention of everyone in the room! Either way, the truth is . . . it's not always about how you feel in these moments, it's about what you have to say and its impact.

Most of us have a story of how God has met us, and you might still be discovering what that looks like. The good news is, that we're all on this journey with God. One of the greatest tools we have to encourage and help others is to share what God has done in our lives. In his letter, Peter encourages people to have an answer when people ask about the hope we have. Basically, he is saying if you spend time reflecting on what God is doing in your life, you will be ready to talk about it when the opportunity comes up.

Spend some time writing down your faith story — what about your experience is unique to you?

Week 4 : Day 16

Read 2 Timothy 4:16-18

Have you ever seen one of those viral clips where a runner gets injured in the middle of a race? It's heartbreaking — until another runner or two steps in and carries them over the finish line.

I don't know about you, but there have been moments in my life when someone gave me the strength and support I needed when I was hurting or weak. And there have been times when I've had the chance to that for others.

In the book of 2 Timothy, we get a look at a situation where strength and support was really needed. Paul was in prison and about to be killed for his faith, so he wrote a letter to his friend Timothy, encouraging him to be strong and reminding him their strength came from God.

In the same way, when you and I are feeling stressed, afraid, weak, or hurting, it's so important to remind each other we're not alone and that God is our ultimate source of strength. That's how we'll help each other find strength.

Week 4 : Day 17

Read Isaiah 40:28-31

In your friend group, who's the "strong one?" The one who always seems to have it together or be there to listen to anyone's problems? Being labeled the "strong one" can seem like a badge of honor, but never really gives that person the room to be human. To be human is to experience weakness every now and again. If we never experience those moments of weakness, we won't know the significance of true strength.

But good news! God promises to be our source of strength in times of trouble. When we feel like we can't find the answers to a friend's problems, we can always point them to God. That's right, we don't have to carry the burden of being the "strong one" — the source of strength for those closest to us. We can lean on God and rely on God when we're in need of strength.

What are some ways we can get strength from God when we feel weak?

Week 4 : Day 18

Read Psalm 121:1-2

Asking for help can bring up a lot of big feelings. We may feel like it exposes our inability to do something or bring up some embarrassment. But really, asking for help is a sign of strength. It doesn't always feel like it, but it's true!

The only way we grow is if we realize when we can't tackle something on our own and learn from the support we gained.

The thing is, we may not want to recognize when we're feeling weak or in need of help. God is always ready to support us, though! Our help comes from God, who is there for us in our time of need. The Psalm for today's Bible reading is a song of overcoming, a song of victory.

Yet, it focuses on the writer's time of need — their moments of vulnerability. Sometimes our biggest strength is the ability to call for help in those moments of weakness.

When have you needed strength?

Week 4 : Day 19

Read Exodus 17:11-13

What are your signs of being tired? Do you get hangry, quiet, or have a big burst of energy? You may have even gotten good at telling those around you to back away, because your tired self may say something you truly don't mean. What about when you feel tired emotionally? If you can see those signs in yourself, you can probably sense them in others, as well. So how can you support someone in your life who might need strength?

The story of Moses shows us what it looks like to be there and support your community through tough times. Moses had men and women around him to help him through leading the Israelites out of captivity and into the promised land. Community makes it easier to follow Jesus — and to get through tough times. It's our job to stand around our community and support them. To lift them up when they're too weak to stand and aren't able to do it on their own.

What are some practical ways you can support your friends when they need strength?

Week 4 : Day 20

Read Psalm 121:5-6

Strength can look different for everyone! For some people, being strong means being able to hold back tears, and for others, strength means being able to cry in front of others. No matter what strength looks like for you, one thing's for sure: it doesn't come easy. Strength is built within us over time — through personal hardship or by practicing good habits.

When we're building up strength, it can feel like we're all on our own. But the psalmist writes about God's presence and protection in all seasons. We're never alone, and definitely not meant to be our own source of strength.

When we're down, God is there. When we've faced hardship, God's ready to protect us. Being strong looks different for all of us, but God is our ultimate place of strength.

What does "strength" mean to you? When do you feel your strongest?
