

# **Soul Strong Study – Week 7 “SERVE”**

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**(Chapter 6 “Extend Kindness” in *Soul Strong*)**

***“I become a person who freely shows grace and mercy to all.”***

***Your own glorious power makes us strong,  
and because of your kindness, our strength increases.*** Psalm 89.17

“The word kindness has a gentle sound that seems to echo the presence of compassionate goodness. When someone is kind to you, you feel understood and seen. There is no judgment or harsh perception directed toward you. Kindness has gracious eyes; it is not small-minded or competitive; it wants nothing back for itself. Kindness strikes a resonance with the depths of your own heart; it also suggests that your vulnerability, though somehow exposed, is not taken advantage of, rather, it has become an occasion for dignity and empathy. Kindness casts a different light, an evening light that has the depth of color and patience to illuminate what is complex and rich in difference. Despite all the darkness, human hope is based on the instinct that at the deepest level of reality some intimate kindness holds sway.” - John O’Donohue, *“To Bless the Space Between Us”*

## **Servant**

***Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** Phil. 2.6-11

“To serve God is the deliberate love-gift of a nature that has heard the call of God. The call of God is essentially expressive of His nature, service is the outcome of what is fitted to my nature. The Son of God reveals Himself in me, and I serve in the ordinary ways of life out of devotion to Him.” – Oswald Chambers

## **Encouragement**

***So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*** 1 Thessalonians 5.11

“The greatest thing we can do is to help somebody know that they’re loved and capable of loving. As human beings our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has – or ever will have – something inside that is unique to all time.” – Fred Rogers, quoted in Lucinda S. McDowell’s *“Life-Giving Choices”*

***Warn them before God against pious nitpicking, which chips away at the faith. It just wears everyone out. Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won’t be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple.*** 2 Timothy 2.16

## Reconciliation

**God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation.** 2 Corinthians 5.19

*katallage'* = Greek for \_\_\_\_\_

**God reconciled all things to himself through Jesus – whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross.** Colossians 1.20

### 4 Proactive Ways to Resolve Conflict:

1. Glorify God -
2. Get the log out of your eye -
3. Gently restore -
4. Go and be reconciled –

“You won’t be able to bear the grace of your own life, unless you come bearing grace and hope and justice and kindness and life and joy *to everyone in your life*. Your life breaks in the deeper ways – unless you lighten your soul by giving forward some of the grace you’ve been given.” – Ann Voskamp

## Value Community

**If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.** 1 Corinthians 12.26-27

**The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers.** Acts 2.42

A number of disasters overtook the Roman Empire in the first three centuries after Christ, prompting citizens to look out for number one – to protect themselves, ignore the less fortunate, or simply run. But the response of the early Christians was quite different. “To stay behind and nurse the sick, dispose of the dead, feed the hungry, and take in the orphan. Full-life generosity. No wonder the Christian movement expanded... The early Christians offered the world far more than just words. They offered a daily compassion that was full life generous.” – Gordon MacDonald

## Everybody

**For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.** Matthew 25.35-36

**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.** Matthew 25.40

*philoxenia* = Greek for \_\_\_\_\_ *philos* = \_\_\_\_\_ *xenia* = \_\_\_\_\_

“God doesn’t see people the way I do. The ones I see as problems, God sees as sons and daughters, made in His image. The ones I see as difficult, He sees as delightfully different... People will figure out what we really believe by seeing what we actually do. Everybody has a plan, but God is looking for people who know their purpose. It’s taken some time, but I’m starting to act like my purpose is to love God and to love the people around me the way Jesus loved the people around Him. To pull this off, I need to do it with an unreasonable amount of patience and kindness and understanding.” – Bob Goff in “*Everybody Always*”

Servant  
Encouragement  
Reconciliation  
Value Community  
Everybody

### **Closing Prayer – singing over you**

I then shall live as one who's learned compassion; I've been so loved that I'll risk loving, too.  
I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges; I'll dare to see another's point of view.  
And when relationships demand commitment, Then I'll be there to care and follow through.

Your Kingdom come around and through in me, Your power and glory, let them shine through me.  
Your Hallowed Name, O may I bear with honor, And may Your living Kingdom come in me.  
The Bread of Life, O may I share with honor, And may You feed a hungry world through me.  
– Gloria Gaither 1980

### **Closing Prayer – praying TOGETHER**

O Christ Who Made Himself the Servant of All, I would set my heart and my affections upon you—and upon you alone—for I can only serve others rightly when such service is undertaken from first to last as an act of devotion offered to you. In serving you I am freed from my need for the praise of others... So let my love be sincere, and let my service be fearless, O Lord. . . . I cannot know the end of another person's story. Our lives so often only briefly intersect. So let me be content to minister regardless of visible outcomes, trusting that the small mercies I extend will be woven into the larger theme of redemption at work in the lives of others as you woo them to yourself, drawing their hearts by graces offered, and shaping my own heart too in this process of learning to serve well, learning to love well. Amen. —Douglas McKelvey, "A Liturgy Before Serving Others"

## **Small Group Discussion**

1. What was one thing you took away from working through Ch. 6 "Extend Kindness?"
2. On pages 117-119 I gave you an opportunity to brainstorm ways you could be kind to a variety of people. Would each person like to share ONE of your answers? Was it hard to answer "that person in your mirror?"
3. The phrase "one another" comes from the biblical Greek word *allos*. Which of the "one anothers" listed on pages 122-125 is most challenging for you to do and why?
4. As you think about the last heated discussion or argument you had with someone, how would using those 5 questions listed on page 130 might have helped you?
5. In the final "Becoming Soul Strong" section on page 133, you were asked to consider a time when you found it challenging to extend kindness to someone. What was the precipitating action or emotion that made it hard for you to be kind at that time?
6. Pray over the sisters in your group.

**HOMEWORK – Please try to complete chapter 7 "Share Stories" before we gather again next week. Pray for those in your group. Think of a story you might want to share with your small group at our final gathering next week. *I think you will enjoy the stories in your homework...***