

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service)**

August 3, 2025 • 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

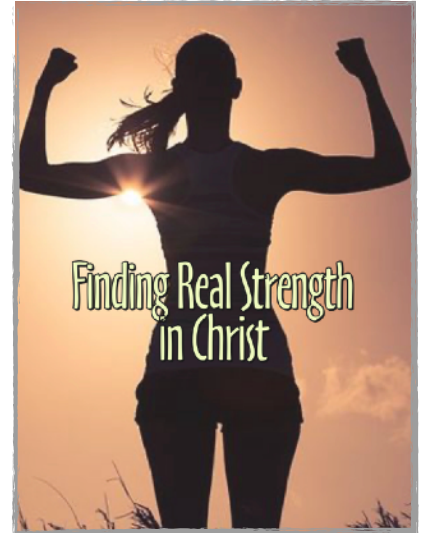
Philippians 1:12-14; 4:10-14*"Finding Real Strength in Christ"*

Measuring real strength God's way requires God's peace.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship:

- a piece of **green** cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a exercise weight or dumbbell
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop*In preparing for Worship, consider the following:*

- Based on your own definition, do you consider yourself a strong person?
- How important is it to you to be a strong person?
- How do you think God measures your strength?
- If you get help with something are you still strong?

(10am only) Prelude:*"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus". arr. Kim Williams***Opening Sentence****Philippians 4:13 (CEB)**

I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength.

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than the Sanctuary.

Power Moves

We measure strength in lots of ways. Influence. Endurance. Power. Authority. Control. But how often do we measure strength by Submission? The true strength of a person of faith is submitting to God's will. What checks do you have in place to ensure you know what God's will is? What practices do you have in place for actually following God's will in your life? And when thinking about the strength of others, is your first question whether they are strong with faith or skilled in other ways? As you move through the week, consider how better to use God's measures for strength in your perspective and self-reflection (which means you have to actually do some self-reflection!).

Bible Heroes

Over the next several weeks we are featuring as a theme in the Morning and Online worship services a Bible hero. We are using the lives of these folks to watch how God operates and contrast their choice-making with our own. From Noah, Abraham, Joshua (Rahab), Moses, Jesus, to the Gospel itself, we will explore people and their stories, examples God gives us to live, learn and, frankly, laugh at ourselves. We perhaps might find the hero of faith God intends for us to be.

The Work of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee works at the behest of the congregation. They are seeking to empower and inform the right of the congregation in our system to elect its leadership. Elders Tammy Karnes, Sandy Muller and Carol Phillips are serving to provide us with a recommended slate of nominees. To aid them in their work, most principally, pray for them. Also, feel free to suggest names to them under these three conditions. First, ensure you have your suggested person's permission to submit their name. Second, make sure that they are, in fact, a member of the congregation. Third, and most important, prayerfully consider God's call on them to serve in this way.

The Story of Our Church Is Written in Our Connections

Whether we're talking about history or our ever-emerging present, God's goal has always been to connect us with God's Spirit and each other. A big way this happens is through our stories. *Linking Lives* is an opportunity for folks to share their stories and in so doing help link us together with each other. Over the next 12 months, there will be opportunities for us to learn more about and, most importantly, *pray* for every family in our congregation. We will feature profiles and have times for personal prayer and chatting as well as bi-monthly opportunities for a podcast featuring faith stories (1st week of the month) and/or burning faith questions or theology (3rd week of the month). Look for your invitation letters to come beginning in August.

We Welcome Guests to Our Pulpit

With David and Mandy taking vacation, we welcome Elder Brody Cameron to our online and morning services and Danny Yancey in the evening!

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "What a Mighty God We Serve" CEL #627

What a mighty God we serve. (x2)

Angels bow before Him;

Heav'n and earth adore Him.

What a mighty God we serve. (repeat)

Measuring real strength God's way requires God's peace.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship. Please join me in the Call to Worship...

(10am only) Call to Worship

When God says "Be strong"

We're not talking about Everest

We're not talking about suppressing emotions

We're not talking about being all things to all people

When God says, "Be strong"

God says, "Trust me"

Sing:

"Revive Us Again" CEL #434

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We clamor and practice lots of different ideas for strength and are, frankly, skeptical of God's idea for strength far too often. That's got to change. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Holy God, You give us great minds for teasing out mysteries and solving even the most complex problems. You give us great muscles and skills to achieve incredible acts. You give us personalities and emotions to cope with the most overwhelming circumstances, good and bad. And yet, when it comes to obeying your Spirit, we are hesitant to receive that gift. We are hesitant to receive you. Help us, Lord, please, do better. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

**Glory be to the Father
And to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning
It is now and ever shall be
World without end: Amen, amen.**

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God doesn't just inform: it reveals. The Word of God doesn't just tell us the truth, it empowers us to live our true path. The Word of God, by God's own Spirit, teaches us to live. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "O, How I Love Jesus" CEL #92 (GTG #232)

**O, how I love Jesus! (x3)
Because He first loved me!**

Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: Philippians 1:12-14; 4:10-14 (CEB)

Paul's example and God's strength.

1:12 Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have actually advanced the gospel. ¹³ The whole Praetorian Guard and everyone else knows that I'm in prison for Christ. ¹⁴ Most of the brothers and sisters have had more confidence through the Lord to speak the word boldly and bravely because of my jail time.

4:10 I was very glad in the Lord because now at last you have shown concern for me again. (Of course you were always concerned but had no way to show it.) ¹¹ I'm not saying this because I need anything, for I have learned how to be content in any circumstance. ¹² I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough; I have learned the secret to being content in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry or whether having plenty or being poor. ¹³ I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength. ¹⁴ Still, you have done well to share my distress.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a seed of some kind
- Don't forget to wait for answers
"Strength to Be"
- Okay! How many of you pick up a car?...Huh, okay. Well what about lifting a house?...Really?... Alright, how many of you can lift any members of our church?
- As strong as we can be, there's only so much we can really do with our strength. So when the Bible says that we can have faith that can move mountains, what does that mean?
- Well it's talking about being strong a different way. This is holding on to our trust in God. Believing that God can help, that God can fix things, that God can love us for real.
- It's like this seed. As a seed, it can't do very much except grow. But with God's help, this seed will become so much more and do so much more.
- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them how they are strong with God.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"Down to the River to Pray with Lord, Listen to Your Children" arr. Mary McDonald; Duet: Noah and Lora Melton

Sermon: "Finding Real Strength in Christ"

Philippians 4:13 is perhaps one of the most quoted verses in the entire Bible. In fact, it might be the most quoted verse. You've probably seen it plastered everywhere—from locker room walls to Instagram bios, from motivational posters to inspirational T-shirts. And honestly, there's a good reason for that. It's a powerful verse, one that speaks directly to the heart of many Christians and non-Christians alike. It reminds us of something we so often forget: with Christ, we can do anything.

For a long time, I really thought this verse was all about physical strength. Coaches and teammates used to quote it all the time—especially after

someone missed a tackle, lost a one-on-one, or failed to block their assignment. It was almost like the verse became a spiritualized pep talk: "If you just believed harder, you could've made that play." "If your faith was stronger, you would've succeeded." In those moments, the verse took on a kind of magical quality. If you chanted it enough times or believed in it hard enough, you'd lift more, run faster, or recover from injury quicker. But here's the thing—I've come to realize that this isn't the full picture of what Paul was trying to say.

It's not exactly wrong to interpret Philippians 4:13 as referring to physical strength. Christ certainly gives us the gifts we need to endure, persevere, and even accomplish incredible feats of athletic or physical endurance. But if we limit the verse only to that realm, we miss something much deeper and far more meaningful. We forget there are other kinds of strength—spiritual strength, emotional strength, mental resilience, the ability to stand firm in adversity. And perhaps most importantly, the strength to be content even when life doesn't go our way.

Before we dig into what Paul was really talking about, we need some context. Who wrote Philippians? What were they doing when they wrote it? Why was it written?

Like much of the New Testament, Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul. He penned this letter to the church in Philippi, a Christian community he had helped establish. The occasion for the letter was a gift Paul had received from the Philippians—probably a monetary gift or some kind of aid to support him during his time of need. He wanted to thank them and encourage them. But here's the detail that changes how we understand everything else in the letter: Paul wrote Philippians from prison.

We're not exactly sure which prison it was—some scholars believe he was in Rome, others suggest Ephesus or Caesarea—but what we do know for sure is that Paul was imprisoned, persecuted for sharing the gospel. So now let's go back to the verse. He's writing, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," while locked in a prison cell. He's not surrounded by fans cheering him on. He's not in a stadium, lifting weights or

throwing a football. He's in chains. He's isolated. He's suffering. He doesn't know if he'll live to see another day.

And yet, he writes with an unshakeable confidence in Christ. That's where the strength comes in. Not the strength to lift, push, or sprint—but the strength to remain faithful and content in the middle of chaos.

Earlier in Philippians 4, Paul actually sets this up. He tells the Philippians that he deeply appreciates their concern for him. But then he says something surprising—he's learned to be content no matter the circumstances. Whether he has a lot or a little, whether he's free or imprisoned, whether he's well-fed or hungry—he's learned to be at peace. And that's when he writes the now-famous words: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

This wasn't about escaping prison. It wasn't about breaking the chains or getting revenge on his captors. It was about enduring hardship with grace. It was about being strong enough to stay—to stay faithful, to stay joyful, to stay loving even in the worst situations. That's the kind of strength Paul was talking about.

And if we're honest, that's the kind of strength most of us need. Not the kind that helps us lift 300 pounds in the gym, but the kind that helps us get out of bed in the morning when life is falling apart. The kind that helps us keep going when everything in us wants to quit. The kind that helps us love people when they don't love us back. That's the strength of Christ.

Now, don't get me wrong—the verse still shows up everywhere in the world of sports. Like I said, I played football since middle school. I've seen Philippians 4:13 printed on banners, wristbands, cleats—you name it. And it makes sense. Football is hard. The practices are long, the hits hurt, the injuries pile up, and losing is emotionally brutal. There's something comforting about believing you have divine strength backing you up on the field. And yeah, sometimes I needed that kind of boost.

But looking back, I realize I didn't really need that verse on the field. Of course, I needed to be physically strong. I needed to train, lift, stay

focused, and push through. But mentally and emotionally? It was manageable. Even after a tough loss to a rival team on a Friday night, by Saturday morning, the sting had faded. Life moved on.

Where I really needed that verse—the true strength of Philippians 4:13—was in places it wasn't plastered. It wasn't there on the ceiling when I lay awake worrying about my family. It wasn't on the walls of the hospital when I was pacing back and forth, wondering if everything was going to be okay. It wasn't echoing in my head when I didn't want to get out of bed or face another day of stress and fear. In the darkest, loneliest moments of my life, the verse that should have comforted me most seemed nowhere to be found.

Let me tell you about one of those moments.

In the span of just one week, my mom broke both of her ankles. Not one—both. Around the same time, my grandmother broke her hip. And to top it all off, my grandfather—while caring for my grandmother in the hospital—passed out from sheer exhaustion. I was suddenly faced with a situation no one ever prepares you for. I was visiting two different hospitals, almost an hour apart, every day. Three of the people I loved most in the world were suffering, and all their responsibilities somehow fell to me. There was no one else. I was it.

It's hard to describe what that kind of week feels like. It's more than just stressful. It's overwhelming. You're scared, but you don't have time to fall apart. You have to keep going. You have to make decisions. You have to show up, even when you're exhausted and confused and unsure of what to do next.

And somehow—I did.

I had strength when I drove back and forth each day, making sure things were okay at my grandparents' house, and making sure things were okay at the hospital. I had strength as I navigated confusing and frustrating visitor policies, dealing with staff who didn't always communicate clearly. I had strength when I had to advocate for my grandparents, pressing for answers when nurses

and doctors seemed to dodge questions or ignore our concerns.

That was one of the moments in my life when I truly understood what Paul meant. That's the kind of strength Christ gives. Not flashy strength. Not Instagrammable strength. Quiet, steady, enduring strength. The kind that lets you keep going, even when you have no idea how.

And here's the bittersweet part: I had so many people encouraging me. My community, my friends, other family members—they showed up. They prayed. They supported. And yet, somehow, I forgot the one verse that should have been my anchor. The verse I'd seen all over my sports life. The verse that had become a cliché.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

I wish I had remembered it then—not just the words, but the meaning. I wish I had let it sink in that the strength I was experiencing wasn't mine alone. That Christ had been there the whole time, strengthening me, guiding me, carrying me when I didn't think I could take another step.

That verse isn't just about winning. It's not just about conquering goals or hitting milestones. It's about enduring. It's about finding peace in chaos. It's about standing firm when life falls apart. It's about discovering a strength that isn't our own—and learning to rely on it when ours runs out.

So next time life knocks you down—and believe me, it will—go back to Philippians 4:13. Open your Bible. Read it again. Not with the eyes of a kid on the football field, but with the eyes of someone who knows what it's like to suffer. Let it speak to your heart. Let it remind you that the strength you need has always been available. Not just the strength to win—but the strength to endure, to love, to forgive, to carry on.

Because you can do all things—yes, all—through Christ who strengthens you. Even the things you think are impossible. Amen

Song of Reflection

"Today We Are All Called to Be Disciples"

GTG #757

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Tis So Sweet to Trust In Jesus" arr. Martha Mier

(10am only) Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise God all creatures here below.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;

Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Blessing

(text online only)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...

- *"Down to the River to Pray"* Traditional

**O Christians, let's go down,
let's go down, come one down.**

**O Christians, let's go down,
down to the river to pray.**

**O Children, let's go down,
let's go down, come one down.**

**O Children, let's go down,
down to the river to pray.)**

- Holy God, We want so many things. We want to be the best. We want to have everything we want and everything we need. We want to be good people. We want really be your children. We want to be respected and loved. We want to be in control. We want good things to happen and for the world to be a better place. Sometimes we wish it could be like it was and sometimes we

wish it could be different than it is. In all of this, you give us one answer: trust me.

- God, sometimes it's just hard to do that. Hard to trust you. We can't let go of the urge to do things our way. We can't let go of the need to control things. We can't embrace the idea that you really are in charge. But help find a path to the peace you offer. Help us practice every day turning over our lives to you and resting your strength rather than our own. Help us make you proud, not by what we achieve, but by how well we submit to you and your will.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) *"Blessed Assurance"* GTG #839

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Measuring real strength God's way requires God's peace.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: *"Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us"* GTG #187

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,

You have bought us: we are yours.

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,

You have bought us: we are yours.

(10am only) Postlude

"Revive Us Again" arr. Cindy Berry
