



**ENTER** God's presence

One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard:  
 "Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is  
 unfailing love."

**Psalm 62:11-12a**

Heavenly Father, you are the source of all power and majesty. Any power or influence that we have comes from you. And yet in your power and majesty, you have shown us unfailing love in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Help us to recognise again today the power of your word to transform and conform us into a greater likeness of Christ. Amen.



**SHARE** life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **When do you feel the most powerful?**
4. **When you interact with people more powerful or influential than yourself, have those encounters generally been positive or negative? Why?**

The impact of power. It's been plastered over our television screens over recent weeks. The raw and destructive power of storms, winds, and floods, sweeping up and destroying everything in its path. The abusive and coercive use of power in workplaces and institutions. The violent and corruptive use of power by government and military groups globally. Human nature finds power unavoidably addictive and more often than not, its impact leaves nations and lives broken, torn apart, and destroyed. But when Jesus enters Jerusalem to the shouts and accolades of the crowds we witness and experience the "flipside" of power...power that restores, rebuilds, forgives, heals and blesses. Jesus didn't grasp for power; he challenged the powerful, the privileged & the proud so that all people could receive the power and presence of God. He flips our world until it is right...in relationship with the Father...responsive to his love...embraced in his death & rejoicing in his life.

Week beginning:  
**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Worship series:  
**Not What You Expect:  
 The Flipside of Power**



**VERSE** for the week

Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

**Mark 11:9**



**REMEMBER** this week

The journey of Holy Week reveals the power of Jesus' love is greater than anything that has taken hold of your life or you have given power over your life. It's a unstoppable power that transforms and propels your life eternally. Receive, embody and live it.



**LISTEN** attentively

**Read Mark 11:1-11**

5. **What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
6. **What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
7. **What do you think the disciples would have felt following Jesus into Jerusalem and seeing the reaction of the crowd?**

Lord Acton, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English writer, historian, and politician, is the one who famously said, “power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Although he is credited with that particular quote, the sentiment expressed in it has been expounded by many others over numerous centuries before him. Most of us have seen the truth of statements like this played out at various time in our lives. Perhaps you’ve encountered a police officer who was a little too eager to demonstrate or exercise their authority? Maybe you have a boss who likes to flex their authoritarian muscles a little more often than is helpful. Maybe you grew up with parents who didn’t always know the right way to exercise their power and authority as parents. While it is easy for us to identify the misuse or abuse of power in others, it is often much more challenging to identify it in ourselves.

8. **Do you agree with the sentiment of Lord Acton’s quote? Discuss.**
9. **What do you think it is about power that has such a corrupting influence?**

In this story, the crowds welcome Jesus into Jerusalem and ascribe to him power and authority and greet him as a king. It seems that they expected Jesus to usher in a new era of the kingdom or nation of Israel; to remove the occupying Roman forces and to re-establish the kingdom of King David; a kingdom which was established through much conflict, violence, and bloodshed (see the book of 2 Samuel). The Kingdom which Jesus established did in fact come through conflict, violence, and bloodshed but not in a way anyone expected. The process up until this point had always been that the victorious king spilled the blood of his enemies and exercised his power over them. Jesus’ victory flipped that paradigm on its head. His victory came through the shedding of his own blood, the laying aside of his own power and authority and in subjecting himself to the power and authority of his enemies.

This can be a huge challenge for us to overcome. Our entire lives, the world around us has told us that power is something we have to fight for, something we have to earn for ourselves and protect at all costs against those who want to take it from us. Yet all of scripture, and particularly in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are shown another way. Those who place their own power and authority in the hands of God and subject their power to his authority, are the ones who seem to find the power of God expressed or exercised most clearly in their lives. Think of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Esther; all had their own power, wealth, and authority but all of them placed themselves in the hands of God who worked with them and through their positions to bring about his ultimate plan of redemption in Jesus.

10. **What is the most unexpected way you have seen the power of God demonstrated in your life?**



**GROW** deeper

**Read Philippians 2:1-11**

There are two kinds of power in this world. The first, and the one that we are most familiar with, is the kind of power which we earn, or take for ourselves. This is the corrupting kind of power that Lord Acton speaks about and which tends to have a corruptive influence. When we get a bit of it, it tends to create in us a hunger or desire for more. This after all is essentially what Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden. God gave them authority and dominion (within certain limits) over his creation (see Genesis 1:27-29). However, before long Eve, prompted by the serpent, and then Adam prompted by Eve, reached for more power than God had given them, leading to the corruption of God’s creation due to sin.

The second kind of power, is the power of love. The kind of power which we freely give to others. This is the power that is expressed in this passage from Philippians. Out of love for us and his love and obedience to the Father, Jesus laid aside the power of his divinity, choosing love and obedience over power and authority. Philip Yancey put it like this, *“Power, no matter how well intentioned, tends to cause suffering. Love, being vulnerable, absorbs it. In a point of convergence on a hill called Calvary, God renounced the one for the sake of the other.”*

- 11. What things have you given power to or taken power from in your life that have caused suffering, despite your best intentions?**
- 12. How does the overwhelming power of God’s love for you free you to overcome those things that have held power over you in your life?**



## **LIVE** purposefully

Our world operates on a limited supply of power and it is driven by people who seek to gather it and keep it for themselves. God’s kingdom however, derives its power from the source of all power and authority, God himself, the creator and sustainer of all things. As the psalms so frequently tell us, God’s steadfast love endures forever. Even the power of sin, death, and the devil could not overcome or bring an end to the power of God’s love for us. The unlimited power of God’s love is now alive in you as one of his loved and redeemed children through Christ Jesus. It brings greater freedom, more fulfillment and deeper joy than any other power this world has to offer. The best thing is you don’t have to worry about giving it away, because God always has more to give you. So let’s all get busy empowering each other and our communities with the love of God!

- 13. Who is someone you could share the love of God with this week? How are you going to do that?**
- 14. Is there an area or power in your life that you need to hand over to God? Share and bring that before God in prayer with your LifeGroup.**
- 15. Is there a place or opportunity in your community where your entire LifeGroup could get involved in serving others with the love of Jesus? Make a plan as a group to do something for and in your community.**



## **PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for his faithfulness and relentless love.
- Thank Jesus for his humility and for choosing love for us rather than power over us.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognise the power of God’s love in your life and to share that with others.
- Pray for all churches as they prepare to celebrate and once again proclaim the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus this Easter.



## **BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], the power of his love has saved you. Amen.**