



WEEKLY LEADER GUIDE

STORY OF MY LIFE

WEEK 4

LIVE A BETTER STORY TEAM

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Reggie Joiner
Reggie Goodin
Carey Nieuwhof

CONTENT DIRECTOR

Sarah Bragg

BRANDING & GRAPHICS

Ryan Boon

SUPPORT

Meghan Hewitt
Jeremy Landers

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MESSAGING

Crystal Chiang

EDITORS & WRITERS

Jared Herd
Jonny Wills
Laurin Greco
Rodney Anderson

ADMIN/TECHNOLOGY/ PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Hadley Brandt
Kevin Benson

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Steve Underwood

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Story of My Life

WEEK 4



WEEK SUMMARY

Many of us think that powerful people are men and women who lead Fortune 500 companies, or are heads of banks, or are politicians making policy decisions for millions of people. We rarely consider ourselves to be powerful. But the truth is that each of us has some sort of power. Whether in our jobs, our families, or our neighborhoods, we all have the ability to influence those around us. The question we must then answer is: What are we doing with the power we have? How we choose to answer will affect our ability to experience the full, abundant, better life Jesus promised. Power, in any form, can be used to benefit the person who holds it or to serve the people who are under it. When we look at Jesus' life, we see the perfect example of how to use power. As the Son of God, He had more power than anyone on Earth, but instead of wielding His power like a self-serving weapon, He used it to serve others. Since we all have power in one form or another, it's our responsibility to use it to make other's lives better, and as we do, we just might make our lives better too.



THINK ABOUT THIS

One of the quickest ways to grow closer together as a small group is to spend time together outside of group. The most effective small groups don't limit themselves to one hour a week together. If you want to build a community of people who have deep relationships, it's important to facilitate ways in which you and your group members can spend time together outside of the small group setting. Encourage casual hangouts throughout the week and even on weekends, knowing that the more time your group spends together, the better your weekly small group time will be.

And one of the best ways to spend time together outside of small group is to serve together. Whether you volunteer at a church event or a local soup kitchen, serving can bring people together faster than almost anything else. This week, talk about places in the community where your group might be able to do some sort of service project. It doesn't matter how big or small the service is, but plan a time when you can all collectively serve others. Remember, relationships are built on time shared together. Don't rely on one hour a week to build long-lasting relationships. Get out in the community together!

TEACHING MATERIALS



VIDEO 04



AUDIO 04

Story of My Life

WEEK 4



BOTTOM LINE

**USING POWER TO SERVE OTHERS IN LOVE
CREATES A BETTER STORY
FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING YOU.**

**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an
example that you should do as I have done for you.**

JOHN 13:14-15

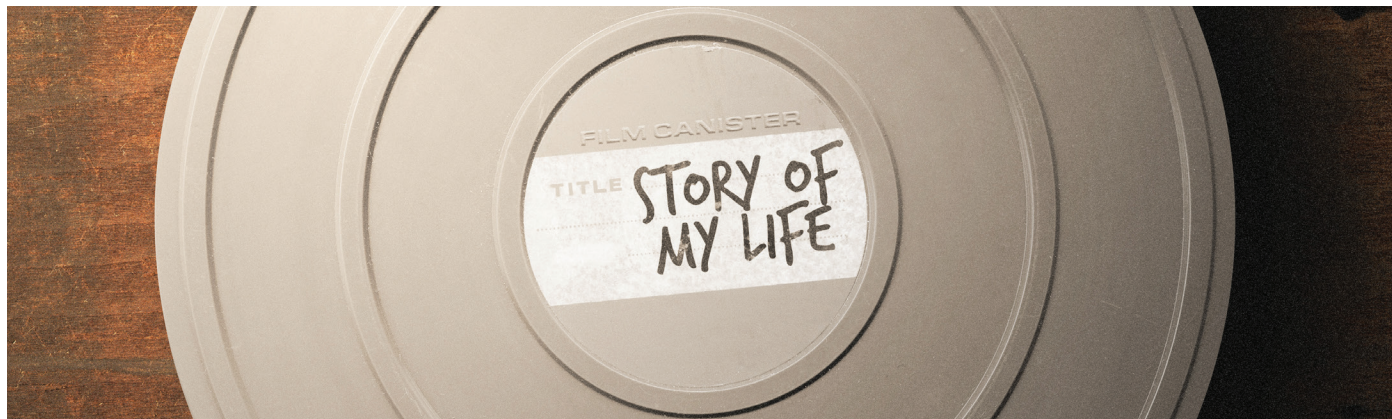
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are a guide to get the conversation started in your group—don't feel like you need to ask everything you see here! As long as you're having a conversation, you're on the right track. Also, feel free to adjust the questions to fit the needs of your specific group.

- 1. WHO IS THE MOST POWERFUL PERSON YOU KNOW?**
- 2. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SOMEONE USE POWER IN A NEGATIVE WAY?**
- 3. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU HAVE POWER OR INFLUENCE?**
- 4. WHY WAS JESUS' ACTION TOWARD HIS FOLLOWERS (WASHING THEIR FEET) SO SURPRISING?**
- 5. DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WITH POWER WHO USES IT IN THIS WAY? HOW DOES THEIR POWER AND INFLUENCE BENEFIT THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM?**
- 6. THINK ABOUT WHO YOU HAVE POWER OR INFLUENCE OVER. IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU USE THAT INFLUENCE TO SERVE THEM THIS WEEK? WHAT WOULD KEEP YOU FROM DOING THAT?**
- 7. HOW DOES SERVING OTHERS LEAD TO LIVING A BETTER STORY?**

Communication Plan

WEEK 4



CONTINUING THE EXPERIENCE

Did you ever wish you could strategically communicate with your small group outside of group time? Ever wish you could find a way to share quick snippets of what they're learning or even send a word of encouragement to them?

Well . . . now you can.

The communication plan is designed to help your small group attenders engage with the truths in that week's group time. Below you'll find bite-size content that you can post on your

attenders' social media channels or send through email. There are tweets, posts for Facebook and Instagram, and images that you can use. And they're all designed to help your attenders connect with the week's topic.

Remember to make these posts and tweets yours. Don't feel like you have to use all of the content provided in a given series. Use this plan as a starting point as you leverage social media with your small group.

TEXT MESSAGES

SEND THIS TO EVERYONE IN YOUR GROUP:

Hi there! Hope this week is going awesome! Just wanted to let you know that I'm asking God to show you ways you can leverage your influence to write a better story this week! See you soon!

SEND THIS TO ANYONE WHO MISSED GROUP THIS WEEK:

(Leader: You can find the audio file in your downloads.

Use a service like Google Drive or Dropbox to share it.)

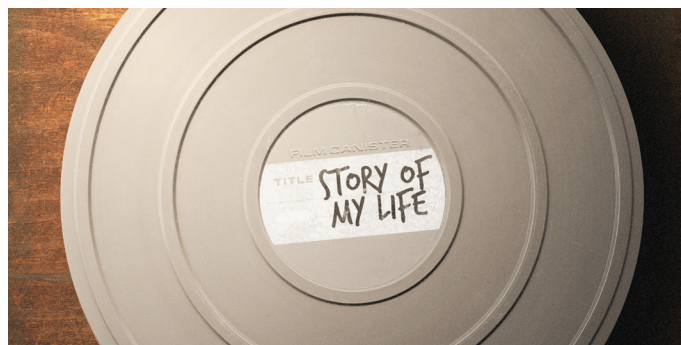
Hey—we missed you at group! Here's the link to the audio so you can catch up. Hope all is well and can't wait to see you next week!

SEND THIS TO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP, JUST BECAUSE:

Hi! Just wanted to tell you how happy I am that you're in our group. I notice that you are _____. And it's great to see God using you in our group! *(Fill in the blank with a positive characteristic. For example, "a great listener," "good at keeping the conversation going," "willing to offer encouragement.")*

SOCIAL MEDIA

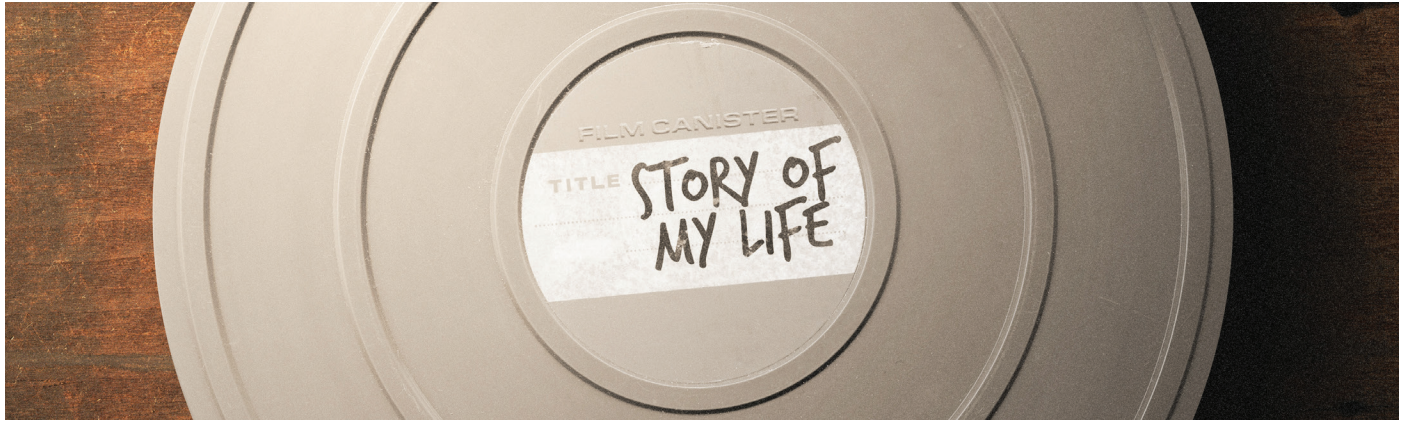
POST THIS TO YOUR FACEBOOK OR INSTAGRAM:



This week, we looked at how the power God has given us is an opportunity and an invitation to write a better story. I'm asking God to show you ways that you can do that this week! And I'm looking forward to next week as we continue to chew on what it means to live a better story.

Weekly Email

WEEK 4



FOR THE LEADER

Remember to email your small group every week with a reminder of when small group meets, directions, and any information that would be helpful for them. To make it simple, just **copy and paste the email below** and fill in any information that you think

your group members might need to know. Since every group and leader is different, feel free to change the email text to fit your group.

WEEK 4 EMAIL

Hey everyone!

Hope your week is going great! I wanted to send out a quick email to let everyone know what we'll be talking about in small group this week.

We're now in week four of *Story of My Life*. This week's message is about using power and influence to help and serve others. While not all of us may feel like we're in positions of power, the truth is that we all have people we influence—whether we're aware of it or not. In small group, we're going to talk about how each of us can use our influence to serve others and to write a better story. I'm really looking forward to our time together!

Here are the details for our meeting:

Date/time:

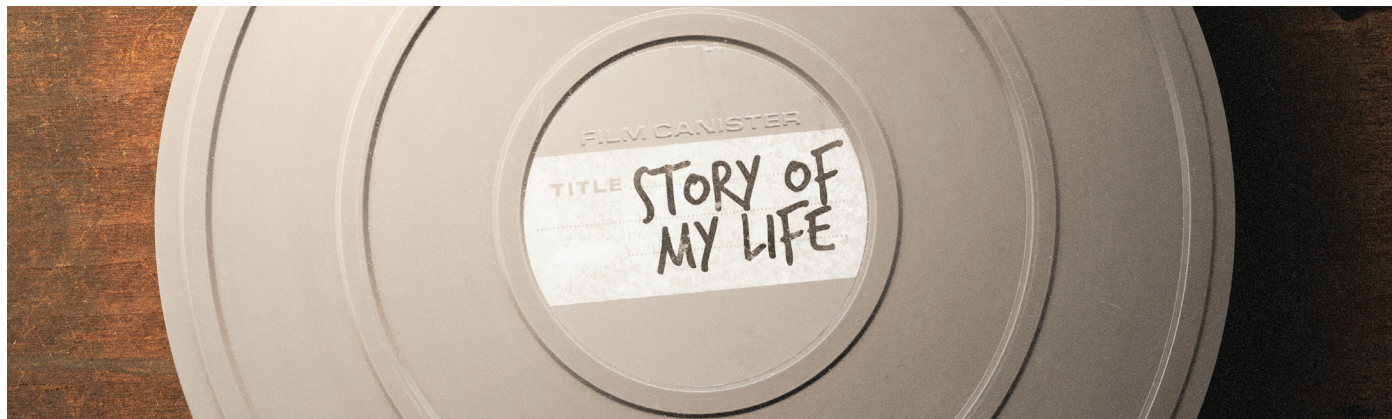
Address:

Our weekly Bible Reading Plan and the questions for this week are attached.

See you guys soon!

Bible Reading Plan

WEEK 4



OVERVIEW

Wouldn't it be awesome if you could help your small group members engage with God's Word all week long, instead of just during your weekly small group time? That's the intention of the Bible Reading Plan that goes along with this series.

Every week of a series comes with five unique verses and five unique prompts to help your small group members think about and engage with Scripture throughout the week. Each Scripture image can be found in the "Graphics" folder of the series download and each prompt can be found below.

HOW TO USE

We've designed these images and prompts to be flexible enough to use in a wide variety of ways. But to help you get started, here are three things you might want to try:

- 1. POST THEM.** These images and prompts work perfectly on social media!
- 2. TEXT THEM.** If you're looking for a more personal way to encourage your group members to read Scripture, try texting

each day's Scripture and prompt to the group. Of course, we're all busy. So to save time, you may want to sign up for an online texting service and schedule those in advance.

- 3. PRINT OR EMAIL THEM.** An easy way to have your group use the Bible Reading Plan is to simply print or email the next page. That way they have each day's reading before the week begins.

SCRIPTURE AND DAILY PROMPTS FOR EACH IMAGE

MONDAY (Day 1) Matthew 5:14-16

What does it mean that God considers you to be "the light of the world?" How have you seen yourself be a light? Ask God to show you ways you can use your influence to be a light to everyone who comes in contact with you.

TUESDAY (Day 2) 2 Corinthians 12:9

It's easy to feel like we're too weak to actually be powerful, but the truth is that our weakness is where God's strength can pour through. Think about the areas of your life where you're most weak and ask God to show you how He's being strong in those areas.

WEDNESDAY (Day 3) Philippians 2:5-6

Who has the opportunity to benefit the most from the power you have? What can you do today to use your power to someone else's advantage?

THURSDAY (Day 4) Matthew 25:40

Who are the people in your life who are most in need? How can you use your power or influence to serve them?

FRIDAY (Day 5) Galatians 5:13

What's something you're going to do today that'll benefit you? What's something you can do today to benefit someone else?

Bible Reading Plan

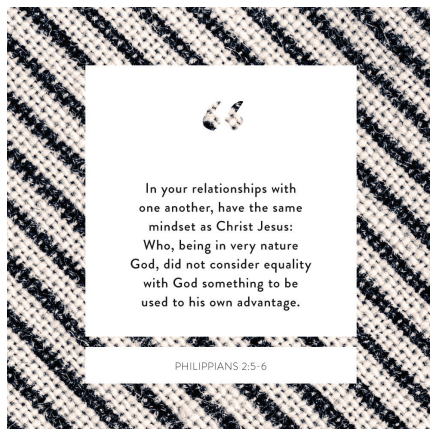
WEEK 4



DAY 1: What does it mean that God considers you to be “the light of the world?” How have you seen yourself be a light? Ask God to show you ways you can use your influence to be a light to everyone who comes in contact with you.



DAY 2: It’s easy to feel like we’re too weak to actually be powerful, but the truth is that our weakness is where God’s strength can pour through. Think about the areas of your life where you’re most weak and ask God to show you how He’s being strong in those areas.



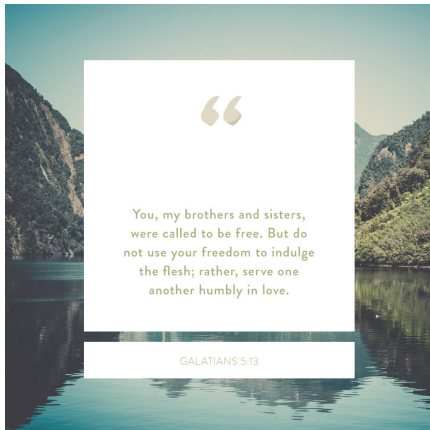
DAY 3: Who has the opportunity to benefit the most from the power you have? What can you do today to use your power to someone else’s advantage?

Bible Reading Plan

WEEK 4



DAY 4: Who are the people in your life who are most in need? How can you use your power or influence to serve them?



DAY 5: What is something you're going to do today that will benefit you? What is something you can do today to benefit someone else?

Teaching Script

Week 4

BOTTOM LINE

USING POWER TO SERVE OTHERS IN LOVE CREATES A BETTER STORY FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING YOU.

INTRODUCTION

Let's begin this week by asking a question: Would you consider yourself a powerful person? Do you think of yourself as someone who has a lot of influence over others?

My guess is most of us would say, "no." Powerful people, we think, are men and women who lead Fortune 500 companies, or are heads of banks, or are politicians making policy decisions for *literally* millions of people. Or maybe we think about sports figures or celebrities, or anyone who seems to have a lot of influence over others. We think these people are strong, direct, persuasive, dominant, and compelling. And we don't think of ourselves that way.

But the truth is, you are a powerful person. All of us are. Every single one of us exercises some sort of power or influence over other people. It may be a professional position or a relational one. You may hold a position at your job where you lead one, two, or a team of people. You could have a seat on your homeowner's board helping shape the future of the neighborhood. You could be a parent who holds power and influence over your children. Maybe you have relational influence or power with your friends, your coworkers, your kids, your kids' friends, and their parents. Everyone who has influence has power. And everyone has influence with someone. So the real question isn't: Do you have power? But rather: **What are you doing with the power you have?**

TENSION

This may not be a question you've ever asked yourself before, but it's an important one as we continue to talk and process through how to live a better story. Because how we choose to use the power we have plays a huge role experiencing the full, abundant, better life Jesus promised.

But most of us aren't very good at using the power we have. Don't take it personally—it's not just you. The truth is, few people in history have been great at using the power they have. The odds are against us. We've all heard about the danger of power and how it tends to corrupt even the best of us. Abraham Lincoln famously said it this way: *"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."*

Isn't this true? It's not hard to find stories of people who've used power for their personal benefit, who've leveraged their power and held it over others, or who have used it to be served by others.

Think about it. Have you ever used your position of power to make yourself look better than you really are? Or have you used it for financial gain? Or maybe you've used relational power to inflate your ego and to make yourself feel superior to someone else. Or maybe in your marriage, you've used your power to get your way or to make your spouse feel small. There are a million small ways all of us can misuse our power and influence. The temptation is real and it's constant. The problem is, there's so much more on the line than just making some poor choices. Look a little closer, and you'll also see the wreckage of shattered dreams, broken hearts, and damaged relationships strewn about the halls of power.

But does it have to be that way? Something in us knows that doesn't feel right. When you see someone leveraging their power for their benefit and using it only for themselves, it bothers us. And I think it's because deep down, maybe even on a spiritual level, we all know we were made for more. Our power wasn't meant just for our benefit. Our stories were meant to be about more than one character.



Teaching Script

Week 4

But what do we do with the power we have? Even if it's only a little power, only a little influence, what exactly are we supposed to do with it? How do we use it for good, instead of being used by it?

TRUTH

While the problem of power is a big one, it certainly isn't a new one. From the time that humans discovered they could use their power to benefit them, they did. It's commonplace—almost expected—that anyone with power will use it for themselves. The same was true in the ancient world. And that's what makes the passage we're looking at today so very remarkable.

Today we're looking at one of the four accounts of Jesus' life on Earth. This one is called the Gospel of John. In it, Jesus' friend, John, remembers the night Jesus was arrested and the day before He was to be crucified. It was also the start of the Jewish feast, Passover, and Jesus and His twelve closest friends were gathered in an upper room of someone's house to share a ceremonial meal together. It was something that families all over Jerusalem would have been doing. And right before it was time to share what would be the last meal before His death, Jesus did something that shocked everyone.

But before we read about exactly what Jesus did, John gives us insight and clarity around why it was so revolutionary. Let's start in John 13:3:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God (John 13:3).

Essentially, John stated that Jesus is the most powerful Person in the universe. He said that all things are under His power and all things are under His control. And Jesus knew it. Jesus was fully aware of that reality. There was no confusion on Jesus' part over who He is and what He is capable of. He knew that He could literally do anything at any time. But more than that, Jesus also knew the tables were about to turn. He knew that in just a few hours, soldiers would arrest Him and He would be beaten, humiliated, mocked, crucified, and killed. He was the most powerful Person in the world, but He was about to die.

So what did Jesus do in His final hours before His death with all the power He knew was at His disposal? Launch a counter attack? Force His disciples to meet His every need? Not exactly. Look what John wrote next and consider that Jesus knew He had all power:

He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:4-5).

I think it's hard to fully understand what it must have been like for Jesus' friends in that moment. No one expected this. Why?

Feet in the first century were disgusting. There were no paved roads, and animals traveled those same unpaved roads. So you can imagine what people's feet looked and smelled like after a day of walking around in the dust, dirt, mud, and . . . well . . . all the stuff animals leave behind. Cleaning the feet of guests once they entered the house was a job no one—absolutely no one—wanted. But someone had to do it.

And no one expected the Son of God to take on the job. Still, Jesus, their Rabbi, their Teacher, the Owner of all the power in the world, did. He washed His friends' filthy feet.

At some point Jesus, like us, had to ask Himself what He was going to do with the power He had. And since He sat in the highest position of all, no one would have blamed Him if He used it to His advantage—to get what He wanted, to be served, to escape His certain death, to take advantage of the following He had. But He didn't do any of those things.

Instead, He stood up from the table, and He picked up a towel. He filled a bowl with water and lowered Himself to the ground. And God Himself, the highest Being of all, took in His hands the dirty feet of His friends and began to wash.

Jesus chose to do the job He was least responsible for. He served. He loved. He gave away the power that was His to wield. It shocked His disciples because that's not what any other leader they ever knew did with power. Not even close.

And then He told His disciples—and He tells us—to go and do the same:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:14-17).

Teaching Script

WEEK 4



While washing feet was the most visible thing Jesus was doing, the real lesson lay underneath. **What Jesus was doing at the deepest level was showing His disciples and the world how to use power for maximum impact: you use it to serve others.**

Jesus showed us that the greatest way to use our power is by loving and serving those around us because He knew that's how we'd live a better story. Instead of leaving broken hearts and broken relationships in the wake of our power, we can leverage our power to build others up and take care of their needs. And that's a better story—for us and for everyone.

APPLICATION

The truth is, everyone has power. Each one of us has influence with someone. We have control somewhere. We have authority with someone. If that's the case, what if the real purpose of the power God has given you isn't simply to benefit you? What if the ultimate use of that power comes in using it to love and serve others?

We may not be in tremendously high positions of power, but every day we interact with people we have influence in and over. And every day we get to decide if we will use that influence to benefit ourselves or other people. All of us have the ability to set aside our pride, our dignity, our ego, and what feels like our rights to serve the people who are around us. When God gives you power, or influence, He is giving you the opportunity to fill up what is lacking in someone else.

Think about it. A genuine compliment to a co-worker can fill up their encouragement tank. Paying undivided attention to your child can help fill up their "noticed" tank. Mowing the lawn for your overwhelmed single neighbor can fill up their "life is going to be okay" tank. Taking on extra housework can fill up your spouse's "appreciated" tank. When you designate that extra profit for Christmas bonuses for your employees, you're filling their money tanks—their bank accounts. Out of the power God has given you, you can spill out goodness to the people you have power over.

The best part about this is, when we use our power to serve, the effect of that power is limitless. It's what changes people's lives. Power given away through serving is how we can leverage our life to make the most difference and have the most satisfaction. It made a huge difference in the lives of the men who got their feet washed by their Leader. They went from being cowardly to carrying the message of Jesus to the world—and changing history in the process.

During this series we've been talking about the story of our lives, and how Jesus promises to make that story more rich, more full, more satisfying, and ultimately a better story. He's inviting you to step into that better story by using your power to make a difference for someone else. Don't discount yourself just because your power doesn't feel world-changing. Some of our greatest impact can come from our smallest acts. You don't have to go out and try and solve world hunger. Just try to change the world for one person—maybe even start with just changing that person's day for the better.

And the beautiful thing about leveraging your power to serve others is that it brings a tremendous sense of satisfaction, fullness, and abundance. Serving others feels incredible. It's just like Jesus to bless us with power and then to turn around and bless us again when we give it away. God has set life up so that when you leverage your power to serve others, it creates not only a better story for everyone, it also creates a better story for you.

LANDING

So what power has God given you? How can you humble yourself to serve others this week? The more you do it, the more you'll experience the better life Jesus promised. And others around you will too.

The ultimate use of power isn't to get people to serve you. It's for you, in love, to serve people. That writes a better story. A better story for your own life, and a better story for those around you.

So, remember: **With the power God has given you, He is inviting you to write a better story.**