



A Voice of Strength and Peace Leader Guide

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for the most effective study.
Passages are printed below in blue for ease in presentation.)

Remember the scene from The Wizard of Oz where Dorothy and her friends finally go in to see the Great and Powerful Oz? “I. Am. Oz.” The loud and booming voice has all of them trembling, shivering, second guessing whether they really want to see the supposed helper – or not, and, of course the Cowardly Lion, is ready to split all together. That voice struck fear in those who heard it, including those who work in Oz and were hoping to be of help to the group that had followed the yellow brick road.

What a relief, that our God also has a voice that can do mighty things. Unlike the Wizard, our God is the real deal, not just a man behind a curtain pretending to be mighty. Our God’s voice can do amazing things. Our God’s power is beyond that of any other. Our God is enthroned over all.

Opening Prayer: Eternal Father, You have all power, all majesty, and deserve all our praise. Your voice is able to do great things in and around us. Send Your Holy Spirit now to work in us as we consider how You, the Creator of the world, are also the one who cares for each and every one of us. Help us to know how special we are to You and to seek to do Your work to bring others to You. In Your Son’s name we pray, Amen.

Sing or read together *Before You, Lord We Bow* (LSB 966).

Faith Talk: When you think of God’s voice, what comes to mind?

Answers will vary, but encourage all to share. When do we hear the voice of God? What does God’s voice do for you?

Begin by reading Psalm 29. Listen and make a list below of what God’s voice is and does.
(Words for the list are in bold.)

1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, “Glory!” 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. 11 May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

God's voice and power can indeed do great things. Take a look at events where God's voice did mighty things. What did God say in the following verses?

Genesis 1, specifically vs **3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, and 26**. 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. 14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. 20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. 24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." "Let there be." God created the world and all that is naturally in it simply by speaking His words. God provides for his people everything they need to support their body and life (meaning of the 1st Article—Apostle's Creed).

Genesis 3:14-17 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you

shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” 16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” 17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

God proclaimed his displeasure with Adam and Eve and gave consequences for disobedience to Him. While he punishes, He also provides the promise of a Savior, who would come to defeat the serpent. In verse 15, God lets us know that His people will be enemies of the serpent/Satan. Jesus will crush the head of Satan as Satan bruises Jesus’ heel. Satan’s blow is painful, but Christ’s is eternal and final.

Exodus 3:4b-6, 11-12 4 God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

10 “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

God’s voice called Moses to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt. He doesn’t just tell Moses what he should do, but He also gives the promise of His presence as the work of leading the Israelites is done.

I Kings 19:9b-13a 9 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10 He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” 11 And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

God’s voice is not always a loud, thundering voice. But even in His whispers, His words carry great power. Here God’s voice calls Elijah to trust in Him and do His work.

In our lives, God’s whispers can also be full of power and meaning. For further reading add verses 14-18 and see where God led Elijah to serve Him.

Matthew 3:16-17, 17:5. What additional direction does God give in **Matthew 17:5**?

16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 17:5

5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

God’s voice from heaven speaks very similar words at Jesus’ Baptism as well as the Transfiguration. We learn that the Father truly loves His Son, but we also know the rest of the story. God allows that beloved Son to be humiliated, and, in the end, killed for our redemption. This shows us that we, too, are beloved by our heavenly Father. Note that in the Transfiguration account there is an extra phrase. “Listen to him.” We are given Christ, but there is an expectation to listen, to learn, and to follow Him.

God spoke to His people in Biblical times. He spoke of the law, gave direction, offered guidance, and shared His Son, Jesus with all people for all times. Did you notice that God’s voice is not always a booming voice like the pretend Wizard of Oz? Sometimes it comes in a quiet voice or even a whisper. God gets our attention and then shares His love and care.

Re-read **Psalm 29:11**. After the first ten verses of the psalm, prescribing praise to our Lord and telling of all His voice and power can do, the psalmist brings God’s intention back to His people. What two things does God offer his people?

11 May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!
Strength and peace

God’s Strength

God can and does do mighty things with His strength, but He also gives strength to us, His children.

Read the following passages. How does God give us strength?

Isaiah 12:2 2 “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.”

We don’t need to be afraid of anything. We can face the trials we meet in life knowing God is with us. Note that not only is God our strength. He is also our song and salvation. We can praise Him knowing in the end, He will save us from our sin and earthly pain.

Zephaniah 3:20 20 At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.

Sometimes we may feel that we are all over the place, even as individuals. Our thoughts may be scattered, and our focus is not on any one thing, but God gathers us. He also gathers His people. While we may feel scattered, being united with the Church and our Lord is our hope.

Philippians 4:13 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

God gives us the strength we need to do His will. This doesn’t mean I will have strength to do anything I want, but to do those things that glorify Him and are in agreement with His will.

Ephesians 3:16

16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

God builds up His people with strength on the inside, in our hearts by giving us faith. Faith makes us strong. Faith comes from the Holy Spirit. We then have the spiritual strength to do what God has called us to do and prepared for us to do.

Ephesians 4:15-16

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

When we are all built together, we are made strong. Oftentimes in life, we have differing opinions from others. The phrase here, “speak the truth in love” invites us to hold to our beliefs and Lutheran doctrine as we live with those around us. We need to be steel, unmoving, yet at the same time speak as soft as velvet. Not an easy thing to do, but with prayer for God to lead our conversations and responses, He strengthens us to further His kingdom.

I Chronicles 16:11

11 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Our strength comes from the Lord. We need to turn to God for all we need. Self-help books, Pinterest, and even consult of our wisest friends need to be secondary. God is with us always to guide, protect, and defend. We need to keep the other “helpers” of life from getting in the way of us seeing Jesus.

God’s strength is ours through His power, His Son, and His plan for our salvation. His strength is given to us by the Holy Spirit and the love of our Savior. Keeping our eyes on Jesus allows us to see all He continually provides for us. As we keep Jesus on our minds our instant thoughts are of His love and guidance for us.

Faith Talk: Share a time with your group or neighbor that you knew God’s peace in your life. Encourage all participants to share whether in small groups or with a partner.

God’s Peace

One definition of peace is to “be in a state of mutual harmony between people or groups” (dictionary.com). Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we can be at peace with God. Our redemption then gives us inner peace knowing we are God’s children and are given His many blessings.

Read the following verses which share God’s peace. How does God share His peace with us?

Numbers 6:24-26

24 The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

God keeps us in His grace and peace. Imagine a grandma smiling at their grandchild. Can you see the joy on her face? This is how God looks upon us as His children. He smiles at us. He shines on us and then allows us to shine His love to others.

Isaiah 55:12

12 “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

When we live in the joy of Christ, even life’s obstacles and trials are not as big and overwhelming. In faith, we can see joy and opportunities as well as have faith that God will be glorified in all things.

Luke 1:76-79

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Zechariah knew as he held his infant son, John, that he would guide God’s people to the way of peace ... to Christ, the Messiah. The “way of peace” suggests that the Savior is not only peace in our lives but gives us a way to live that is peace. He does not only lead us to peace at the end of a path, but the path is also lined and surrounded by peace.

Ephesians 2:14-18

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Jesus is our peace. He has made us one with Himself. He makes us new.

Jesus has reconciled us to the Father so that there is no more separation between us and God. Jesus preached peace to all. Through this peace, we have the Holy Spirit, who gives us faith, sanctifies us, and keeps us in faith.

John 14:23-27

23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25 “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The world gives peace. We can have peace knowing we have health insurance to help pay medical bills when the need arises. Having new tires on my car for winter driving gives me peace. However, these are temporal examples of peace. The peace Christ gives is eternal. It goes

deeper than good tread on a tire or a health saving account. It promises eternal peace with our Creator, the Father of all.

God surely gives us His peace through our redemption through Christ. In times when our minds and hearts carry guilt for our wrongdoing and imperfection, we know that God loves us not because of who we are, but because of Whose we are. We are His chosen, redeemed, sanctified, forgiven children. What a comfort this peace is for us. We are God's children and no matter what choices we make or what circumstances we endure—we are His.

Our God of strength and peace can give us all we need in this life, no matter what type of road we travel. He gives courage to the timid, wisdom and mental clarity to the minds of many, and love to the hearts that need it. Most importantly He gives us a home—not, necessarily one in Kansas like Dorothy wanted—instead, we have a heavenly, eternal home, which someday we will enjoy with Him and all believers.

Think back on Psalm 29 once again. God's voice and power can do mighty things, yet in the end, He gives His strength and His peace to us. We are His people, and He does care for us. An individual person may seem insignificant in a crowd, but to our Lord, we are blessed to receive Christ's gifts, no matter what our past looks like. Our forgiving God loves us. He takes from being cowardly, mindless, heartless, and lost to being His children full of his grace, strength and peace. We are made to be like Christ.

Faith Talk: Share with others in your group how your significance to Christ affects your daily life as you joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions, and equip women to honor God by serving others. Again, encourage all to share their thoughts. The sharing time should include discussion how daily remembering our washing and renewing at Baptism makes us part of His kingdom, as well as reminders that the forgiveness, mercy, and joy each part of the body of Christ receives in Holy Communion empowers His children to share His Word with others. Be sure to center on God's grace and providence, rather than our works.

Faith Walk:

- Thank God for those who have been God's voice in your life.
- Take time to "be still" so that you can be in worship and God's word so that you hear His voice.
- Pray for guidance to know whom God needs you to speak to about His strength and peace.
- Encourage others who are hurting and carrying shame and guilt by sharing God's Word with them.

Closing Prayer:

Dearest Savior, You have come to speak to us on earth so that we may know You. You have sent Your Holy Spirit to be our Comforter. We know that comfort in times of sorrow, whether it be from trials of life or the choices we make that cause us shame and guilt. Work in our hearts each

day so that we are more and more confident in the hope You share in Your Word —Your voice of strength and truth. In Your name, Amen.

Katy Gifford, wife to Pastor Dan, has taught and nurtured children for over 20 years, from 6 weeks to 21 years of age in many schools This includes their own five children, Anne, Luke, Joel, Pete, and Sara. She thanks God for His voice in her life that gives His strength and peace as she serves God's people of any age.