



## UPCOMING DATES ...

Young Adults Afterparty – 5 March

Young Families Big Birthday Bash – 19 March (*after AM service*)

Men's Encounter – 24 to 26 March

Kids "Blast" (*Kindy to Yr 6*) – Sunday nights

Christian Character Course – register online

## 2017 – CG Notes #1

### STRONGER

**Title: Growing Stronger Together**

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#### KEY VERSE:

*Psalm 84:7 (NKJV)*

*They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.*

Earlier, in February we launched our theme for 2017: **Stronger**. Our key verse for this year is Psalm 84:7, quoted above. We encourage everyone to become familiar with the entire psalm, even taking on the challenge of memorising all twelve verses. When you deposit God's Word into your heart by committing it to memory, it becomes a ready resource for

the Holy Spirit to draw upon and remind you of important truth, anytime and anywhere. (See Deut. 6:6, 11:18, Ps 119:11, Ro 10:8, Col 3:16)

In the weeks ahead we will be exploring some of the ways that we can become stronger. We are speaking spiritually and emotionally of course, but the benefits of spiritual and emotional strength affect all areas of our wellbeing.

### **By way of introduction to the theme discuss the following:**

- Make a list, everyone contributes a thought or two: “What makes me stronger?”
- Make a second list: “What depletes me of strength?”
- How does being aware of *strength bringers* and *strength depleters* help me be wiser in how I negotiate life?
- Note: weakness is *not always* a negative, so keep this in mind – see 2 Cor. 12:9-10, just in case you feel more weak than strong.

### **Theme verse discussion ...**

This week we will focus on our theme verse and just a couple of the truths we can learn from it.

***Growing stronger is a progression.*** “*They go from strength to strength...*”

This is great news! If we are actively pursuing Christ, then we’re getting stronger all the time. It’s a process, not an instant, one time event. Life is a series of opportunities to grow and become stronger – some more momentous than others!

Psalm 84 contains the imagery of pilgrims on the journey to Jerusalem – to Mount Zion, specifically. The topography of the region is such that anyone travelling to Jerusalem *goes up* – it’s always an uphill journey but the destination is the “joy of the whole earth!” (Psalm 48)

As we press on in the journey of life we may sometimes feel like we are trudging up-hill. We feel the strain on our muscles and certainly the heart gets a good work out – anyone know what I mean? But if we will faithfully continue – sometimes it may be just putting one foot in front of the other – we will eventually become stronger. Some “hills” are tough but oh, what a feeling when you finally make it to the top!

Negotiating the challenges of life God’s way is just one of the ways we become stronger. In all the circumstances of life we have a choice. We can give in to fear, anger, doubt or

simply fail to engage or act upon the opportunities we have. If we make choices like this we will not grow stronger. But if we choose faith, humility, perseverance, endurance and so forth, we will go from strength to strength.

## **Discuss:**

- Think of a time when you have felt your “faith muscles” go through a significant stretch or strain.
- What was the outcome and how did you feel? What principles from God’s Word did you use to help you get through?

### ***Strength is gained in the company of others.***

“*They go from strength to strength.*” As the pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem they came from all regions of the nation. Several feasts were held during the year, the most important of which was Passover. It was customary that the people from the same village travelled together. (See Luke 2:41-45, Joseph and Mary with Jesus at 12 years old). This was primarily for the protection and safety of the travellers but it also afforded time to fellowship with their neighbours. They often sang praises to God as they journeyed. (See Psalms 120-134 Songs of Ascents)

As the pilgrims travelled further, they met up with other groups and the numbers would grow into a huge throng as they neared Jerusalem. Some estimates of Passover crowds in the time of Christ were up to 500,000 in a city that normally held around 70,000 people.

The word translated *strength*, used in Psalm 84:7 means “strong like a force of men, valiant, like soldiers in an army”. (Strong’s H2342). As the number of pilgrims amassed so did the strength of this great multitude. It would have been amazing to see this site: all the faithful, coming to Jerusalem with one heart, one focus, to worship the Lord our God.

Something we need to understand clearly is this: we each can have a personal relationship with the Lord but ours *is not a solitary faith*. God’s design is that we live in community with other believers. We don’t live unto ourselves alone. He has made us one body in Christ. To ignore this or draw back from this aspect of our faith is to our own detriment and the detriment of others. We grow stronger together. Today, I may have the strength you need and you can lean on me. Tomorrow may be different and I need to gather strength from my family in Christ.

## **Discuss:**

- In what ways do we find protection and safety “journeying” together?
- How does being with other believers make me stronger?
- What can I do to become more of a part of the community of believers?