Greetings friends,

I ask that as we begin our spiritual journey together we begin to take some time daily (if you are not already) to read the Scripture and pray. I thought it would be beneficial for us to focus on the same passage of Scripture for the week. This week, we will focus on Sunday's texts (See below) If you were not present in worship on Sunday and have not yet watched it, I encourage you to do so. The Scripture used on Sunday was **1 Peter 4:8-11**. It was written by Peter, one of the twelve disciples, who identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). 1 Peter is an epistle, or letter, written to Christian communities throughout Asia Minor. It is assumed that he wrote the letter from Rome, which he referred to as "Babylon" (5:13). It is believed that this reference was used to try to protect the Asia Minor churches as well as indicate the situation in Rome (Babylon was where the Israelites had been sent in exile- foreign land and culture).

Format-this is a repeat from every week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all. It is listed at the bottom for review and for anyone who is new to this exercise. Please remember that it is a suggestion. There is no pressure to do it in the format suggested, to do everything on the days that are listed, or to even to answer all the questions. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. If one question takes up the time because you are moved in your spirit, then stay with it. The idea of this it to spend some intentional time with the Scriptures, in the presence of God, and in prayer and reflection- in whatever way that works for you!

Scripture:

1 Peter 4:8-11

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. **9** Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. **11** If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Other Scriptures referenced:

Proverbs 27:17
As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

The 59 "One Anothers" of the New Testament*

1. "…Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)

2. "…Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)

3. "…Love one another…" (John 13:34)

4. "…Love one another…" (John 13:34)

5. "…Love one another…" (John 13:35)

6. "…Love one another…" (John 15:12)

7. "…Love one another" (John 15:17)

8. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love…" (Romans 12:10)

9. "…Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)

10. "Live in harmony with one another…" (Romans 12:16)

11. "…Love one another…" (Romans 13:8)

12. "…Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)

13. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you…" (Romans 15:7)

14. "…Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)

15. "Greet one another with a holy kiss…" (Romans 16:16)

16. "…When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)

17. "…Have equal concern for each other." (I Corinthians 12:25)

18. "…Greet one another with a holy kiss." (I Corinthians 16:20)

19. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (II Corinthians 13:12)

20. "…Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)

21. "If you keep on biting and devouring each other…you will be destroyed by each other." (Galatians 5:15)

22. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)

23. "Carry each other's burdens…" (Galatians 6:2)

24. "…Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

25. "Be kind and compassionate to one another…" (Ephesians 4:32)

26. "…Forgiving each other…" (Ephesians 4:32)

27. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)

28. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)

29. "…In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)

30. "Do not lie to each other…" (Colossians 3:9)

31. "Bear with each other…" (Colossians 3:13)

32. "…Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)

33. "Teach…[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)

34. "…Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)

35. "…Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)

36. "…Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)

37. "…Encourage each other…"(I Thessalonians 4:18)

38. "…Encourage each other…" I Thessalonians 5:11)

39. "…Build each other up…" (I Thessalonians 5:11)

40. "Encourage one another daily…" Hebrews 3:13)

41. "…Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)

42. "…Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)

43. "…Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)

44. "Don't grumble against each other…" (James 5:9)

45. "Confess your sins to each other…" (James 5:16)

46. "…Pray for each other." (James 5:16)

47. "…Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)

48. "…Live in harmony with one another…" (I Peter 3:8)

49. "…Love each other deeply…" (I Peter 4:8)

50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)

51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others…" (I Peter 4:10)

52. "…Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another…"(I Peter 5:5)

53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)

54. "…Love one another." (I John 3:11)

55. "…Love one another." (I John 3:23)

56. "…Love one another." (I John 4:7)

57. "…Love one another." (I John 4:11)

58. "…Love one another." (I John 4:12)

59. "…Love one another." (II John 5)

DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD:

Monday: v.8 "Above all, love"- above all is a strong statement, above absolutely everything and everyone in our life, place love above it all. Love is the priority. As it says in 1 John 8:8, "anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love." What would it look like if love was

“above all”? Above any worry, upset, confusion, anger. Above any circumstance or situation. Above our thoughts and feelings. Ask God to show you what would be different, if anything. What are the things that rise up in you, where God would want love to rise up above it all. What has to change? As things come to your mind and spirit, ask God to enable and empower you to place love above all. “Love”- the Greek word for “love” here is *agape*, a divine sacrificial love- the same type of love used to describe Jesus giving himself up on a cross for us. Think about Jesus’ life- how did his life reflect agape love? How is it different from the way our culture, the world, thinks about and lives out “love”? What are the differences? Why would these differences be important to God, and to you? Ask God if there are any areas in your life where you may have a skewed perception of love- not in alignment with God’s perspective. Why would someone have a skewed perspective of love? How would having a skewed perception of love be harmful- to themselves, others, and society? V.8 “Above all, love each other deeply”- the word “deeply” can also be translated as zealously, earnestly, intensely, constantly, and even stretched. Biblehub.com gives a further description of the word: to stretch out fully, at maximum potential without slack- fully extended to its necessary outcome. Wow! Does this expanded definition inspire or bring apprehension? Why? What does all of this say about the way we are to love others? How could this be practiced in your life? In your faith? At the church? Ask God to fill you up with this kind of love. Thank God for his love, because it’s this kind of love that God has for you!

Tuesday: v.8 “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins”- in what way would the *agape* love described yesterday “cover over” sins? What would it mean for the person who was sinned against? What would it mean for the person who sinned? How does this make you feel? Have you ever experienced this from <u>either</u> position? What happened? How did that make you feel? Have you ever experienced, from <u>either</u> position, when love covering over sins did <u>not</u> happen? For all of these circumstances, how did it make you feel toward the other person? Did it change your relationship in any way? Why or why not? Consider that God does this for us through Jesus. Envision Jesus’ death on the cross, his time in the grave, and his resurrection. How does this relate to your life and the way God wants you to handle sin between people- either as one who sinned, or as one sinned against? “Multitude of sins”- what do you believe is meant by “multitude”? How does that relate to your own sense of forgiveness? Ask God if there are any sins that have been done against you that you need to “cover over.” If necessary, forgive others, forgive yourself. Ask God to “cover over,” within your mind, heart, and spirit, to be set free from any pain you’ve been carrying. Praise God for his goodness and love!

Wednesday: v. 9 “Offer hospitality to one another”- hospitality in the Bible is not social entertainment. It is an offering of oneself without expecting anything in return. This type of hospitality was normative in the Old Testament, and then Jesus amplifies it. He modeled and taught radical hospitality. For example, in Luke 14:12-14 Jesus emphasized how true hospitality is not done in order to receive something in return. Instead, he said “when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot

repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (v.13-14). Is this type of hospitality, generous giving without expectations of receiving anything in return, something you have seen before? Have you experienced it yourself? How did that make you feel? Have you ever offered hospitality to others? How did that make you feel? Why do you believe there isn't a lot of this type of hospitality being offered in the world? What does that say about our culture? How is it different from what God wants from us? What would this practice look like in your life? Ask God to show you any areas, or any people, where he wants you to offer this kind of hospitality. What would this look like in our church? What would need to change, if anything? Are there any fears behind this- for yourself and the church? Ask God to reveal to you his will in this, for opportunities for you to step into, to not only bless others, but be blessed yourself. "Without grumbling"- Peter anticipated a negative response and addressed it. What are the many reasons why people would grumble about offering hospitality? With all of those possibilities for grumbling, what would be the impetus to offer hospitality without grumbling? Have you ever offered hospitality, generously giving to someone else without any expectations, and found yourself grumbling? What brought the grumbling on? Did you have an experience of God through the giving? Through the grumbling? Describe your experiences. Ask God to lead you to offer hospitality, and to protect you from the thoughts and circumstances that tend to cause you to grumble. Thank God for his generous giving to you!

Thursday: v.10 "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others"- the Greek word here for "gift" is *charisma*, which refers to spiritual gifts (see also 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12). Scripture teaches that we all have spiritual gifts- divinely given for use for the "common good" (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). Consider the spiritual gifts that God has given to you. If you don't know what your spiritual gifting is, pray about it. Ask God to reveal it to you. Once discerned, pray about how you are using your gifts. Ask for guidance. "Received to serve others"- are you using your gifts to serve others? If not, why not? If so, what is your attitude when doing so? Is your attitude worthy of the Source of your gifting? Based on what we have read so far in this passage, why would there be a focus on using the spiritual gifts given by God to serve others? "serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" -why would Peter determine that serving others is akin to being a faithful steward of God's grace? Remember, grace is unmerited love, unmerited favor- getting what we do not deserve. Consider "faithful steward"- stewardship is the management of what we have been given, knowing that everything belongs to God. This includes, but is not limited to, our time, talents, possessions, and finances. Ask God about all of these areas in your life- how would God want you to be a faithful steward in these areas? Ask God for specifics on how you can honor God with being a faithful steward in these areas. Thank God for all that you have been given, and commit to what God has directed you to. "God's grace in its various forms"- have you ever thought about the many ways that God's grace manifests in your life and in the lives of others? What does that tell you about who God is? Praise God who gives generously and with variety!

Friday: v.11 "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God"- what would speaking as one who speaks the <u>very words of God</u> sound like? Describe the

different aspects, from delivery to content. What do you believe is Peter's intent for wanting everyone to speak in this way? What is the desired outcome? How would speaking this way change how you speak now- to people at church, people at stores and restaurants and offices, people at work, people in your family, people who cut you off in traffic, etc.? How would that type of speaking be received by others? What effect could it have? Ask God to show you examples in your life- when you have spoken this way to others, and when you have spoken to others in a way contrary to what Peter is suggesting. Looking back at those circumstances, how do they make you feel? Why? Now ask God to show you times when people have spoken to you in this way, and when they have not. How do those times make you feel? If necessary, ask for forgiveness, or healing, or whatever is needed based upon those memories. Why do you believe people ever speak in ways that are not like "the very words of God"? What is the feeling, belief system, or thought process for speaking in ways that can often cause harm? Ask God if you are carrying any ungodly feelings, beliefs, or thoughts that inspire ugliness in speech or action. If something comes up, repent of it, offer it to God, and allow God to wash you clean. Ask God to give you a Holy Spirit conviction whenever you encounter this again. How can someone can grow in the ability to speak as one who speaks the very words of God- what could they do? Step into growing in these areas, and be thankful.

Saturday: v.11b "If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides"- serving implies several ideas- giving to and for others, humility, care. Can you think of any others? What is the underlying attitude and belief system of one who serves? How is this related to *agape* love? How is it related to offering hospitality? Interesting that Peter chose the word "if"- "if anyone serves." There is an expectation of serving, and yet serving is still a choice. When that choice is made, check yourself first. Are you in alignment with having a servant's heart? What do you believe would happen if someone stepped into serving without having a servant's heart? How would that affect the other people? How would that affect the person serving? "With the strength God provides"- what kind of strength do you believe this is? Why do you believe that would be needed? What does it look like to serve by God's strength? Have you ever seen that? Have you ever experienced this yourself? What do you believe would be the outcome of using the strength God provides vs. trying to do it on your own? "So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ"- in what way do you believe God would be praised based on using God's strength in serving? "God may be praised through Jesus Christ"- how is God praised through Jesus? "To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever"- giving "glory and power"- to exalt God for who God is, what God has done, and what God continues to do! "Amen" doesn't mean "the end," but means "so be it"- so be what has been declared by God over you- that you are one who is loved, gifted, filled with God's strength, worthy to be in community, giving and generous to others, able to speak as one who speaks the very words of God, and able to serve with a servant's heart reflecting Jesus. Thanks be to God! Amen!

Other items:

Responsive Reading

L: Almighty and Gracious God,
You desire righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed
P: Blessed are those who are kind to the weak and the poor;
L: Lord, You are compassionate and loving,
P: Let us show Your compassion and love to all
L: Through Christ, You offer us grace
P: Let us treat others with the Love of Christ
All: To Christ be the glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Unison Prayer

We humbly come to You,
Knowing that we fall short
Of the plan you have for us
Have mercy on us
Let us feel Your gracious love
As we share Your love with others
Keep us encouraged to continue serving
Help us to be compassionate to all Your children
Through our words and actions
Use us to be an example to others
Of Your great love

Song Lyrics:

Help Us Accept Each Other #560 (tune of #303 Day of Resurrection) (Delta UMC)

Help us accept each other, as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us, and Bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted, and meant to love and live.

Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
we struggle to be human, and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them, or as they may become.

Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved
in living situations, to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance, until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness, and laughter's healing art.

Lord, for today's encounters, with all who are in need,

who hunger for acceptance, for justice and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us, make us one!

O Church of God United UMH#547 (Rome First UMC)

O church of God, united
to serve one common Lord,
proclaim to all one message,
with hearts in glad accord.
Christ ever goes before us;
we follow day by day
with strong and eager footsteps
along the upward way.

From every land and nation
the ordered ranks appear;
to serve one valiant leader
they come from far and near.
They chant their one confession,
they praise one living Lord,
and place their sure dependence
upon his saving word.

Though creeds and tongues may differ,
they speak, O Christ, of thee;
and in thy loving spirit
we shall one people be.
Lord, may our faithful service
and singleness of aim
proclaim to all the power
of thy redeeming name.

May thy great prayer be answered
that we may all be one,
close bound, by love united
in thee, God's blessed Son:
to bring a single witness,
to make the pathway bright,
that souls which grope in darkness
may find the one true light.

By Our Love by Christy Nockels
Brothers, let us come together
Walking in the Spirit, there's much to be done...

We will come reaching, out from our comforts
And they will know us by our love...

Sisters, we were made for kindness
We can pierce the darkness as He shines through us...
We will come reaching, with a song of healing...
And they will know us by our love!

The time is now
Come Church arise...
Love with His hands
See with His eyes...
Bind it around you,
Let it never leave you,
And they will know us by our love...
Children, You are hope for justice,
Stand firm in the Truth now, set your hearts above
You will be reaching, long after we're gone,
And they will know you by your love!

Family Prayer Song (As for Me and My House)
Come and fill our homes With Your presence
You alone are worthy of our reverence

As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
We will serve the Lord

Lord, we vow to live holy
Bowing our knees to You only

As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
We will serve the Lord

Staying together; Praying together
Any storm we can weather
Trusting in God's Word
We need each other

Fathers and mothers
Sisters and brothers
In harmony and love

As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
As for me and my house
We will serve the Lord
We will serve the Lord

Blest Be the Tie that Binds UMH#557 (Delta UMC)
Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes,
our mutual burdens bear;
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.
When we asunder part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

Format (this is a repeat from last week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all):

Find a quiet place and time to focus on the Word, and to hear from God through it. It doesn't have to be long, for some it will be longer than others. I encourage you, if possible, to do this practice in the morning. You will then find that God brings it to your mind throughout your day.

For greater impact I encourage you to get some paper and a pen and journal daily what thoughts and impressions God brings to mind. Write out also your own thoughts and your own prayers, making sure to leave space within your time for God's response. Listen intently, and notice what rises up within you- what you are thinking, feeling, memories that arise and ideas that spring up. It may be something God would want you to address within yourself and/or with others. It may be something God is inspiring you to begin or end. God's possibilities are infinite!

After time, it is often beneficial to go back and read what you have written, and notice how God has been moving in your life (and praise God for it!).

Begin with prayer, quieting yourself within and opening up to hearing what God would like to reveal to you. Praise God for who he is, for loving you, being with you, and more. Then ask God to speak to you; to open your heart and mind to hear his message. (if you are journaling, you could write out the prayer)

Read the Scripture passage over twice; once as a read through, and the second time slowly, meditatively. Notice what God illuminates for you. Notice what words or ideas are "jumping off the page at you," impacting you from the Scripture. Ask God why that is being highlighted for you. What is God saying to you? What is God asking you to say, do, change, pray about, etc.? What is the application for my life today? **Most importantly- what am I going to do about it? (If you are journaling you could write it all out, which reinforces it in a greater way)

I have put together some daily questions based upon the Scripture. You may use those, but also feel free to deviate away from it if God is leading you there. They are simply offered to prompt contemplation with God. There is much more in this passage, feel free to delve in more!

At the end of your time pray again. I recommend praying throughout, but the ending prayer would include praise, thanking God for revelation, and asking for the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal, bringing to mind God's will. Ask God for the courage, empowerment, and opportunity to do what you have determined God is asking you to do.