

STRIPPING THE POWERS

Weekly Study Guide | Stripped Series: Week 5

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." — Colossians 2:15

INTRODUCTION

This week, we continue our Lenten journey by exploring how Christ's work on the cross "stripped" both earthly and spiritual powers of their authority. While the world's systems and spiritual forces of darkness may appear overwhelming, the cross reveals that their power is ultimately limited and temporary. As believers, we can live from a position of Christ's victory rather than fear.

DAY 1: EARTHLY POWERS CONFRONTED

READ: Matthew 26:57-68; John 19:1-16

REFLECT:

1. What motivated the religious leaders to condemn Jesus? What were they trying to protect?
2. How did Pilate attempt to maintain control of the situation? What pressures was he responding to?
3. In what ways did these earthly powers believe they were succeeding in their goals?

CONSIDER: Jesus told Pilate, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:11). How does this statement reveal the true nature of earthly authority?

APPLY: What earthly powers (government, social pressure, economic systems, etc.) cause you anxiety today? Write them down, then write beside each one how Christ's authority transforms your perspective on them.

PRAY: Ask God to help you see earthly powers through the lens of His sovereignty. Thank Him that no earthly authority can ultimately thwart His purposes.

DAY 2: SPIRITUAL WARFARE THROUGHOUT THE GOSPELS

READ: Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 22:3-6, 31-34

REFLECT:

1. What do we learn about Satan's tactics from Jesus' temptation in the wilderness?
2. How did demonic forces respond when they encountered Jesus during His ministry?
3. What role did spiritual forces play in Jesus' betrayal and Peter's denial?

DIG DEEPER: In Matthew 4:8-9, Satan offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world." Why would this be tempting? How does Jesus' rejection of this offer contrast with His victory through the cross?

APPLY: Where do you see evidence of spiritual warfare in your own life? What lessons can you apply from how Jesus responded to spiritual attacks?

PRAY: Ask God for discernment to recognize spiritual warfare and strength to stand firm in Christ's victory. Pray specifically about areas where you feel under spiritual attack.

DAY 3: THE CROSS AS VICTORY

READ: Colossians 2:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:14-15

REFLECT:

1. According to Colossians 2:15, what did Christ do to the powers and authorities?
2. What does Paul mean when he says the "rulers of this age" didn't understand God's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:8)?
3. How did Christ's death destroy "him who holds the power of death" (Heb. 2:14)?

STUDY NOTE: The Greek word translated "disarmed" in Colossians 2:15 (ἀπεκδυσάμενος/apekdusamenos) literally means "to strip off clothing" or "to divest completely." It carries the image of completely removing a garment or armor, leaving one exposed and vulnerable.

APPLY: Write about a time when what appeared to be a defeat in your life actually became a victory through God's work. How does this parallel Christ's victory through apparent defeat?

PRAY: Thank God for turning the cross—an instrument of shame and defeat—into the ultimate victory over all powers. Ask for eyes to see how He continues to work this way in your life.

DAY 4: LIVING IN FREEDOM, NOT FEAR

READ: Romans 8:31-39; 2 Timothy 1:7-8; 1 John 4:4

REFLECT:

1. According to Romans 8, what can separate us from God's love? How does this relate to earthly and spiritual powers?
2. What spirit has God given us instead of fear (2 Tim. 1:7)?

3. Who is the "one who is in you" in 1 John 4:4, and how does this truth empower believers?

CONSIDER: Romans 8:37 says we are "more than conquerors." What does it mean to be more than just a conqueror? How is this different from merely surviving?

APPLY: Identify a specific fear in your life related to earthly or spiritual powers. How would embracing these Scripture passages transform your response to that fear?

PRAY: Declare God's truth over your fears. Thank Him that you are "more than a conqueror" through Christ who loves you.

DAY 5: HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

READ: James 4:6-10; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:6-11

REFLECT:

1. What is the connection between humility and resisting the devil (James 4)?
2. What resources has God given us for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6)?
3. How do we balance "casting anxiety" on God with being "alert" to the enemy (1 Peter 5)?

DIG DEEPER: The command to "resist the devil" appears in both James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9. The Greek word for "resist" (ἀντίστητε/antistēte) means "to stand against" or "to oppose." It suggests not a passive resistance but an active standing firm against an adversary.

APPLY: Which piece of the armor of God (Ephesians 6) do you most need to "put on" right now? What practical step will you take to do so?

PRAY: Ask God for both the humility to depend fully on Him and the confidence to stand firm against all opposing powers.

DAY 6: RECLAIMING CHRIST'S VICTORY

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 12:7-12

REFLECT:

1. What does it mean that "death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54)?
2. How does the vision of the Lamb in Revelation 5 challenge conventional notions of power?
3. According to Revelation 12:11, how do believers overcome the accuser?

CONSIDER: In Revelation 5, the Lion of Judah is revealed as a slain Lamb. How does this image capture the paradox of victory through apparent weakness that we see in the cross?

APPLY: In what area of your life do you need to "reclaim Christ's victory"? Write a declaration of faith regarding this area, based on the Scriptures you've studied this week.

PRAY: Thank God that the final victory is already secured through Christ. Ask Him to help you live in light of this reality.

DAY 7: COMMUNITY REFLECTION

READ: Acts 4:23-31; Hebrews 10:23-25

REFLECT:

1. How did the early church respond to threats from earthly powers (Acts 4)?
2. Why is community important when facing opposition or spiritual warfare?
3. What does it mean to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (Hebrews 10:23)?

APPLY: How can your small group or church family support one another in standing firm against opposing powers? What specific practices would strengthen your community?

PRAY: Pray for boldness in your church community to proclaim Christ's victory over all powers. Ask God to use your congregation as a witness to His kingdom's authority in your local context.

CONCLUSION

As we continue our Lenten journey toward Easter, we remember that the cross represents not just Christ's suffering but His definitive victory over every power that opposes God's kingdom. In a world where earthly and spiritual forces often appear overwhelming, we can live with humble confidence, knowing that Christ has already disarmed them and publicly triumphed over them.

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 15:57