



## Week 1: The Stronger Man

Good morning everyone, today we will be starting a 6-week series about 'Me'! It feels weird to talk about 'Me' in Church because, as Christians, we've been conditioned to believe that it's not about 'Me'. I must deny 'Me', I must be 'Me'-less. Enough about 'Me', what about you? How many of us know, if 'Me' isn't right, then I'm no good for you? That's why we need to start with the **Individual Sphere**, because once I, as an individual, am under authority, I can walk in authority everywhere else. Otherwise, I'll be trying to help you with your oxygen mask, meanwhile hypoxia is setting in because my mask isn't on, and now I'm dazed, disoriented and soon-to-be dead, no good to anyone else. It reminds me of the time I was getting ready for a trip and I set up all of my devices to charge overnight so they'd be ready to go the next day. But the next day I woke up and all of my devices were dead! My laptop, my phone, my iPad, everything was dead! So I checked, and all of my devices were plugged in, the surge protector was on, but as I lifted the surge protector I realized it wasn't plugged in. Flat tire! In the same way, each of us is connected to different spheres – our homes, our work, our families. And God has called us to bring love, and light, and life to these areas but if we are not connected to the one who is love, to the giver of light, to the source of life, we won't have the power to make life whole. In John 15, Jesus tells His disciples, *"Abide in Me, and I in you. Apart from Me you can do nothing."* The Good and Spesho Book says, *"You guys no can do notting if you guys no stay tight wit Me."* How much can we do? 'Notting' if we're not plugged in to Jesus. It starts with me. So how do we **Present** God to the world? It starts by *Giving God Control*. In the first two weeks of our series we'll cover Giving God control of the **Individual Sphere**. After God has control of our lives, we partner with Him to *Own our role*, we'll cover that in weeks 3-4. And in the last two weeks of our series we'll talk about walking in our Kingdom Authority to *Make Life Whole* as we live authentically and **Present** Him accurately.

**OG Discussion Guide Question:** *In the context of influencing our world, what do you think Jesus meant when He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing"?*

What does it look like to Give God Control of our lives? Today we are going to look at a powerful passage of scripture where Jesus gives us a picture – like a movie, of what it looks like when a person gives Him control of their life. This story is so significant that all three of the synoptic gospels record it. Our passage begins with Jesus correcting false assumptions of where His authority comes from. In Luke's gospel it says,

*"Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." Others tested Him by asking for a sign from heaven,"*  
(Luke 11:14-16 NIV).



Matthew and Mark's gospels tell us that it was the Pharisees and Teachers of the law who were making these accusations. They couldn't deny the authority of Jesus so instead they made up lies about where His authority came from. They said, "His power over Satan comes from Satan!" How many of us know, people will make up any excuse to reject God? Why? They knew if they accepted Jesus was God then they'd also have to accept Him as Lord. They said, "He's made a deal with the devil!" To correct their false assumptions about His authority, Jesus gives a very logical and thoughtful response to why their theory was incorrect. In the very next verse, in verse 17 it says,

*"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you," (Luke 11:17-20).*

Jesus opens His story with a tale of two kingdoms. Remember, we said in the beginning there was only one kingdom – God's Kingdom. And God made mankind in His image and in His likeness to rule over His Kingdom. But God also placed a tree in the garden, and what do trees represent in scripture? (A Test) God wanted to test Adam and Eve to see if they would rule with Him or apart from Him. Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent and chose to rule apart from God, which created a separation between God and man and between heaven and earth. Now instead of one kingdom there were two – The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. God's Kingdom departed from our world plunging it into darkness, brokenness, and sin. But here's the kicker. When Satan deceived Adam and Eve, watch this, they didn't become the rulers of this world, he did. Satan wants to seduce you to reduce you. When the Bible talks about the ruler of this world, it's not talking about man, it's talking about the Devil. You need to catch this Church because we're going to see this again, wherever Jesus is not King, the Devil is. Wherever Jesus is not King, the Devil is. There is no neutral ground.

There aren't three sides to a fence. There are only two – God's side, or the Devil's. A former atheist tells of a dream he once had. In the dream there was a large group of people gathered. Off to one side of the group stood Jesus and on the other side stood the Devil. Down the middle was a fence running through the group. One by one, people chose to either side with Jesus or Satan until Jesus gathered those with Him and left and the Devil did the same leaving only the man behind. The man climbed up the fence and sat on it. Jesus and His followers disappeared from sight and Satan did too leaving the man alone. But as the man sat, Satan returned looking for something which he appeared to have lost. Upon finding the man he said to him, "Oh there you are, come with me." The man said, "But I sat on the fence, I chose neither you nor Him." To which Satan replied, "That's ok, you see, I own the fence."

You see Church, in this life, there is no neutral ground. Where Jesus is not King, the Devil is. A vote for yourself is a vote for the devil. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with Me is against Me." When Adam and Eve chose themselves, the Devil became king.





**OG Discussion Guide Question: Do you agree that a person cannot be spiritually neutral? Why or why not?**

And from the time of Adam and Eve until Jesus the Devil was given authority over the earth. 1 John 5:19 says, 19 "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe." The whole world lies in the power of the evil one and as the god of this world he has enslaved every man, woman, and child in sin.

I need to pause here because I know this sounds like a pretty bleak diagnosis. But when I go to my Doctor, I expect her to tell me the truth no matter how painful it may be to hear it. Her job is not to sugarcoat it. Do you have the same expectation of your Pastors? Because if I have a potentially life-threatening disease I need to know so I can find treatment or a cure. The Bible is 100% clear that every single one of us is born in sin and sin has a 100% mortality rate. Sin is like a disease that you may not think you have but if not addressed will have serious negative side-effects and ultimately lead to eternity apart from God. All of us are born slaves to sin with the Devil as our king. This isn't me, it's the Bible talking.

But turn to your neighbor and say, "There's hope!" With God there is always hope! When you came to Church today you didn't come to, 'No hope' you came to, 'New Hope'. When Jesus entered the scene, He came to undo everything that Satan had done. The first thing Jesus did at the start of His ministry, the Bible says He went straight to His hometown synagogue, stood in the presence of all who were there, opened the scroll of Isaiah and read this prophecy aloud, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and with all eyes on Him said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He leaves and starts singlehandedly wrecking the kingdom of darkness!

But in the Pharisees' mind, Jesus and the Devil are in cahoots, they're buddies, and every once in a while the Devil lets Jesus heal a person or two just for kicks. Jesus says, "Why would the Devil partner with Me to overthrow his Kingdom? A house divided cannot stand."

And in the very next verse Jesus gives us a radical picture of what's really going on when He takes Authority over someone's life. I believe if you receive this in the Spirit, it will drastically change the way you view yourself.

*"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe,"  
(Luke 11:21).*





In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul tells us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Did you ever wonder what your heart was before Jesus moved in? Jesus says it was the Devil's palace. Imagine your heart as a throne room. Because we are born in sin, each of us is born with the Devil on the throne. The Bible calls him a strong man. Why? Because we can't overpower him. He has complete authority over us. Jesus says the strongman guards his own house. Whose house? It's not the Ram's house. It's not your house. It's the strongman's house. And the Bible says He's fully armed. Not only has the Devil taken up residence in our heart but he's fortified himself in there. The Bible calls these strongholds. The strong man sets up strongholds. A stronghold is anything the Devil can use to keep a strong hold on your life and fortify himself in your heart. The Bible calls the Devil the father of lies, (John 8). So these strongholds are often rooted in deception. What are some of the most common strongholds the Devil uses to keep God out?

### 1. Pride (I Don't Need God)

Pride says, "I got this, I'm not that bad, others are worse off, maybe you need God but I don't." And the more the Devil can stoke your ego and make you self-reliant the more he can keep God out. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

### 2. Idolatry (I Need this More Than God)

The devil deceives us into thinking we don't have idols simply because we don't bow down to something. But an idol is anything that takes the place of God in our lives. Worship means to ascribe worth (Worth-ship). Is there anything you ascribe more worth to than God? More time, more affection, more attention? That's what you worship. That thing is an idol. The Bible says that those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love. This is another stronghold the Devil uses.

### 3. Ignorance (Who is God?)

Ignorance is one of the Devil's favorite tools of deception. Truth told, the Devil would rather you didn't know about his presence at all. He doesn't need the credit. He's ok with you thinking you sit on the throne of your own life. But we're just a puppet king and he's pulling the strings.

***OG DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTION: What stronghold does the Devil try to use most in your life to keep God out?***

But look how insidious this is. It says, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe." What are these possessions? The Bible is talking about the treasures stored up in your heart. See God has stored up treasure beyond your wildest dreams inside the heart of every person on earth. God has given each of you gifts, and abilities, special skills, and experiences, He's given you the gift of time, and resources, He has amazing plans and purpose stored up in there. There are ideas and solutions just waiting to be released. But as long as the Devil sits on the throne, the Bible says, "His possessions are safe." They're under lock and key.



The famous quote comes to mind. Do you know where the richest place on earth is? It isn't Fort Knox or Eldorado. The richest place on earth is the graveyard, because it is here that you will find all the hopes and dreams that were never fulfilled, the books that were never written, the songs that were never sung, the inventions that were never shared, the cures that were never discovered. The Devil wants nothing more than for you to squander the treasures God has given you on frivolous empty pursuits or to not even use them at all.

*"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger..."*

The Bible calls the Devil the "Strong Man" but how many of us know there's someone stronger? How many of us are thankful we met someone stronger? How many of us are thankful we know someone stronger? You hear that Devil? You thought you were strong, but I know someone stronger!

*"But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder," (Luke 11:22).*

How does the Stronger Man overpower the strong man?

*"He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross," (Colossians 2:14-15 NLT).*

Because of your sin, the Bible says the Devil had legal authority over you.

*"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil," (1 John 3:8).*

When you invite Jesus into the throne room of your heart the Devil challenges Him. He says, "What right do you have to this throne? They're a sinner, they belong to me!" And Jesus says, "You're right. They have sinned and the wages of sin is death." Then He shows Satan His nail-scarred hands and nail-scarred feet, He shows Him the wound in His side where He was pierced for our transgressions. And He looks the Devil straight in the eyes and says, "It is finished. Paid in full."

So Jesus, the Stronger Man, overpowers the Devil by the power of the cross. Then it says He takes away the armor in which the man trusted.

*"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ," (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV).*





What is our greatest weapon against the strongholds of the enemy? Remember what strongholds are rooted in – Deception. So our greatest weapon against deception is the truth! One of the most quoted and, dare I say, misquoted passages of scripture is John 8:31-32. It says, “The truth will set you...FREE”. So how do we break free from the strongholds of the enemy? The truth! But how does the truth set us free? Watch this.

*“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” (John 8:31-32 NIV).*

See this is one of those instances where we know the promise but we skipped the premise. We know the truth will set us free but we don’t know how the truth sets us free. Jesus says we first hold to His teachings, meaning we abide in His Word, we are faithful and obedient, we live it out. As you hold to His teachings, then you will know the truth. It’s not enough to simply hear the truth. Nobody gets free from hearing the truth. You can come to Church every Sunday for 30 years and hear the truth but it doesn’t mean you’ll be set free. You have to hold the truth. You have to live the truth. When you live the truth then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

***OG DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTION: How would you describe the difference between hearing the truth versus holding to it and knowing it?***

When Jesus enters your heart, there are strongholds that need to come down. As you dismantle the deceptions the enemy has erected in your heart God will put up new fortifications built on truth.

*“But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder,” (Luke 11:22).*

So Jesus overpowers the strongman by the power of the Cross, He takes away his armor – his strongholds by replacing them with truth, and then it says he divides up his plunder.

He takes the treasure that Satan kept locked up and the Bible says He unleashes it. He releases your gifts, He releases your talents, He releases your abilities, and He spreads it around to makes life whole. This is what happens when Jesus takes authority over the **Individual Sphere**. But in closing, Jesus ends with a stern warning.

*“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first,” (Luke 11:24-26 NIV).*



What is Jesus saying? He's saying, your heart cannot remain empty. Wherever Jesus is not King, the Devil is. You see, the Devil hates being evicted. He doesn't enjoy being homeless. And there's nowhere the Devil feels more at home than in your heart. Listen carefully Church. When the Devil gets evicted, he doesn't retreat, he regroups. If he comes back to find an empty throne, he's taking over. If those strongholds do not come down in your life, he's kept the key – that's an open door for him. There is no neutral ground. You put Jesus on that throne. You hold fast to His truth and build up your defenses. Unlock the treasure God has stored in your heart. And the next time the strong man comes knocking, send the Stronger Man to answer the door. The Devil will say, "I'm sorry, I thought this was my house but I think I have the wrong address!"

***OG DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTION: Where are you in Giving God Control of your life? Have you allowed Jesus to be King of your life? Which strongholds need to be dismantled and replaced with truth? Are there treasures stored up in your life that God wants to release? Continue to pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal these areas to you.***