

Session 1: The Strong Man's House

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

Jesus freed a man no one else could free, and told us what it meant: “when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted” (Luke 11:22). The strong man is real, and he has already met the Stronger One. He casts out demons by “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), the very phrase Pharaoh’s magicians used when God broke Egypt’s grip (Exodus 8:19): every deliverance is a new Exodus. And Isaiah asked our question centuries early: can captives be taken from the mighty? God’s answer: “I will contend with those who contend with you” (Isaiah 49:25).

We built our working definition from Paul’s fortress image in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (our pastoral application of it): a stronghold is a lie fortified into habit until it feels like home; the walls are made of thoughts, which is why willpower alone cannot punch through them, and why our weapons “have divine power.” And we heard Jesus’s warning about the swept house (Luke 11:24-26; Matthew’s parallel adds the word “empty,” 12:44): freedom is not vacancy. The goal of this study is a house occupied by the Stronger One.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine of Hippo

Confessions, Book VIII (ch. 5)

Looking back on the years he could not break with sin, St. Augustine describes, in substance, how his chain was forged: a will bent the wrong way produced disordered desire; desire indulged became habit; and habit unresisted hardened into something that felt like necessity: a chain, he says, of his own making.

A close summary of Confessions VIII.5.10-12; wording varies by translation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Leo the Great

Sermon 21, On the Nativity (quoted in CCC 1691)

“Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning... Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light.”

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Athanasius (the witness of St. Antony)

Life of Antony (several discourses on the demons, combined)

St. Athanasius records St. Antony teaching his monks, in substance, that since the coming of the Lord the enemy is a defeated foe: the demons can threaten and terrify, but their real power is broken, and they trade on fear precisely because fear is most of what they have left.

A summary of Antony’s teaching as recorded by St. Athanasius; not a direct quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Morning surrender.** Each morning this week, before your feet do anything important, pray one line: “Jesus, Stronger One, this house is yours.” Seven words, seven days.

- **Reconnaissance, not scorekeeping.** Keep a small private tally of when the old pull shows up: the moment, the mood, the place. You are mapping approach routes, not grading yourself.
- **Reread.** Midweek, read Luke 11:14-26 slowly, and stop on “one stronger than he.”

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”
2 Corinthians 10:4

Before next session: Read James 1:12-18 and John 8:31-36.

From the Catechism: CCC 409; 2853; 1691.

THE WALL

In one sentence, name the wall you most want down. Then fold this sheet closed, seal it, and write your name on the outside. No one will ever read it but you. Bring it back each week, sealed. At Session 5 you will open it alone, in silence, before the Lord.

The wall I most want down:

And hear this, from all of us: if what you wrote involves harm to yourself or anyone else, or a grip you already know is beyond your strength, the bravest thing you can do this week is tell one trusted person: a priest, a counselor, a doctor. Asking for help is a weapon, not a defeat.