



**MISSION POSSIBLE | WEEK THREE**  
*MARCH 19, 2017*

# + Week Three | March 19<sup>th</sup>

## *Power Received for Our Mission*

“...with God  
everything  
is possible.”

matt 19:26



### PREPARATION

#### + **MONDAY - WEDNESDAY**

Read through 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Philippians 2:12-16, and Ephesians 3:7-12. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truths of this text.

#### + **THURSDAY - SATURDAY**

Many questions have been included, so read through and determine which of those questions will work well to encourage, push, and grow your group in the best way.

#### + **DAILY**

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming week at the corporate church gathering. Pray also for your time in this week's study.



### THIS WEEK

#### + **KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH**

Only those who admit weakness receive power from God. Once received, God's power works to change our hearts and actions, and empower our relationships with believers and nonbelievers.

#### + **THEOLOGY APPLIED**

To become more like Jesus, we must depend on God's power and not our own. As we come to him in weakness, his power flows through our lives in every area. Our hearts and actions start to look more like Christ, as well as our relationships with believers and nonbelievers.



## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

*Q: What are the expected attributes of a person who is powerful?*

*Q: How does our culture view weakness and dependency?*

*Q: Why do prolonged seasons of difficulty and weakness make us doubt God's power?*

## | OUR SEARCH FOR POWER

We live in a culture where the powerful rise to the top, shining and ruling for everyone to see, while the weak fall to the bottom, unnoticed and cast aside. It seems like everyone is after some sort of power—the power to succeed, the power to make more money, the power to control circumstances, or the power to influence others. Some assume that for Christians to be set apart from this world, we should avoid engaging the idea of power altogether. It's true that we should not run after securing our own power for a higher status in the world; however, there's a certain power God does want us to have in order to accomplish our mission of becoming like his Son. Unlike the world, Christians do not spend their days trying to muster up their own meager power in order to make it in life, desperately trying to become a "somebody." Christians, knowing that God loved them when they were a nobody, walk in a divine power that does not come from them in order to become like a certain Somebody who saved them. The power God offers us is a received power—one that comes from above and cannot be manufactured by any of us.

*Q: When do you usually feel most powerful in your walk with God?*

*Q: Where do you usually run for strength when you feel weak?*



## Understanding the Text

In these passages, we learn about God's power and how it works in the life of a believer. Instead of making us important in the world's eyes, God's power does something much more incredible inside us and through us. This kind of power can only be experienced in a certain kind of heart, and once it lands on us, it changes everything from our internal character to our external relationships. Here are three ways God equips us with his power in order to make us more like Jesus:

**1. Power that Strengthens**

**2. Power that Changes**

**3. Power that Reaches**



## GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help to show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Walk through the Scripture passages, connecting the text to this week's biblical truth.

# | POWER THAT STRENGTHENS



Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 2 Corinthians 4:6-17 and 12:7-10.

*Q: What kind of people does God choose according to 1 Cor. 1:26-29? Why?*

*Q: Why does God allow weak vessels to carry the "treasure" of the gospel inside them? [2 Cor. 4:7]*

*Q: Explain what it means that our "outer self" is wasting away, but our "inner self" is being renewed day by day. [2 Cor. 4:16]*

The powerful people in our culture are those who seem to have no faults, no weaknesses, and no difficulties. They are considered the most talented, the most important, and the most influential. However, God's ways are not ours when it comes to power. God desires to set his power on people, yes, but he does not do so by looking for the type of person our society would naturally look for. 1 Corinthians 1 teaches us that God chooses to set his power on the lowly, the foolish, and the weak. Instead of choosing the proud and the self-important, he chooses the humble (Luke 1:51-53; James 4:6). His eyes scan the world to offer power, comfort, and help to those who are completely surrendered to him and dependent on him instead of themselves (2 Chron. 16:9).

God chooses to do this to show that surpassing power belongs to him and not us. Power comes from him to remind us that we cannot muster up enough strength on our own to accomplish our mission of becoming like Jesus. He strengthens us to remind us that he is the one that provides all good things, and to prevent us from bragging, thinking we are the strongest and the best. God wants to keep us from self-idolatry that always leads to ruin (Jer. 17:5, 2 Chron. 32:8, Ps. 146:3). God is not being cruel by doing this; he is being honest with us. The truth is that we're not the strongest or the best, and at some point, in some circumstance, we won't be able to simply "power through." We can't do anything without God's help—not even move or breathe (John 15:5; Acts 17:25). He knows that we are frail, human, and exhaustible, and that we will eventually run out of stamina, strength, and will power (Ps. 103:14). Instead of leaving us to ourselves—a place that could never offer us continual power—he himself provides the strength we need. Only the one who cannot grow tired or weary has the power to give strength to those who can (Isaiah 40:28-31). As long as we remember where true power comes from and seek it humbly, we will never be without it. Surpassing power only has one source—God. And surpassing power is only received one way—through admitting our need, weakness, and dependence.

*Q: Why does God allow weakness to remain in Paul's life? [2 Cor. 12:9]*

*Q: Explain Paul's view of the weaknesses and difficulties in his life, according to 2 Cor. 12:9b-10.*

Whether it's financial struggle, poor health, job loss, family dysfunction, or ministry troubles, we all have some sort of "thorn" in our lives. While the Bible never explicitly tells us what Paul's thorn was in this particular passage, we know his life was riddled with ongoing relational, spiritual, and physical battles. If anyone had good reason to ask God to remove hardship, it was Paul. We see in 2 Corinthians 12 that Paul gets an answer from God: the thorn stays. While we'd expect Paul to sulk at God's answer, he rejoices

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*Q: Share a time when God's power strengthened you during a season of weakness or struggle.*

*Q: Explain why a Christian's posture of weakness invites God's strength and looks like Jesus.*

## | POWER THAT CHANGES



*Read Philippians 2:12-16, Hebrews 13:20-21, 1 Corinthians 15:10*

*Q: Whose power is working in us, helping our efforts to become more like Jesus?  
[Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21]*

*Q: On what two levels does God's power work in us, according to Phil. 2:13?*

*Q: Why does God equip us with everything good, according to Heb. 13:21?*

*Q: What is the result of God's power working in us, according to Phil. 2:15?*

Yes, God gives his power to the weak, and that's a very comforting reality for a believer. However, God gives us his strength with more ends in mind than simply making us feel better. He gives us his power to change and sanctify us as well. Becoming more like Christ requires a lot of transformative power that we simply cannot generate ourselves. Knowing this, God himself bears the primary responsibility of working out our sanctification. Paul shows us in Philippians 2 that when we receive God's power, it works powerfully to change us on two levels: our will and our behavior (actions). Our "will" is the deep part of us that desires and delights in certain things. It's the part of us that wants. The "work" mentioned here is referring to our behavior—the ways we act on our desires. Knowing this, Paul is telling us something amazing: that God's work in us has the power to transform what we desire and also what we do into the things Jesus desired and did. Paul is giving us the blueprint on how God conforms us into the image of Christ—by changing us on the heart and the behavior level. His mighty power within us changes what we want (God's pleasure) and also how we act (walking according to Christ). How incredible and mighty is this power received!

*Q: God's power works in us to produce what, according to Heb. 13:21?*

*Q: Paul believes that his spiritual progress up until now is due to what [1 Cor. 15:10]?*

Jesus continuously enjoyed the Father's presence and always did the things that are pleasing to Him (John 8:29). To achieve our mission of becoming more like Jesus, we too should want to continually please the Father. However, this is no small task. Pleasing the Father is one thing. Always pleasing him is another! How can we possibly be confident that we have the power to continually please the Father and do his will? The

short answer is this: we can't. We can't be confident that we have that kind of power, at least not in ourselves! The true source of that kind of power lies in Hebrews 13:20-21. Verse 21 tells us that we are equipped with everything we need to do God's will, that we can, like Jesus, do what's pleasing in his sight. So where does this ability come from? God himself. And how do we know God has the level of power we need to change? Because it's his power that raised Jesus himself from the dead! If there's any power we can trust to effectively work in us, it's resurrection power! Not only is this God one of great resurrection power, he's also our peaceful shepherd, guiding us into only the things that please him and fulfill his will. The good news for us, as these passages show, is that only God can fully please God, and he does not expect us to do the same without imparting to us the divine power required to do it. Our mission of becoming like the Father-pleasing Christ is only possible when we receive God's power that works in us—the power for change.

## | POWER THAT REACHES



*Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-10, 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, & Ephesians 3:7-12*

*Q: What name description does Paul give God in 2 Cor. 1:3 and 9? How does this encourage you?*

*Q: What is one reason God comforts us, according to 2 Cor. 1:4?*

*Q: According to 2 Cor. 1:4, we should be willing to share God's strength with those in what kind of affliction?*

As we saw in the last section, God gives us his strength in times of weakness with more ends in mind than our comfort alone. Another reason he gives us his strength is for us to share that strength with others—both believers and nonbelievers. The power he supplies isn't just supposed to fill us; it's supposed to overflow to those around us. Jesus himself shares his power with us (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:5; Luke 9:1, 10:19, 24:49; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:19, 3:16-20), and to succeed in our mission to be like him, we also must share the strength we receive from God with those outside of us. The power we receive from God isn't a thing hoarded, it's a thing shared. 2 Corinthians 1 shows us what this looks like among believers—as we are afflicted by life and then comforted by



God, we share this experience with others, giving them the support God has bestowed on us in our time of need. The amount of comfort and strength God provides is overflowing—there's no capping it or containing it. In order to enjoy it properly, it must be channeled to others, for there is more than enough to go around. Jesus shares the strength of the Father with us and to be like him, we must use the power we receive from God in order to reach out and bless other believers with the strength and perspective he provides.

*Q: According to 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, the power to minister the gospel to the lost comes from where?*

*Q: Paul's salvation and call to ministry was given to him by what? (Eph. 3:7)*

*Q: Explain the posture of Paul's heart as he reflects on his call to share the gospel with unbelievers according to Eph. 3:8.*

God's power should overflow not only to believers, but to our lost friends and family, too. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, inviting all who would believe (Heb. 9:15; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 3:22; Acts 10:43). To fulfill our mission of becoming like Jesus, we too must be ministers of this new covenant, inviting the lost around us to believe in him. But how do we become sufficient ministers to the lost? Does it require a degree? Special training? A certificate of some sort? No. Paul shows us in 2 Corinthians 3 and Ephesians 3 that God's power works mightily within us to make us sufficient ministers to the nonbelievers in our life. God's power and - his power alone - is what gives us the ability to share the gospel effectively with our lost friends and family.

We see this principle throughout the Bible—ordinary believers bringing many to Christ simply by receiving and relying on God's power to speak and to save (Ex. 4:10-12; Matt. 10:20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:4, Rom 1:16, 15:19; 1 Thes. 1:5). To be a witness like Jesus to the lost world, we must abandon our own power, and be empowered instead by the strength God provides (Acts 3:12-13). As power went out from Jesus to the lost around him (Luke 8:46; Mark 5:30), may we who are changed be a channel of the power which can change the lost around us. The overflowing power we receive from God is not only meant to transform us and other believers, but the lost around us, too.

*Q: Share a time God's power worked through you to reach a lost friend.*

*Q: Briefly explain how Power in Weakness, Power for Change, and Power for Others help us become more like Jesus.*



## NEXT STEPS

+ Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.

*Q: What barriers prevent you from admitting weakness before God? Why don't we like to depend on him?*

*Q: Do you rely on your own strength to please the Father? If so, how can you rely on God's power instead?*

*Q: List some ways you can be a channel of God's transformative power to nonbelievers this week.*



## PRAY

+ Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

*• God, help me see I'm not invincible, and create a dependent posture in my heart so that I'm fit to receive your power.*

- *God, help me please you by using your power instead of my own.*
- *God, give me ideas on how to share the strength you offer with other believers who need comfort and help right now.*
- *God, provide opportunities for me to share your power with nonbelievers in my life this week.*



## COMMENTARY

+ Use these commentary resources to help explain the passages and facilitate discussion.

**1 Corinthian 1:27** Paul is speaking in a culture where spiritual leaders were lauded for their religious ancestry, accomplishments, and affiliations with other powerful leaders. His entire message about humility flips the norms of the day on their head, indicting the most powerful in Corinth as the lowest on the totem pole in the economy of God. This reversal of human status before the eyes of God is prophesied in the Old Testament in 1 Sam 2:1–8, Isaiah 61:1; c.f. Luke 1:52, John 9:39.

**2 Corinthians 4:7** “Treasure” here refers to the knowledge of the gospel. “Jars of clay” is a common metaphor in the ancient world for the idea of weakness (Ps. 31:12, Is. 30:14). This verse supports the central message of 2 Corinthians as a whole (1:3–11 and 2:14–17)—that God triumphs in our human weakness, embodying both the weakness and power present at the crucifixion.

**Philippians 2:12–13** “Work out your salvation in fear and trembling” does not suggest salvation by works, as Paul rejects that teaching in 3:2–11. This phrase means that God expects sober, alert living from his people as they seek to obey him. Paul does not want his hearers to be anxious that they can never be good enough to merit God’s favor, however. So he assures them that they can have confidence that God himself is working powerfully in their sanctification. The Christian’s continued obedience and good works are evidences or results of God’s work within his people.

**2 Cor. 3:10** Paul is adamant that his sufficiency to preach a new covenant to the lost came from God’s grace and power alone. While this is a helpful passage about God’s power that helps us in ministry, it is not a new pattern in the Scriptures in regard to the sufficiency of a leader. God has always been the sole source of power for those who minister in his name, throughout the Bible. Paul is following the pattern of Moses and others who were granted God’s call and power to proclaim his name (Ex. 3:1–4:17; Judg. 6:11–24; Isa. 6:1–8; Jer. 1:4–10; Ezek. 1:1–3:11).

*\*All commentary resourcing for Lesson 2 was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the NIV Compact Bible Commentary.*

