

Read: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Real Strength

Jeremiah 17:5,7

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord.

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Who is stronger: Spiderman or Superman? Sure, Superman has huge strength; but Spiderman’s strength is also superhuman, and he also possesses agility, speed, incredible reflexes, not to mention his spider senses. Then again, it is easy to physically harm Spiderman, while it is nearly impossible to harm Superman—unless you have some kryptonite nearby. In the comic world, fate relies on the strength of the superhero. People put their trust in the strength of these figures. In the real world, many people do the same thing. They put their confidence in the strength and abilities of human beings rather than God. To this point the prophet Jeremiah has a strong warning. He says those who put their trust in man are cursed.

This week we’re taking a look at how being a disciple of Christ turns the definitions of this world upside down. Today we look at the word *strength*. The dictionary tells us *strength* is the state of being physically strong—filled with power, muscle, and toughness. This world tells us superheroes, steel, diamonds, spider silk, and NFL linebackers are strong. What does God say? Jeremiah gives us the answer: *Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh*. While power, physical toughness, and material things that can’t be easily broken are blessings from God, they are not what makes someone strong.

Because we follow Jesus, we place our trust in God alone. We do that when we take our problems and struggles to God in prayer and ask his guidance. We build our happiness and dependence on what God has done for us, such as redeeming us from sin (he paid sin’s price), and not upon what we do. In verse 8, Jeremiah uses the image of a tree planted next to a stream of water. It illustrates a confidence in God’s promises. The tree planted near water doesn’t worry about drying up; it will always have what it needs to survive. Even in the hardest conditions, the tree by the stream is strong and healthy. That’s what God promises us. He knows there will come difficult days and places in our lives—we are sinful, and we live in a broken world. But he will always provide the strength we need. Oftentimes he may use difficult times to remind us *he* is the stream providing everything we need.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Who is someone you think is *physically* strong?
- Why can we trust in God's strength completely?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How does God define strength?
- Kryptonite weakened Superman's strength. Think back to a "kryptonite" moment in your life where your strength failed so you asked for God's strength.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Like today's reading, Psalm 1 also talks about a tree planted by streams of water. Explain what God is teaching you through that picture.
- God's idea of strength is different from what the world believes to be strong. Think of one example that illustrates that truth (*example: military strength vs. gospel power that saves*).

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for making me your child through the water of my baptism. May its power help me to stand confidently in your grace and trust in you completely. Amen.