

Small Group Study Guide

How the Cross Changes our View of Power |
From Sunday March 8, 2020

Appetizer:

Question: The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith, yet to describe its importance to others can be a bit of a problem. Like Paul said in 1 Corinthians, the idea of someone dying on a cross to save us somehow seems foolish to many... yet for those of us who believe, it is the power of God.

This week's sermon suggested that power is having some kind of capacity to make things happen. **Chat as a group about how this definition of power is displayed in our world in both good ways and bad ways, in our countries, in our work places, and in our neighbourhoods.**

A couple questions from the passage:

Read Colossians 2:13-15. **What stands out to you in the passage?** What are some key words that stand out? What do they mean? Why does Paul mention words such as "uncircumcision" and "legal indebtedness"? Some of the difficulties in these phrases show us that it's really important to understand the culture of Bible times to understand the way Paul used words.

Verse 15 talks about disarming the powers and authorities. In Sunday's sermon, the speaker suggested that powers and authorities were things or structures or systems that we have created but have enslaved us in our worship of them. **Can you name some powers and authorities that we all deal with today?**

Main Course:

Colossians 2:13-15 deals with what happened on the cross. Although the first couple verses talk about a familiar theme for Christians—the idea that Jesus died on the cross for our sins—the second part of the passage talks about a battle with the powers and authorities. Something happened on the cross that brought a victory over these powers that enslave us. To put it another way, *the capacity Jesus had to make things happen won over the capacity the powers had to make things happen.*

Question: But what power did Jesus have? Underlying the passage is the love that God has for us (think John 3:16). This capacity to love us was what overcame the powers that bind us.

How did love overcome the powers? Colossians mentions three things: He disarmed them (literally, took away their weapons), he made a public spectacle of them (basically exposed them to the world) and he triumphed over them (he won; they lost).

Put your thinking caps on, because, along with Jesus saving us from our sins, Jesus conquering the powers is at the centre of our Christian faith, even if it may be a harder concept to understand. So... as Christians, how do we see love, God's love...

1. Disarming the powers that enslave us?
2. Making a public spectacle of them?
3. Triumphant over the powers of this world?

One image that often comes to mind is from South Africa during the time of apartheid. Racial tensions were very high, and yet reforms were allowing freedoms like never before. The reforms were not always appreciated by the powers that be. At one point, one of the leaders of the reforms, Bishop Desmond Tutu, was preaching in church when a bunch of police officers came into the building to threaten him. In joyful enthusiasm, he preached a sermon on how God loved all people equally, and then, pointing to the threatening police officers, he declared, "Christ has already won, and you have lost. Love has won the day." The police officers didn't arrest him but left instead. Here is a picture of how love disarms, makes a public spectacle, and triumphs over the powers.

Dessert:

Challenge:

Examine your own life. Jesus has forgiven your sins! But sometimes we live as if the powers are still in charge. What powers (worldviews, things that you hold dear to, that may be controlling you) do you need to disarm and triumph over in your life?