

**"What does it mean that we do not fight against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12)?"**

**Answer:** In [Ephesians 6:12](#), the apostle Paul introduces the believers in Ephesus to the reality of [spiritual warfare](#) in the Christian life: "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places" ([Ephesians 6:12, NLT](#)). Before discussing the [armor](#) Christians must wear in combat and their weapons of warfare, Paul stresses that the battle is spiritual, not physical. *We do not fight against flesh and blood* means we do not face a physical enemy but a spiritual one.

Christian warfare consists of a spiritual strategy fought with supernatural weapons against an unseen enemy. The opposition is real but not visible to the naked eye. Beneath the surface, an invisible spiritual battle is raging. We fight this war not with tangible weapons like guns and ammunition, nor with bodily defenses such as kicks and punches, but by daily putting on the whole armor of God, always praying, standing firm in the Word of God, and staying alert ([Ephesians 6:13-18](#)).

If we do not fight against flesh and blood, whom are we wrestling with, and who are our spiritual enemies? Paul named these opponents as the devil and his schemes, the rulers, authorities, and "powers of this dark world," and "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" ([Ephesians 6:10, 12](#)). His description seems to indicate a pecking order of evil beings who do Satan's bidding to oppose God's will on earth.

The apostle Peter also warned believers to remain vigilant against the devil: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" ([1 Peter 5:8-9](#)).

*We do not fight against flesh and blood* means that our enemies are not human but demonic. Many in Paul's Ephesian audience had previously dabbled in the [occult](#) ([Acts 19:18-20](#)) and would have been familiar with the devil and his evil forces.

The Bible calls the devil, or [Satan](#), "the prince of this world" ([John 12:31](#)), "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" ([Ephesians 2:2](#)), "the god of this age" ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)), and "the accuser" of believers ([Revelation 12:10](#)). This is our true enemy.

Paul says, in our fight with this enemy, we must be aware of his tactics ([2 Corinthians 2:11](#)). And in [Ephesians 6:11-12](#), Paul mentions three main traits of Satan's spiritual forces. First, they are powerful. They have authority to rule in the world. Second, they are evil. These wicked spiritual enemies use their power to wreak destruction. They are associated with darkness and not light, wickedness and not good. And, third, they are shrewd. They know how to scheme and strategize. They are so skilled at deception that sometimes they come disguised as angels of light ([2 Corinthians 11:14](#)) or wolves in sheep's clothing ([Matthew 7:15](#)).

So how can we, in our human weakness, expect to stand against such strong and cunning enemies? Brute strength won't win the battle. Humanly speaking, victory is impossible. In our struggle against the devil and his scheming forces, Paul says we must "be strong in the Lord

and in his mighty power” ([Ephesians 6:10](#)). It is our job to stand aside and let God fight the battle for us, and only then are we sure to win.

Only God can strengthen, defend, and deliver us from the power, wickedness, and craft of the devil ([2 Timothy 4:17-18](#)). Our enemy may be strong, but God is stronger ([1 John 4:4](#)). God makes available to us the same mighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated Him at God’s right hand in heaven ([Ephesians 1:19-20](#)). Our enemies are defeated through Christ’s victory over them on the cross ([Colossians 2:15](#)).

When David came up against the [Philistine giant](#), he recognized that his fight was not ultimately against flesh and blood. Goliath taunted David and cursed his God, saying, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks? . . . Come here . . . and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!” ([1 Samuel 17:43-44](#)). But David, trusting in the strength of the Lord and His mighty power, answered, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” ([1 Samuel 17:45](#)).

“For the battle is the Lord’s!” declared David ([1 Samuel 17:47](#)), and so ought we as we engage in spiritual warfare. Our fight is not against flesh and blood. The victory depends on the Lord, not us.