



| **SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES** |

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THE TEXT

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| ARMOR OF GOD |

SERIES SUMMARY

In Ephesians 6, Paul makes clear that he doesn't want us to be naïve about the fact that we're engaged in a cosmic struggle with the forces of evil. Unfortunately, most of us are oblivious to the fact that there's more going on than meets the eye. And because we're unaware, we're often ill-equipped to face the challenges. But we haven't been left without weapons to fight a successful battle. By the end of this series, you'll possess a greater awareness of the tools God has placed at our disposal to help us stand firm against the forces of evil.

THIS CURRICULUM IS REALLY EASY TO USE

STEP 1: Click the link in each lesson to watch the video teaching.

STEP 2: Reflect on the discussion questions with your group.

STEP 3: Stand firm against evil, utilizing all the tools God has given you!



PART 1 | **THE BATTLE IS REAL**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:10-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-25

DESCRIPTION

Paul doesn't want us to be naïve about the fact that we're engaged in a cosmic struggle with the forces of evil. Unfortunately, most of us are oblivious to the fact that there's more going on than meets the eye. And because we're unaware, we're often ill-equipped to face the challenges. Which is why we're launching a brand-new series called the Armor of God. By the end of this first episode, you'll possess a greater awareness of the struggle in which we're all engaged and a clear understanding for how God means for us to respond to the reality of spiritual warfare.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Describe a situation in your life where you sensed that struggle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Evil was playing out in your life?
- What do you think of NT Wright's suggestion that when it comes to the idea of spiritual warfare, most people either ignore it or over-indulge it? Where would you place yourself on that spectrum?
- Because human beings bear the image of God and embody God's glory, evil often opposes us in the very places where we bring the most glory and goodness to God. Where in your life do feel you most deeply embody God's goodness and glory (marriage, business, kids, your giftedness, etc.), and how have you experienced evil coming after you in that very place?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 2 | **BELT OF TRUTH**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:14; Ephesians 4:13-15, 25; Isaiah 11:1, 5

DESCRIPTION

When we're not truthful, we become vulnerable. Paul's description of the belt of truth corresponds to the cingulum that protected a Roman soldier's most vulnerable parts. No matter how big or strong a Roman soldier was, a strike to the groin could bring him down in an instant. The cingulum provided protection so that didn't happen. Likewise, when we're not truthful, evil can drop us fast. By the end of this episode, you'll understand why truthfulness is something we must incorporate every day in our struggle to stand firm against evil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- What do you think happens in a society when truthfulness isn't something we practice all the time but instead only when it's convenient?
- Describe a time in the past when you deceived yourself with a lack of truthfulness. How did it hurt you? Others?
- Why can truthfulness be so hard to practice sometimes?
- Describe a time when you had the courage to practice truthfulness even when it was hard. What did you learn?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 3 | **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:14; Ephesians 4:22-23; Isaiah 59:14-17

DESCRIPTION

The breastplate was the piece of armor that protected a soldier's vital organs. And when Paul pairs the word breastplate with the word righteousness, he's drawing on the Hebrew understanding that righteousness is relational. In other words, relationships are at the very core of who we are, and the enemy's number one purpose is to wreck relationships. By the end of this episode, you'll appreciate just how important it is to be vigilant about pursuing and preserving right relationships so the enemy doesn't take out your heart!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- What does it look like when you're vigilant about protecting your relationship with God? With others? With yourself? With creation?
- Describe a time or experience in your life when you had to take action to preserve a relationship that was at risk?
- What do you think about the statement "The enemy's #1 purpose is to wreck relationships?" In what ways have you experienced that to be true?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 4 | SANDALS OF THE GOSPEL

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:15

DESCRIPTION

Roman military sandals were all about traction. They stabilized and grounded soldiers so they could stand firm in the field of battle. According to Paul, the gospel of peace is what stabilizes and secures a follower of Jesus. Unfortunately, many of us fall into the destructive habit of locating our identity in unstable things: jobs, relationships, performance, the approval of others, etc. When we do so, it's nearly impossible to stand firm against the forces of evil. Which is why this episode will help you spot the ways you're seeking your identity outside of Jesus and know what to do about it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Roman soldiers wore their sandals at all times in order to be in a constant state of readiness. What practices or habits are you engaged in (or need to start engaging in) that could help you to be in a constant state of readiness to stand firm against evil?
- We have a destructive tendency to locate our identity in things other than Christ. What are some of those things in your life?
- Brad Lomenick's framework (Identity–Calling–Assignment) is an insightful one. What was helpful or challenging to you about it?
- What is your impression of the following statement: Peace is not the absence of conflict. It's the presence of wholeness. What does that statement stir up in you?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 5 | SHIELD OF FAITH

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:16

DESCRIPTION

The Roman military was one of the most formidable fighting forces in the ancient world. They routinely faced and defeated larger opponents because of their unique tactical approach to warfare: they never fought alone. The shield (scutum) allowed Roman soldiers to fight together as a unit, and that's why Paul connects the shield with the concept of faithfulness. Evil's desire is to isolate and cut us off from each other because we're never more vulnerable to attack than when we're going it alone. By the end of this episode, you'll learn that it's impossible to stand firm against evil if we're not standing with each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- If faith isn't just about intellectual affirmation but also behavior, describe a story or time in your life when you had to practice faith?
- What are some of the experiences in your life that have made you feel isolated and cut off from others?
- Why do you think "going it alone" is such a tempting way for people to live?
- Describe a moment in your life when you had to let the people around you carry you and fight for you? What impact does that continue to have on you today?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 6 | **HELMET OF SALVATION**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:17; Isaiah 59:17

DESCRIPTION

When Paul connects the image of the helmet with the concept of salvation, he's talking about deliverance. Standing firm in the midst of the battle begins with how we think. Our adversary, the evil one, loves to get us thinking in ways that are contrary to what God wants for us. Once planted in our minds, those thoughts wreak havoc on our lives. But spotting those lies and being vigilant about guarding what enters our minds are essential to withstand the assaults. By the end of this episode, you'll understand just how important what you think really is, and why it matters so much to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Before watching/listening to this episode, how would you have described salvation, and how does thinking of salvation as “deliverance” give new meaning to your understanding of salvation?
- What are some of the recurring thoughts that are contrary to what God wants for you that keep popping up in your mind?
- Think about what you're reading, listening to, watching, talking about, and being exposed to. How do you feel you're doing at being vigilant about what gets into your mind?
- When life gets intense, what are the things you turn to and look to for deliverance?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 7 | **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 4:1-11

DESCRIPTION

The final weapon in the armor of God, and our last line of defense, is the Sword of the Spirit which Paul says is the word of God. When Paul talks about God's words, he uses a very particular Greek word, *rhema*, which means "a word that is given." Sometimes in the midst of battle, the Holy Spirit gives us a word from God to use in the fight. Other times, the Spirit recalls the words of God that we've committed to memory, and that we need most to stand firm in the midst of the onslaught. In this final episode of our mini-series, you'll learn how to wield the very words of God in order to fight a decisive battle against the evil one.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- When was a time in your life where it seemed like the Holy Spirit gave you a very specific word from God that gave you strength, encouragement, or direction?
- When or in what way has the Holy Spirit reminded you of Scripture when you were in a difficult or challenging situation?
- It almost seems like if you cut Jesus, he bleeds the Bible. What typically comes out of you when you're cut, challenged, or pressed in the battle?
- If both Jesus and Paul saw the Scriptures as a potent weapon against evil, why don't we?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Click on the Titles below for links to each of these resources.

- *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis
- *Live No Lies* by John Mark Comer
- *Dressed to Kill* by Rick Renner
- *Warfare Part 1: The Reality of a War Against Your Heart* – The Place We Find Ourselves In Podcast
- *Satan and the Powers of Evil* – Ask NT Wright Anything Podcast
- *Paul and the Powers (An Interview with NT Wright)* – BibleProject Podcast

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