

SESSION 5

BATTLE ARMOR

▶ ***The Point***

God equips us for the spiritual battles we face.

▶ ***The Passage***

Ephesians 6:10-20

▶ ***The Bible Meets Life***

The TV character MacGyver is known for his uncanny ability to get out of harrowing circumstances with mundane objects. Whether he's defusing a bomb, rescuing people, or escaping from a deadly trap, all MacGyver needs to save the day is his knowledge of science, a few paper clips, and some chewing gum.

Of course, the show is pure fiction. But sometimes it would be nice if we could save ourselves from life's problems and attacks by quickly grabbing whatever is at hand and creatively crafting tools to free ourselves. Right?

Thankfully, God has given us all we need to do just that. He's equipped us with the tools we need to stand strong in the face of attacks that come against us. Better than any tool we can create on our own, God has given us spiritual armor and weapons. Yes, life is often a battle with Satan coming against us. But we are guaranteed victory when we trust in Christ and in the tools He has provided.

▶ ***The Setting***

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, most likely written around A.D. 60-61 during an imprisonment in Rome, is one of four letters called "Prison" or "Captivity" letters (including Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). Paul briefly noted his imprisonment in this letter. (See Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20.) A key topic in this letter is the spiritual armor we need to fight our spiritual battles.

What does the Bible say?

Spiritual forces (v. 12)—Paul is in line with the rest of Scripture in highlighting the reality of supernatural forces in this world. These forces exist; they are “real,” although they are different from human beings, which Paul refers to as “flesh and blood.”

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 45 of the PSG: **“What are some ‘tools of the trade’ you rely on most days?”**

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 46 of the PSG. Introduce the concept of being equipped for spiritual battle by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

Notes

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Supplement “The Bible Meets Life” by playing a video clip from the *MacGyver* TV show. Choose a clip that shows MacGyver escaping from trouble using an especially strange or mundane set of tools. (An example video clip will be posted on the Leader Extra! blog at biblestudiesforlife.com/adultextra.) If time permits, make additional use of the clip by asking group members to think through other methods MacGyver could have used to escape.

Note: If you’re not in a position to play a video clip, or if you’re not inclined to do so, supplement Question #1 by bringing in several examples of “tools of the trade.” For example, bring a hammer, a calculator, a keyboard, a thermometer, and so on. Pass these around as object lessons while your group discusses Question #1.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 46 of the PSG: **“God equips us for the spiritual battles we face.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by acknowledging that many people in this room will have read about and talked about the armor of God in previous situations. Pray that God would grant each of you new wisdom and new insights as you work together to engage Ephesians 6.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Ephesians 6:10-13

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

READ: Ephesians 6:10-13 on page 47 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 47 of the PSG: **“What have you been taught about spiritual warfare?”**

RECAP: Read aloud the first two paragraphs on page 48 of the PSG:

Yes, we have victory in Christ. But Paul still called the battle we face a “wrestle.” The Greek word is actually tied to the sport of wrestling, which reminds us that we don’t battle the spiritual forces of evil from a distance. Our fight is a close, hand-to-hand type of struggle—only we’re not struggling in a physical context. Our fight is not “against flesh and blood.” It’s supernatural.

So how do we take on these evil forces that seek to harm us? We stand. In a position of Christ-centered confidence, Paul told us to “stand firm.” We do that when we “take up the whole armor of God.” By doing so, we become active participants, not passive observers, in dealing with spiritual attack.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Help your hands-on learners by asking the entire group to stand up as an illustration of Paul’s words in verse 13. With everyone standing, encourage the group to read verse 13 out loud together as a picture of your desire to stand with one another.

TRANSITION: As we continue with verses 14-17, we’ll find specific information on what the armor of God is—and how we can use it.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
Where do you see evidence of spiritual attacks in today’s world?

Ephesians 6:10-13 Commentary

We are in a spiritual battle.

[Verse 10] In the last major section of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul focused on the Christian life as a spiritual battle. He began by emphasizing our need to **be strong in the Lord**. Believers need to rely on the strength of God's **might**, literally "the power of His might." Paul had previously described this power in Ephesians 1:19 as "the immeasurable greatness of his power" by which God raised Christ from the dead. He also had prayed that the Ephesian believers would be strengthened with this power in their inner-being through the Holy Spirit. (See Eph. 3:16.)

[Verse 11] To prepare for our spiritual battles, we need the **whole armor of God**. The armor of God could be armor that God provides to His people for their protection during spiritual warfare. It might also refer to the armor Scripture describes God Himself wearing. (See Isa. 59:17.) Both meanings could fit here, since the main point is that our protection in battles comes from God.

The purpose of putting on the full armor of God is so that believers may **stand**, holding one's ground against an enemy, resisting one's foe and in so doing prevail over that enemy. For Christians, the decisive victory has already been won by Christ. It's the believer's job to stand firm against the attacks of the devil and his allies so as to defend and hold on to that which has been won.

Our primary foe in our battles is the **devil**. The devil has many **schemes** or "wiles" (KJV). He has a wide range of tactics to use against us, and we need God's strength in these battles.

[Verse 12] The devil has a great many allies who are also our enemies and are not human beings of **flesh and blood**. Our primary opponents are spiritual and supernatural. Paul used several terms to describe these spiritual enemies. Some of our enemies are **rulers** and **authorities**. Paul mentioned these same entities in Ephesians 1:21 in describing the supremacy of Christ over all such powers. The **cosmic powers over this present darkness** refers to those evil spiritual powers (demonic forces) in rebellion against God who have authority in the world. The phrase **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places** is a broad, general description of all evil spiritual beings and relates to Paul's comment in Ephesians 2:2 describing the devil as the "prince of the power of the air."

[Verse 13] Because of these spiritual enemies, the **whole armor of God** is essential for the spiritual battles Christians must fight. These battles occur in **the evil day**, which might refer to any time in our Christian pilgrimage in "the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4), or it might highlight particular crises when we are most vulnerable to the devil's attacks.

We must be ready to **withstand** or resist the devil and his allies. A key idea in this verse is Paul's command **to stand firm**. (See v. 11.) Paul knew that in military battles a soldier had options. He could attack the enemy, defend himself, or he could run away. A Christian must stand his or her ground in the sense of being alert and prepared to face these spiritual foes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

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ALTERNATE QUESTION:
Who in your life wears this armor well and knows how to use it?

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Ephesians 6:14-17

14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 5, “Armor of God,” to provide a visual look at the pieces of armor described in these verses. Use the poster to reference each piece of armor as you read the Scripture text.

READ: Ephesians 6:14-17 on page 48 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read or skim through the bullet list on pages 48-49 of the PSG.

Note: If time permits, this would be a good moment to stop and ask if group members have any questions about the armor described. Don't feel like you have to answer these questions yourself, however.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 48 of the PSG: **“Which piece of God’s armor most resonates with you? Why?”**

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 49 of the PSG: **“What are some real-life situations in which this armor is essential for followers of Christ?”**

Note: If possible, encourage group members to share a little of their stories as they engage this question. Ask if they would be willing to describe real-life situations in which they have depended on God’s armor in a practical way—or situations where they wished they would have done so. Allowing people to open up and share their experiences is a great way to learn and to build unity within the group at the same time.

TRANSITION: We’ve seen each piece of God’s armor, and we’ve talked about how each piece helps us to stand as followers of Jesus. But verses 18-20 remind of another critical tool that is necessary for any and all spiritual battles.

Ephesians 6:14-17 Commentary

God equips us and protects us completely.

[Verse 14] Again encouraging believers to **stand**, Paul gave us the details about how we could prepare for battle with our spiritual enemies. He identified the different pieces of armor a Roman soldier wore, using each piece to represent an aspect of the Christian life.

The **truth** is represented by a **belt**. Truth could be referring to the truth of the gospel of Christ. Our understanding and proclamation of the Christian message are central to our spiritual warfare. Our thoughts and actions are based on the truth of God's Word. Truth could also be referring to our ethical behavior as believers—how we live out our Christian lives.

On our chests we wear **the breastplate of righteousness** as armor. Similar imagery appears in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (see 1 Thess. 5:8) and it is found in the Old Testament, as well. (See Isa. 59:17.) The term "righteousness" probably meant living out the righteousness of Christ in one's personal life and in support of the cause of justice in the world.

[Verse 15] Our **feet** are to be **fitted** with **readiness given by the gospel of peace**. (See Isa. 52:7.) A soldier needed to have firm footing in order to fight effectively. The believer stands securely on the gospel of Jesus Christ. The peace Paul referred to is brought about through Christ, encompassing the peace between God and His people based on their salvation from their sins as well as the peace that should mark our relations with others.

[Verse 16] An important part of a soldier's equipment was his **shield**. The crucial nature of this shield is seen in that it is to be used **in all circumstances**. Paul used a Greek word that referred to a large shield that would cover much of the soldier's body and protect him from the **flaming darts** of the enemy. This shield represents our **faith**. In this context, "faith" describes the personal, complete trust we are to have in God. The **evil one** is one of Paul's names for the devil.

[Verse 17] Paul wrapped up his catalogue of armor with two final items. We have the **helmet of salvation**, which is part of God's armor in Isaiah 59:17. The helmet of salvation reminds us that our ultimate protection is God, who has provided our salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. (See Eph. 2:5.) It's an accomplished fact on which we can depend. The helmet of salvation also reminds us that through our salvation in Christ we have the power to overcome sin and the devil in our personal lives.

The last piece of the believer's battle gear is the **sword of the Spirit**. This reminds us of the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The sword of the Spirit is identified specifically as the **word of God**. Christians today especially think of the "word" of God as the written Word, the Bible. One of the best examples of the way the written Word of God can help us in spiritual warfare is the account of Jesus' temptations. Jesus successfully responded to each of the devil's temptations by quoting the Book of Deuteronomy. (See Matt. 4:1-10.)



STUDY THE BIBLE

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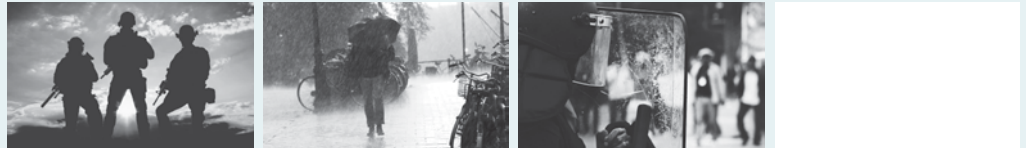
Ephesians 6:18-20

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity “Standing Firm” on page 51 of the PSG. If time permits, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



What does it look like to stand firm against the spiritual forces of evil? Choose the image that best represents your understanding of what it means to stand firm. Or, use the blank box to draw your own image.



READ: Ephesians 6:18-20 on page 50 of the PSG.

RECAP: Read aloud the first paragraph on page 50 of the PSG:

We have one more tool at our disposal as we engage in spiritual battle: prayer. God has supplied us with all we need to stand, but we never stand alone. We need constant communication with the One we serve.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 50 of the PSG: **“How does prayer contribute to our efforts in spiritual warfare?”**

Note: This is another opportunity to encourage group members to share their own experiences. How have they seen prayer contribute to their spiritual lives? Their efforts at spiritual warfare?

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” for this session: **“God equips us for the spiritual battles we face.”** As time allows, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts and questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How can we help one another be more active and intentional in prayer?

Ephesians 6:18-20 Commentary

Equipped by God, we can act with boldness and confidence.

[Verse 18] Prayer is crucial to victory in the spiritual battles the believer faces and to the Christian life as a whole. Therefore, believers should pray at all times. Paul had encouraged the church in Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Christians should also pray **in the Spirit**. The Holy Spirit resides inside every believer. (See Rom. 8:9-11.) In prayer, Christians are to partner with the Holy Spirit, praying under His guidance and influence. In fact, the entire Christian life is to be lived in the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:16-25.)

Because believers are in a spiritual battle, we need to develop an attitude of alertness and perseverance when it comes to our prayer lives. (See Col. 4:2.) To remain **alert** means having an attitude of constant vigilance. **Perseverance** in prayer requires being consistent and disciplined in one’s prayer life. Every **prayer and supplication** we make should be consistent with the will of God and His expectations for us. Included in our prayer should be **supplication**, praying for God to address the needs of other Christians.

[Verse 19] Paul wanted his readers to pray for him. He wanted his readers to pray that he would proclaim with boldness **the mystery of the gospel**. Paul normally used the word “mystery” to refer to a truth that had been hidden until God revealed it to His people. Earlier in this letter, however, the mystery now revealed was the gospel—the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, intended for both Gentiles and Jews. (See Eph. 3:3-7.)

[Verse 20] Paul reminded his readers that he was a prisoner, describing himself as **an ambassador in chains**. Paul saw himself as Christ’s representative sent around the world to preach the gospel. (See 2 Cor. 5:20.) Now, however, Paul was a prisoner in chains. Even though his travel was restricted, he wanted to continue to **boldly** declare the gospel in his ministry. The Greek term for “boldly” carries the sense of a freedom in speaking, of being blunt and outspoken.

Paul’s prayer request to his readers was not self-centered. He had instructed them about how to prepare for spiritual battles, and he was himself in a struggle. Surely he would rather have been liberated from jail so he could preach and plant churches. In another prison letter, however, he acknowledged that the gospel was still being proclaimed by others while he was in jail. (See Phil. 1:12-20.) Also in that same letter, he noted that he was having an impact on the “whole imperial guard” of the Roman emperor (v. 13).

The New Testament depicts the Christian’s spiritual life in many ways. The believer is described as a pilgrim, a student or disciple, and as a servant or slave. In this passage, Paul’s use of the image of a soldier equipped for battle reminds us that God and His people are opposed by powerful, unseen adversaries. Paul’s emphasis on spiritual armor, prayer, and a bold witness are crucial to our success in this spiritual battle. We do not fight on our own. We should not retreat or deny our faith. We must trust God to empower and equip us for the struggles we face.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 52 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider these options for relying on everything Christ has provided for their lives—including His armor.



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Pray.** Take everything to God in prayer. Everything. Your victories begin with prayer. Make prayer a regular part of your day, knowing you need to continually look to God for strength.
- ▶ **Stand.** If you find you're susceptible to "the flaming darts of the evil one"—his lies, doubts, and temptations—use God's armor. Identify several promises from God's Word on which you can stand against spiritual attacks.
- ▶ **Stand together.** Meet with someone you trust this week to talk about mutual accountability. Discuss ways to support and encourage each other in the spiritual battles you face.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 52 of the PSG:

Don't lose sight of the fact you are in a spiritual battle that does not include just you. You have help! You have the support of your friends and family. More importantly, you have the support of God, who empowers you to stand.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking God for the gift of His armor—for making His armor available to you and to the members of your group. Pray for courage to use that armor in order to stand.



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