



THE
ARMOR
OF GOD

RICHARD ELWELL

THE
ARMOR
OF GOD





WHY IDEAS MATTER.

Ultimate Outcomes is a non-profit organization founded on the fruit of the 30 plus years Pastor Richard Elwell and his wife Marty spent in church ministry, developing studies that would help their congregants discern and apply God's truth. Richard was a firm believer that the outcomes in our lives are a result of what ideas we choose to believe and follow.

After Richard died of a rare liver disease in 2018, Ultimate Outcomes has taken on the mission of sharing the Elwell's insights with all people who desire to live a better life and are willing to look to God for understanding of the way they are to go. To that end it makes available for free download on its website: Bible studies, Sunday school curriculum, and sermon podcasts.

Richard earned a Master of Divinity degree from the International School of Theology and was the founding and senior pastor at University Park Church, San Bernardino, CA for over 30 years. His passion was always to make God's truth understandable and applicable to all who hunger for it. Marty holds a Master's Degree in Teaching Processes from Claremont Graduate University. Her passion has been to train women and provide curriculum for parents who want to raise up their children up in the ways of the Lord.

<https://www.ultimateoutcomes.org>

Copyright 1999, 2008, 2018 RICHARD ELWELL
Scripture taken from the Holy Bible,
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.
Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Contents

Being Fully Armed	1
The Belt of Truth	7
The Breastplate of Righteousness	13
The Shoes of Peace	19
The Shield of Faith	25
The Helmet of Salvation	31
The Sword of the Spirit	37
Praying in the Spirit	43

Study Focus

As Christians we have to remember that Satan wants to defeat us and we are in a spiritual battle to maintain our redeemed life in Christ. If we are unprotected and unprepared, we will be defeated. This study explains each piece of the protective armor that God provides when we seek him and put our faith in all that Christ has done for us.



“You can’t expect to have a picnic in the middle of a battlefield.”

Preface by Marty Elwell

Whenever I complained about feeling down or something being hard or difficult, my husband would always respond, “Marty, you can’t expect to have a picnic in the middle of a battlefield.” Throughout my life, I have had to battle against the idea that the Christian walk would be one of ease, a perspective I believe is unique to American Christians. We have to recognize that we are in a continual battle against a cunning enemy. God has called us to fight, not to watch from the sidelines while others do battle.

When I went through this study the first time, the piece of armor that really spoke to me was the shoes of the gospel of peace. It helped me to realize that by abiding in Christ I didn’t need to respond to provocation or take offense at what people said to me. Sometimes people tell me that they are sorry if they offended me. Their saying that makes me realize what a work Christ has done in me, because I seldom get offended or mad at what people do or say. Understanding the protection Christ provides and his admonition to live at peace with everyone as far as it depends on me, I have grown to the point I am not easily provoked by other people or situations. That has become to me a tremendous benefit of abiding in Christ and putting on the shoes of the gospel of peace.

Putting on each piece of defensive armor enables us to live victorious and secure lives in Christ. The one offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit, gives us the tool we need to defeat the lies of our enemy Satan. Filling my mind with God’s truth enables me to deal with deceptive thinking that would take me off God’s path

I pray that this study will help you understand more fully that, even though we can’t have a picnic in the middle of a battlefield, we can rest in the protection that God has given us through his Son and the Holy Spirit and defeat the enemy by knowing and applying the Word of God..





BEING FULLY ARMED



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1. Who needs armored protection and why?
Those who are in a battle and vulnerable to an enemy's attack. They need armor to avoid being killed or defeated.
2. From what do we personally need protection?
Physical and spiritual harm.
3. What do we have that is worth protecting?
The whole of our life: life, health, family, relationships, material assets, mind, heart, truth, future, etc.
4. What is the result of an absence of protection?
Ruin, brokenness, vulnerability, spiritual and material poverty. John 10:10a – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...”



Illustration: After their exile to Babylon, God's people returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. They faced enemies who wanted to destroy them and keep them from completing God's work. They needed God's protection to finish God's work.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at the importance of being fully protected.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.



Note: Ephesians 6:10-18 begins with the word “finally.” The section leading up to the word “finally” begins at 4:17. That section speaks of the new life we as believers have in Christ and how to live in our new life by being imitators of God and living a life of love through serving others whole-heartedly.

1. What does the context of the word “finally” tell us about what we need to protect?

We need to protect the new life we have in Christ and the wonderful work God is doing in us so we bring honor and glory to him and serve his purposes.



Illustration: What does one do after applying a fresh coat of varnish to a piece of fine furniture that is being refinished? *One has to protect the finish from the dust and all that might stick to it or mar it while it dries. You wouldn't want to leave it on a busy street to dry.*

2. What does what we protect or fail to protect show?

What is valuable to us. We protect more vigorously, what we value the most. Do we value our new life in Christ enough to want to protect it?



Illustration: What kind of things does a person lock up rather than just leave lying around? *What is valuable and irreplaceable.*

3. If we are in a battle, why is it important to be fully armed?

If we are not fully armed, we will be vulnerable in some areas. It is the areas of vulnerability where the enemy will attack. The enemy focuses on what is weak, not strong. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.



Illustration: What happens to a country with a coastline that has a great army but no navy? *It is vulnerable to invasion from the sea.*

4. What happens when we have some, but not all, of the armor of God?

The enemy will find and attack our weak spots.



Illustration: What is the meaning of the expression “an Achilles heel”?

It is an area of weakness in spite of overall strength, which can lead to downfall.

In Greek mythology, Achilles was invulnerable except on his heel, which his mother was holding onto when she dipped him into the River Styx to make him invulnerable.

5. What is the nature of what threatens us? (vs.11-12) What do we have to take our stand against?

Spiritual forces of evil, the devil’s schemes (methodeia), which are well-crafted deception.

It’s wrong ideas, not something physical, like people, bombs or bullets.



Illustration: How do people get taken in by a scam? They believe a well-crafted lie that what is being offered to them will be of benefit to them.

6. What is the nature of the armor that protects us?

That which comes from or is a work of God: truth, righteousness, peace, salvation, Word of God, prayer, internal character, integrity, etc.

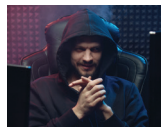


Illustration: What type of person gets caught in a sting operation?

One who isn’t upright; someone who has moral defects and is following the lie that doing something illegal will be of benefit to him.

THINKING IT THROUGH

1. What are things people usually associate with protection?

Physical things like gates, locks, guns

2. In what way are we vulnerable even if we have complete physical security?

No amount of physical protection can protect us from that which will harm us spiritually: the deceptive ideas of the world and the temptations of the devil.

3. Why are we generally more concerned with physical safety than spiritual safety?

We don’t appreciate that spiritual harm is far more detrimental than physical harm. We are consumed by the material world rather than the spiritual reality.

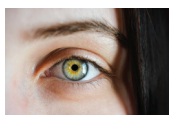


Illustration: Why are martyrs able to face certain death filled with peace?

Because their focus is on the spiritual rather than physical life. They may be harmed physically, but they have spiritual protection.

4. What are the comparative consequences of being physically or spiritually vulnerable?

The worst that can happen to us physically is death. The worst that can happen to us spiritually is eternal separation from God's glory, spending eternity in hell. The suffering in this life pales in comparison to eternal suffering.

5. How does the opposite of each piece of spiritual armor threaten us?

- Truth – Deception
Threatens good judgment and decisions
- Righteousness – Disobedience
Threatens our well-being and life's destination
- Peace – Anxiety
Threatens our hope and physical and spiritual health
- Faith – Doubt
Threatens our relationship with God
- Salvation – Being lost
Threatens our eternal destiny, unable to see or discern what is true
- Sword of the Spirit – Lack of familiarity with God's word
Threatens our judgment and influence, can't ascertain God's will
- Prayer – Lack of prayer
Threatens our power and strength, reliance on self rather than God

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

DEMOLISHING WHAT COMES AGAINST OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.



Note: Knowledge in these verses refers to personal, first-hand knowledge (a relationship), not knowing about something.



Why do we need to demolish anything that comes against our knowledge of God?

Everything we need for life and living a good life is found in our knowledge of (relationship with) God.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

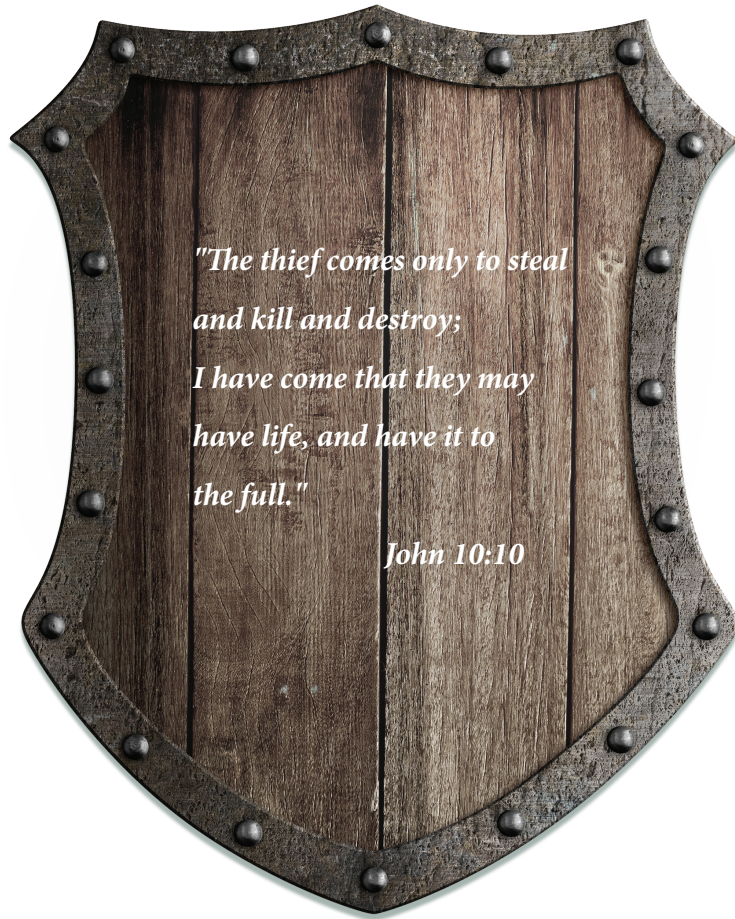
Circle the areas in which you are the most vulnerable and write out why you are vulnerable.

1. Truth – Deception
2. Righteousness – Disobedience
3. Peace – Anxiety
4. Faith – Doubt
5. Salvation – Being lost
6. Sword of the Spirit – Lack of familiarity with God's word
7. Prayer – Lack of prayer

PRAYER

Thank God for the new and abundant life that you have through Jesus Christ. Pray that you would recognize what threatens that life and seek God and his protection.





*"The thief comes only to steal
and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may
have life, and have it to
the full."*

John 10:10



THE BELT OF TRUTH



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

To be strong in the Lord, we must put on the full armor of God.

1. What are we protecting by being fully armed?
The life that we have in Christ, the wonderful work God is doing in us to restore us to the beauty of what he originally intended.
2. What is the nature of what threatens us?
Spiritual forces of evil, the deceptive ideas of the devil that pull us away from God and destroy God's work in us.
3. What is the nature of what protects us?
The things that come from or are a work of God. We are protected by our character and the internal condition of our hearts, personal integrity.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will begin the examination of each piece of the armor of God, starting with the belt of truth.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

PUTTING ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:10-11

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

1. What are the two commands in verses 10 and 11?
Be strong in the Lord and his mighty power and put on the full armor of God.



2. “Be strong” (endynamoyste) is in the imperative mood, passive voice. Imperative mood means it is a command. Passive voice means the action is happening to the subject. How does that impact the meaning of the verse?
We let the work be done to us. We become strong when we allow the power of God to operate in us.
3. “Put on” (endysaste) is in the imperative mood, middle voice. Imperative mood means it is a command. Middle voice means the subject is participating in the action happening to him. What does that mean in terms of understanding the verse? **We have an active role in putting on the armor that God provides.**

Explanation:

We are empowered by God, which is an action that happens to us as we put on the full armor of God, which is an action we participate in. We have an adversary who, through the power of persuasion, wants to deceive us into forfeiting that great and priceless treasure we have in the love of God. We must put on the full armor of God to stand our ground against the devil’s schemes.



Illustration: When we drive a car, we are empowered by the power of the car to get somewhere. That power is only realized when we get in the car and start driving it. The power of the car to take us somewhere has no effect on us if we don’t get in it.

THE BELT OF TRUTH

The full armor of God begins with the belt of truth.

Ephesians 6:13-14a

¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.

Explanation:

A first century soldier had a leather belt that was like a girdle covering his stomach and groin. It not only covered the most vulnerable parts of his body, it also readied him for action. Besides being a place to sheath his sword he could also tuck his garment in it so he would be free to run.

What do you think it means spiritually to buckle the belt of truth around our waist?

Knowing God’s truth both protects us from and readies us to do battle with the devil’s schemes.

In thinking about the function of the belt of truth, it is important to understand the difference between objective and subjective truth. The word aletheia can refer to either. Objective truth is a correct or valid statement (i.e., He is a man.). Subjective truth is something or someone that is trustworthy or true. (i.e., a true friend)



Illustration: Tape measure

A tape measure can be true in the sense that it is reliable. You can count on five inches actually measuring five inches. It can also be true in the sense that five inches is a true location on the measuring tape.

It seems that the belt of truth refers to subjective truth for two reasons:

1. There is no article in front of it (i.e., the truth).
2. The sword of the Spirit refers to objective truth.

What does it mean to arm ourselves by being subjectively true?

We are who we say we are. We don't pretend to be something we are not. We are for real. To be subjectively true is to be a person of integrity. We are an integral whole, the same on the inside as we are on the outside. Perceiving things clearly



Remember: To be subjectively true, God's objective truth has to be taken in and made part of us.

THINKING IT THROUGH

1. Does being a person of truth mean you have to be perfect? **No**

What does it mean?

It means we have to be honest about who we are. We know we are sinners in need of a savior. We need to know where we are vulnerable.

2. Why does denying, ignoring or hiding our sin keep us from being protected by the truth?

Our enemy has far more power over our weaknesses, sins, and imperfections when we deny, ignore or try to hide them. Integrity doesn't mean we are perfect; it just means we are who we claim to be. If we try to hide our sin, then we stay in darkness and it continues to destroy us.

3. How does confession help to protect us by the truth?

The first step in deliverance is recognizing what is true about ourselves. We can never be delivered from what we don't admit is true about ourselves.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

What happens if we claim to be without sin?

We are deceived. God's truth isn't in us and we make God out to be a liar.



Remember: To put on the belt of truth doesn't mean we are sinless; it means we are honest. It means we have personal integrity. We admit what is true about ourself.



Illustration: A bank robber who admits he is a thief has more integrity than a person who has never been in trouble with the law and says that he always does what is right.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

TO BE CLEAN ON THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

Matthew 23:25-28

²⁵"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

1. What does a lack of subjective truth result in?

Hypocrisy or pretension. We're vulnerable to corruption, eaten away on the inside, separated from God.

2. What does the belt of truth protect us from?

Pretending to be something we're not. Living in pretense only covers evil. When we try to pretend evil doesn't exist, it gets worse and worse. This is a problem of our times, the postmodern era, in which image matters more than substance. Honesty keeps us connected to God because we realize how much we need Jesus.



Illustration: Who are examples of people who have pretended to be something they are not and have been brought to ruin? **Bernie Madoff, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffery Epstein, fallen pastors, disgraced politicians etc.**

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Are you willing to take an honest look at yourself? What demonstrates that?

2. How do you contribute to your own brokenness?

3. Are you willing to receive criticism? What demonstrates that?

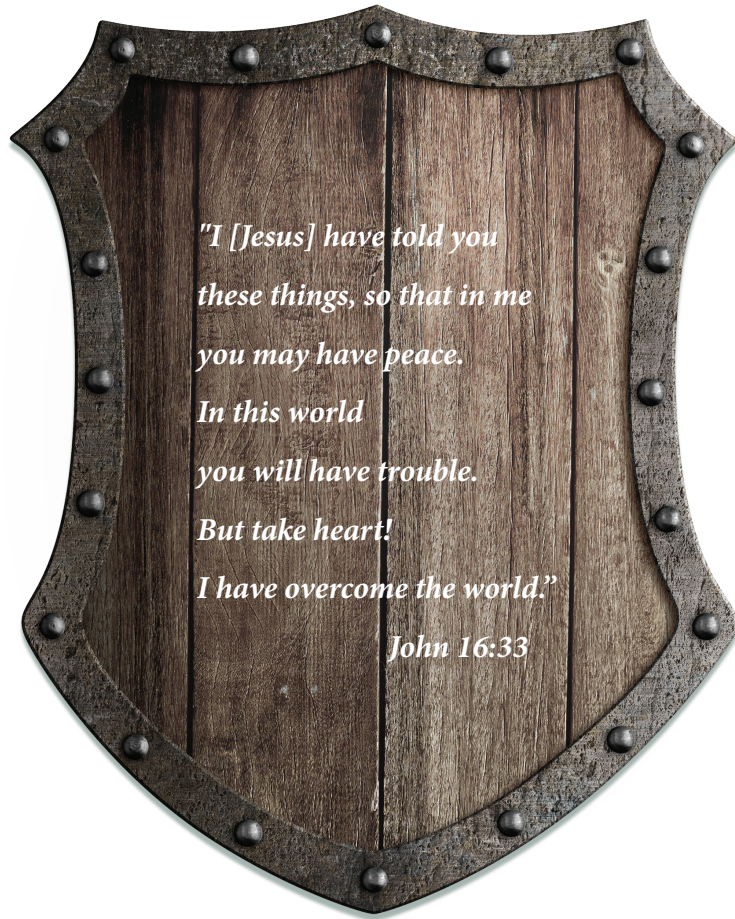
Proverbs 9:9-Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

4. When other people are wrong, are you willing to look at their flaws in light of your own?
What demonstrates that? **Take out the log in own eye versus speck in someone else's eye**

5. Do you find refuge in the truth that you are a sinner saved by God's grace?
What demonstrates that?

PRAYER

Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal sin in your life that needs to be dealt with so that you will be a person of integrity.



*"I [Jesus] have told you
these things, so that in me
you may have peace.
In this world
you will have trouble.
But take heart!
I have overcome the world."
John 16:33*



THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Lesson 1

1. What does the full armor of God protect?

Our new life in Christ. All the benefits and blessings of being a child of God through faith in Christ.

2. What is the nature of the armor of God?

Godly character, which is a barrier that protects us from the devil's schemes.

Lesson 2

1. What is the belt of truth?

Subjective truth, integrity, honesty, being who we claim to be

2. What does the belt of truth protect us from?

Pretension, hypocrisy, pretending we are something we're not.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at the breastplate of righteousness, the second item in the full armor of God.

1. What is righteousness?

Being right in thought and deed, being right with God

2. Why is a person who thinks he is righteous unprotected by righteousness?

The delusion of self-righteousness is probably sin's most favorable growing condition.

3. It is a biblical irony that those who trust in their own righteousness are unrighteous. They put on a breastplate of self-righteousness, which leaves them unprotected. How does the belt of truth keep us from putting on the breastplate of self-righteousness?

Truth enables us to see ourselves as we really are, unrighteous sinners in need of a savior.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ephesians 6:10-14

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

1. What is the function of a breastplate?

A breastplate protects the vital organs. It keeps arrows or a spear from inflicting a mortal wound.

2. What are the two different approaches to becoming righteous?

One approach is to try to become righteous on your own, which results in self-righteousness. The other is recognizing that you can never make yourself righteous and to trust in the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Jesus.

THE PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. Romans 3:10

¹⁰As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one."

What is the principle of righteousness in this verse?

No one is righteous on his own merit. Everyone begins unrighteous.

2. Romans 1:17

¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

What is the principle of righteousness in this verse?

There is a righteousness that comes from God for everyone from the first to the last that comes through faith. Everyone who has faith in Jesus can be made righteous.

3. Romans 3:20-22

²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

What is the principle of righteousness in these verses? **No one can hope to be righteous by the standard of the law, but there is another righteousness that comes from God through faith in Jesus. The law is the standard of righteousness, which no one can measure up to. We can never perfectly obey the law.**

4. Romans 5:17

¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

What is the principle of righteousness in this verse?

Righteousness is a gift from God that comes through Christ.

5. Romans 9:30-32

³⁰What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³²Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

What is the principle of righteousness in this passage?

Righteousness can't be attained through works. It is seen in works but can't be attained through works.

6. Romans 10:3-4

³Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

What is the principle of righteousness in this passage?

Those who are busy trying to establish their own righteousness are ignorant of the righteousness that comes through faith. You can't pursue self-righteousness and God's righteousness at the same time.

7. How would you summarize the principles of righteousness from the passages in Romans?

None of us is righteous on our own. We all need to believe in the gift that comes through Jesus. If we pursue self-righteousness, we will miss the righteousness that comes through Christ.



Illustration: An honorary degree is awarded to someone who has not gone to school to earn it. The righteousness that comes from God is what theologians call imputed righteousness. God confers upon us the status of being right as we put our faith in the work of Christ on the cross. Righteousness is also inward; God's Spirit works in us to make us truly right from the inside out.

THINKING IT THROUGH

BEING MADE HOLY

1. Can a person be righteous by faith in Christ and still live in wrong ways?

Yes and no. No in terms of the course of life one chooses. Yes in the sense that we are all still subject to the weakness of the flesh.

2. Hebrews 10:14

¹⁴because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Is a person whom God sees as perfect, truly perfect?

Not yet, he is still being worked on. He sees us as perfect but he is still making us perfect.



Note: “Made perfect forever” is a completed past action, which means that once a person acknowledges faith in Jesus and what he did on the cross God sees him as perfect for all eternity. “Being made holy” is an on-going work being done in someone who has been made perfect forever.



Illustration: A Construction Site

When a building is under construction, the site is a mess as it is a work in progress.

There is trash and useless materials laying around. The mess only becomes a problem if the work stops and it is left that way, rather than the building continue and the mess cleaned up when it is done.

THE PROTECTION OF THE BREASTPLATE

Revelation 12:10-11

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

¹¹They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

1. What does the breastplate of righteousness protect us from?

The enemy's accusations

2. What happens to us if we are unprotected by the breastplate of righteousness?

Accusation sticks and justice is required. Satan says what is true about us and the penalty for our sin must be paid by us.

3. Why are we vulnerable to accusation if we trust in our own righteousness?
We are completely unprotected. If you have committed a crime, you are vulnerable to arrest. Thinking you are innocent doesn't protect you.
4. Why aren't we vulnerable to accusation if we trust in the righteousness that comes from Christ?
Christ is our scapegoat. Our lack of righteousness is covered by his blood. He died to pay the penalty for all sin. If our faith is in him then our sins are completely paid for and Satan can't accuse us.



Remember: To put on the breastplate of righteousness we daily trust in the atoning sacrificial death of Christ to justify us, and the indwelling of his Spirit to sanctify us.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THE CHANGE IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Philippians 3:4b-12

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

How would you describe the change in Paul's life? **He changed what he put his faith in. His faith had been in himself but he came to recognize his personal lack of righteousness and put his faith in Christ's righteousness.**



Remember: When Paul was converted, he changed his belief; he changed what he put his faith in. Once he recognized that he couldn't be righteous on his own apart from Christ, he put his faith completely in the work Christ did on his behalf.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. When God or another person reveals something wrong in your life do you ...
 - a. Try to justify yourself?
 - b. Get down on yourself?
 - c. Trust in God's mercy for forgiveness and in his Spirit to enable you to change?

2. When you look at other people's flaws do you ...
 - a. Think you are better than they are?
 - b. Pray that God would work in them as you desire him to work in you?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus that he is righteous and that by putting your faith in him you have been made right. Pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal to you any way that you are trusting in your own righteousness rather than in Christ.



THE SHOES OF PEACE



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Lesson One

How is the armor of God different from physical protection or armor?

Physical armor protects what we have, our physical life.

Spiritual armor protects who we are in Christ.

Lesson Two

How does the belt of truth protect us from hypocrisy?

Honesty keeps us from pretending we are something other than what we really are, sinners in need of a savior.

Lesson Three

1. How does the righteousness that comes from God protect us?

It protects us from the accusation of our guilt. It protects us because our guilt was exchanged for Christ's righteousness through his death on the cross.

2. What do we have to remember about the origin of our righteousness?

The righteousness doesn't come from us. Being self-righteous keeps us from truly becoming righteous.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will focus on a soldier's footwear as it looks at what it means to have our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of Peace. How is footwear related to being ready for battle?

You wouldn't be able to fight effectively without footwear. Your focus would be on your feet and where you were walking rather than on the enemy's plans.



Illustration: George Washington faced many obstacles in the Revolutionary War.

One major hardship was the lack of boots during the winter at Valley Forge.

As they didn't have shoes, the soldiers had to wrap rags around their feet.

What would have been the effect on morale by seeing bloody footprints in the snow?

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE SHOES OF PEACE

Ephesians 6:10-15

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.



Note: Peace (irene) is the state of well-being; the absence of conflict.

1. What is the apparent irony between verses 11 and 15?

We are instructed to get ready for war by being fitted with the gospel of peace.

2. How does God's peace prepare us for spiritual warfare?

If we are full of internal strife, we are not ready for battle. We are ready for battle when we are at peace with God. When we are at peace, we are able to wait on God. We aren't impulsive and can think clearly, which is important since our battle is against the devil's schemes.

3. How can we be at peace and at war at the same time?

Knowing that we are in God's hands in all circumstances gives us the calm assurance he will be with us through our struggles. Being at peace demonstrates a connection to God. We are able to recognize who the real enemy is. We are not looking for peace in our circumstances, but rather in God.



Example: Stephen Being Stoned

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was filled with God's peace even while being stoned to death. He was able to forgive those who were killing him because he recognized that they were not the real enemy. He remained in a state of peace because of his connection to and dependence upon Christ.

LIVING AT PEACE WITH OTHERS

Romans 12:17-21

¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1. What usually happens when we are victims of someone else's evil behavior?
We get mad and want to get even. We want justice.
2. What does the passage say about that response?
We aren't to take justice into our own hands. We need a third, impartial party, God or the government, to intervene. We are to do right and live at peace.
3. What does it mean to live at peace with everyone as far as it depends on you?
You don't have to fight or be in conflict. You do what you can to avoid it. Note: There is a difference between individual pacifism and governmental pacifism.
4. How do we live at peace with others?
We let things go. We don't take offense. We turn the other cheek. We are strong enough to exercise self-control. We are filled with the Holy Spirit.
5. What does peace protect us from?
Peace protects us from provocation: provocative words, situations, actions. It keeps us from responding in kind or impulsively. It protects us from the evil perpetrated against us.
6. What part does peace play in our conquest of evil?
It enables us to step back and respond in God's will, not as a slave to our passions. It keeps evil from escalating. It keeps the focus on the real enemy, which is Satan and his schemes, not other people.
7. How are we to overcome evil?
By doing good.
8. What does doing good result in?
Peace is maintained and the real enemy is defeated.
9. What happens if we return evil for evil?
Satan wins. Evil increases. Everyone loses.

THINKING IT THROUGH

GOD'S PEACE

Philippians 4:4-7, 12-13

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.



Note: The word “guard” in verse 7 refers to the action of a military garrison.

1. How does God's peace protect us from provocation?

It enables us to be content in all circumstances. It surrounds and protects our heart and mind.



Illustration: Walking barefoot

Walking barefoot is not a problem on smooth ground, sand, or soft grass. It becomes a problem when there are sharp stones or stickers. If you have shoes on, you are able to walk anywhere.

2. How does being at peace with God protect us from the provocation of evil circumstances?

We have a long-term perspective and we know that God works all things together for our good. We can rest in God's sovereignty.

3. Why does God allow us to experience challenging and provocative circumstances?

To mature and develop us. To reveal what we are really like, to see what lies in our heart.

4. Why do we try so hard to avoid challenging and provocative circumstances?

We think that they hurt us. They are difficult to go through.

5. What would people be like if they always had things go their way and never experienced difficulties or provocations?

Obnoxious, hard to get along with. They wouldn't know how to respond to hardship and would fall apart in difficult circumstances.



Remember: In heaven we will recognize the value of suffering and difficult circumstances. We will be most grateful for the situations we dreaded on earth as we will see their outcome and benefit.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THE PRICE OF PEACE

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

1. What was the price paid for us to have peace with God?
Christ's suffering and death is what has brought us peace with God.
2. How should the knowledge of that price affect us?
We should cherish the peace of Christ and take hold of it as an expensive and valuable gift. It should humble us and make us grateful.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How easily are you provoked?
2. Are you having difficulty conquering external conflict because you are experiencing internal conflict?
3. What is your focus on when you are wronged?
4. How can you put into practice the principles of not returning evil for evil in your life?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for the peace that comes through a relationship with him. Pray that you would truly be fitted with shoes of peace and respond rightly to provocation.



*"For he has rescued us from
the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the
kingdom of the Son he loves,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins."*

Colossians 1:13-14



THE SHIELD OF FAITH



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Lesson 1

What does the full armor of God protect?

Our new life in Christ. The renewing work that God is doing in us.

Lesson 2

What does the belt of truth protect us from?

Hypocrisy, pretension, not being a genuine person of integrity

Lesson 3

What does the breastplate of righteousness protect us from?

**Accusation. The accuser can't challenge us because Christ has exonerated us.
Condemnation-crippling pain or guilt or selfrighteousness**

Lesson 4

What do the shoes of peace protect us from?

Provocation, conflict. Peace keeps us from being provoked or taking offense.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will focus on the soldier's shield. It will look at what the shield of faith is and what it protects us from.

There were two types of Roman shields. One was a small round shield used to deflect swords in hand-to-hand combat. The other was a large rectangular shield used to intercept arrows and flying deadly objects.

Remembering that our enemy is Satan and his deceptive ideas, what does it mean to have faith as a shield? **Taking cover behind what we believe to be true through faith blocks the flying arrows of deception that would penetrate our minds and hearts. If you have faith and believe God, then you won't believe Satan.**

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Ephesians 6:10-16

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

1. In the Greek text, the command to take up the shield of faith is in the past tense. The outcome, “so you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one,” is in the future tense. What is the significance of the relationship between “taking up the shield” being in the past tense and “the flaming arrows of the evil one” being in the future tense?

If you are not prepared in advance, you will be unprotected in the future when the arrows are flying. You need to think about preparing yourself today for future battles. Learning and applying God's truth now protects us when things get bad.



Illustration: The idea behind the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative was to have a system to intercept nuclear missiles before they could do any harm. To be effective the defensive interception system had to be in place before any offensive missiles were ever launched.

2. What are the flaming arrows of the evil one?

Temptations, seductions, ideas that provoke us to defy God's goodness, anything designed by Satan to bring us down. Flaming arrows light things on fire; enflame our natural desires or passions and cause harm and destruction.

3. How does faith protect us from temptation?

When we believe the truth, we have faith in God's revealed will. If we want to do what pleases God, we won't give into temptation which will take us off God's path. If we lack faith in God and his truth, we are vulnerable.

4. What does it mean to extinguish temptation?

To take away the power of temptation to destroy, burn up, devour, inflame and consume. You make a fire harmless by putting it out.



Illustration: Foam used in fire fighting

In a forest fire, foam is used to cover a house so the sparks and flames can't light it on fire. To be effective the foam must be in place before the fire reaches the house.

TRUE VERSUS FALSE TRUST

Proverbs 3:5-8

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Proverbs 26:12

¹²Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

1. When does faith, not only fail to protect us, but actually makes us more vulnerable?
When our faith is in the wrong thing. When we are the object of our own faith, we are in the most danger.
2. How does trusting in God compare to trusting in ourselves?
God is all knowing, all powerful, and wholly good. We are relatively ignorant, comparatively powerless and corrupt. God is worthy of our faith, we're not.
3. Why can't trusting in ourselves ever protect us from temptation?
To do whatever we think is best leaves us completely open to temptation. We will do whatever appeals to us rather than what really benefits us. We don't have the power to protect or the desire to resist.

THINKING IT THROUGH

THE THREAT OF TEMPTATION

James 1:13-18

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

1. What are some of the flaming arrows of temptation common to humanity that threaten us?
Lust, anger, pride, greed, sexual passions, gluttony, etc.
2. How does temptation relate to our own evil desires?
We aren't tempted by what we don't want. We are only tempted by what appeals to us, where we have evil desires.

3. What makes a desire evil?

Every evil desire is a desire for the promise of something good. It is evil only because it brings harm, even as it promises good. It is outside of God's will.

4. How does the shield of faith affect our own evil desires? (vs. 16 & 17)

If we have faith that every good and perfect gift comes only from God, we are protected from that which would harm us because we won't want it. We will pursue what is of God, not our fleshly desires.

5. In the examples of the fiery arrows of temptation, state how they are extinguished by faith in the truth.

Fiery Arrows – Temptations Shield – Biblical Truths

Anger (James 1:20) – It doesn't accomplish what God wants

Greed (1 Timothy 6:6-9) – Contentment with what you have

Pride (1 Peter 5:5) – God opposes the proud

Lust (Proverbs 5:3-5) – There is no good end to pursuing lust

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

RESISTING GOD'S PROTECTION

Matthew 23:37-39

³⁷"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

What would make us unwilling to be protected by God?

We think we can protect ourselves. We don't take the threat seriously. In a world overflowing with examples of the deadly effects of temptation, we still don't think that giving into them will take us down. We don't want to be told what to do. We think that by following God we will miss out on something fun or exciting.

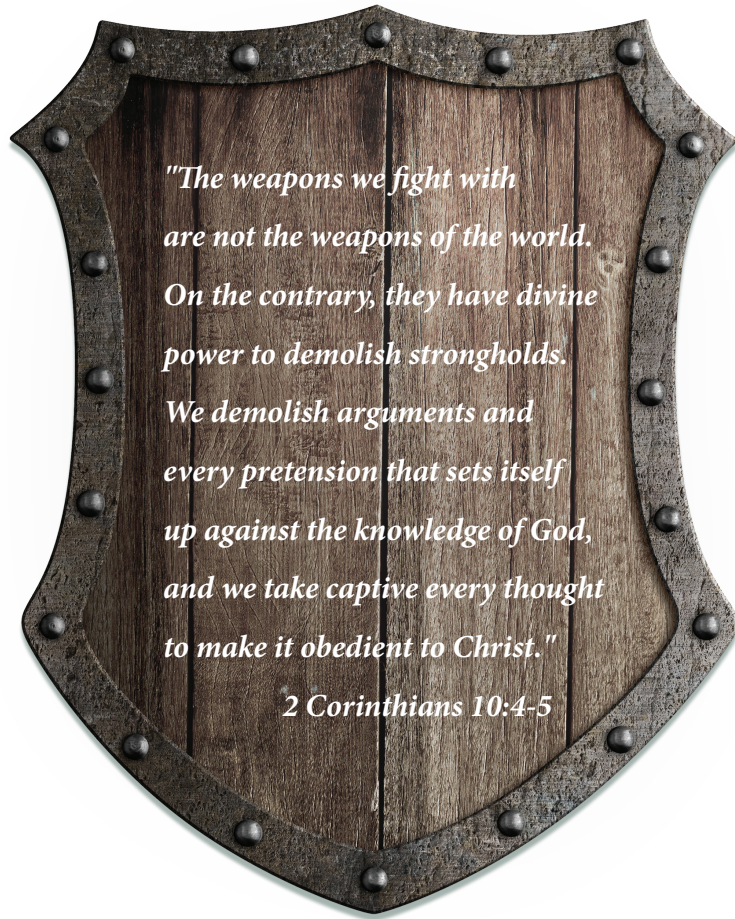
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How do you take the threat of any temptation seriously?
2. How do you prepare yourself in advance of being tempted?
3. How do you keep from letting your guard down after a time of temptation passes?

PRAYER

Thank God that his way is good and that he wants what is good and right for you. Pray that you would recognize the temptations and wrong ideas that would lead you away from God and bring you harm.



*"The weapons we fight with
are not the weapons of the world.
On the contrary, they have divine
power to demolish strongholds.
We demolish arguments and
every pretension that sets itself
up against the knowledge of God,
and we take captive every thought
to make it obedient to Christ."*

2 Corinthians 10:4-5



THE HELMET OF SALVATION



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Lesson 1 - The Full Armor of God

Why are we to put on the full armor of God?

So we can stand against the devil's schemes to steal our new life in Christ.

Lesson 2 - The Belt of Truth

How can pretension (hypocrisy) harm our new life in Christ?

It can keep our sin from being examined and exposed so it continues to grow. We can't see what we really are.

Lesson 3 - The Breastplate of Righteousness

How can accusation harm our new life in Christ?

It can keep us under the weight of guilt and sorrow, beat us down and defeat us, thinking we're not worthy.

Lesson 4 - The Shoes of Peace

How can provocation harm our new life in Christ?

It can cause us to respond impulsively and make reckless choices.

Lesson 5 - The Shield of Faith

How can temptation harm our new life in Christ?

It can seduce us away from what is good to do things that hurt us and others. We can follow wrong beliefs.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will focus on what is the helmet of salvation and what it protects us from. What does a person mean by saying, "I am saved"? *That I was in a hopeless situation, lost in my sin without the ability to get out, and Jesus did for me what I couldn't do for myself.*



Illustration: Rip Tide

A person caught in a rip tide, who isn't able to swim out of it, needs someone to come to his rescue. The need to be saved is an admission of helplessness.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1. What does a helmet do for a soldier?

It protects the head, which contains the brain and directs the actions of the body.

2. What is salvation?

To be brought out of our sinful, condemned state and enter into an eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

3. What does it mean to put on the helmet of salvation?

We protect our minds with the knowledge we have been saved from damnation and eternal separation and alienation from God. We know we belong to God.

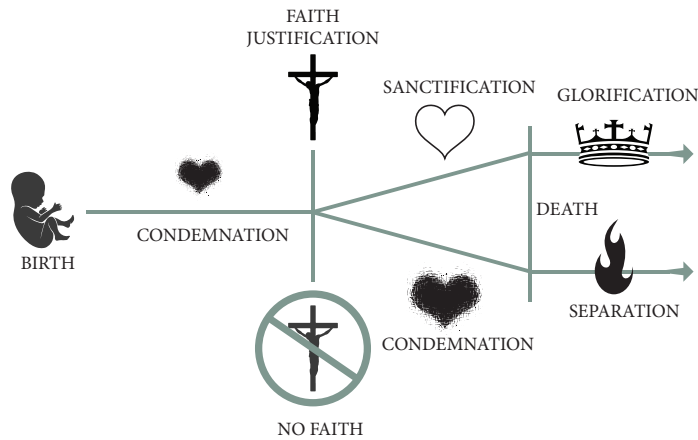
THE HOPE OF SALVATION

1 Thessalonians 5:8-9

⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. How are we both saved and hoping to be saved?

Salvation isn't just an event that happens at one point in time. It is an on-going process of being made holy. We hope for more than what we really are.



- Condemnation – Condemnation means a person is guilty of sin and in a condemned state deserving punishment. The consequence of condemnation is separation from God. Once a person puts his faith in Jesus, he is no longer condemned.
- Justification – Justification is the state of being declared innocent or right. Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sin on the cross, God considers us innocent of sin when we put our faith in Jesus.
- Sanctification – Sanctification is the on-going work of salvation. It is the process of being made holy. Once we put our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins a work in us to make us right and deliver us from the power of sin.
- Glorification – Glorification is the ultimate destiny of a person who has put his faith in Jesus. In heaven we will be delivered from the very presence of sin and enter a glorified state with Christ.

2. How does hope in our future victory affect our current struggle?

Being sure of our ultimate outcome gives us strength to persevere. Doubting the outcome of any effort hurts morale and affects steadfastness in the fight. Hope keeps us from giving up.

If we have hope in our salvation, we are putting our hope in our Savior, not ourselves.



Illustration: Helicopter Rescue

A person stranded in an inaccessible or precarious place has to recognize that his hope for rescue is in the helicopter, the pilot and the harness, not in himself. To be saved we have to abandon hope in our self and put our trust in the one who is rescuing us.

3. What does the helmet of salvation protect us from?

Fear of condemnation, rejection, failure, dismay, giving up, dependence on self, etc. It gives us a promise of something greater. We are far more secure when we trust in one who is infinitely more able. The way we think about things will direct our actions.

THINKING IT THROUGH

THE LAW AT WORK

Romans 7:21-8:11

²¹So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. ⁸Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

1. Why don't our failures threaten our salvation?

Because of our belief in Jesus we aren't condemned. The law of the Spirit sets us free from the law of sin and death. We have already been justified if we are being sanctified. We recognize that being made holy is a process.

2. Under what condition can we be sure of our salvation?

We believe in Jesus and what he has done for us. If we have come to Christ and are seeking to be led by him, we know the Spirit of Christ lives in us and is at work in us. We are being changed into something new.



Remember:

The Law of Sin and Death = If you sin, you die.

The Law of the Spirit = If we trust in Jesus, his Spirit works in us and frees us from sin.

THE BASIS OF OUR SALVATION

Romans 5:18-21

¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. What is the basis for our salvation?

The righteousness of Christ, not our own righteousness.

2. How does knowing that the obedience of Christ is the basis for our salvation protect us from the fear of damnation?

His work is flawless and complete. Nothing can change the basis of our salvation. We are safe, as we trust ourselves to him and his righteous work on the cross. It wasn't our power that saved us in the first place, so we know that when we slip and fall we're not condemned.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

SALVATION IS FOUND IN NO ONE ELSE

Acts 4:5-12

⁵The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹He is " `the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.

¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

1. In terms of salvation, how does Christianity compare to all other religions?

Only Christians claim to be saved, no other religion has a means of salvation. Entering heaven for every other religion depends on works, the person's own merit. Only Christians believe they enter heaven by God's grace, not by their works.

2. If salvation (sanctification) is an on-going process, how should we view our failures?

As evidence we need to be ever more dependent on Jesus for the power of change and renewal within us. They show us our need for Christ and the continued work of the Holy Spirit in us.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. If salvation is a progressive work of God in you, what are you doing to help facilitate God's work?
2. How do you demonstrate that you are not content to stay the way you are now?
3. In what ways do you recognize that living for today will affect your future in eternity?
4. In what ways do you hinder God's work in you?
5. Why is it harmful to look at the sin of other people rather than your own?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for the salvation that comes through him and his sacrifice for your sin. Pray that you would want to live by the Spirit and overcome the power of sin in your life through faith in Jesus.



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT



INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

What do the first five items in the armor of God protect us from?

ARMOR

PROTECTS AGAINST

Belt of truth	_____	pretension, hypocrisy
Breastplate of righteousness	_____	accusation and guilt
Shoe of the gospel of peace	_____	provocation, conflict
Shield of faith	_____	temptation, deception
Helmet of salvation	_____	fear of condemnation

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will examine the sword of the Spirit

1. How does the purpose of a soldier's sword differ from that of his armor?
It is an offensive weapon rather than defensive armor. It is not designed to protect, but to kill the enemy.
2. What good would a soldier's armor be to him without a sword?
Victory would never be won because the defensive armor can't defeat the enemy. A soldier could only retreat, never attack. Armor only retards the enemy's ability to defeat us.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1. What is the sword of the Spirit?

The word of God

2. What does the phrase “of the Spirit” tell us about the nature of the sword?

It is a spiritual weapon to be used against a spiritual enemy.

3. What are the spiritual enemies we face? (vs. 11-12)

The devil and his schemes, the world and its temptations, the flesh (our own evil desires)

4. How is the word of God like a sword used to defeat an enemy?

It is thrust into deceptive ideas to destroy them. It is only useful when it is being used. It enters the heart and can kill and mortify the ideas we love that would defeat us.

5. What part do ideas play in warfare?

Every conflict has at its core a conflict of ideas. Ideas can't stop bullets once they are fired but ideas are behind bullets being fired. This is true for both international warfare and gang warfare.



Illustration: Nazi Germany wasn't defeated by holding Bible studies, but the ideas that led to the formation of the Nazi Party and its rise to power could have been defeated by the study of the Bible. Hitler is long dead but his ideas are still a threat. If we want to win the spiritual battle, we have to defeat wrong ideas with the truth of God.

THINKING IT THROUGH

PERSONAL BATTLES

1. How do we use the sword of the Spirit in our own personal battle?

We identify the enemy and then thrust the truth into the heart of each and every deceptive idea. We have to have knowledge of the truth to use the sword.



Note: There are two Greek words used for God's word: *logos* and *rhema*. *Logos* is the whole of God's truth. *Rhema* is a specific word or idea that applies to a specific situation. The sword of the Spirit is the *rhema* of God. To keep the sword of the Spirit (*rhema*) sharp and ready to use, you have to know the *logos* of God.

2. Luke 12:11

¹¹"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

What kind of word does the Spirit bring us when we are being confronted?

A timely word that applies to the situation at hand (*rhema*). It will penetrate the darkness and destroy the enemy's ideas.

3. Matthew 4:1-11

¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: " 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

How is the passage an example of the *rhema* of God?

Jesus responded to Satan with the word of God that fit each temptation. Satan misapplied Scripture; Jesus responded with a proper understanding to defeat the lies.

Why does the word have to be specifically applied?

It wouldn't make sense if it weren't. The right tool needs to be used for the right job to be successful.



Illustration: When Jesus was tempted by Satan to worship him, he didn't say, "Man does not live by bread alone," because that *rhema* didn't apply to that temptation. It did apply when Satan tempted him to turn the stone into bread.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

OUR PART IN TAKING UP THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 12:1-2

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1. What is our part in preparing ourselves for timely words from the Lord? (vs.1)
We devote ourselves to God and his truth so that our minds are renewed and transformed. Our part is to die to self so God's truth can work in us and change us.
2. What does the word of God do for us? (vs.2) It renews and transforms our mind. It changes us into something new.
What does that mean? We can think like God and gain his perspective so that we can do things his way and see that it works.

Psalm 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

3. What does it mean to hide the word in your heart?
You have taken it in and it has become part of you and informs your thinking. It is easily accessible at any time because it is part of you.
4. What is it about the word hidden in our hearts that overcomes sin?
It blocks the incentive to sin. If I trust the truth, I distrust the opposite. A deceptive idea can't take hold because we know it isn't true.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

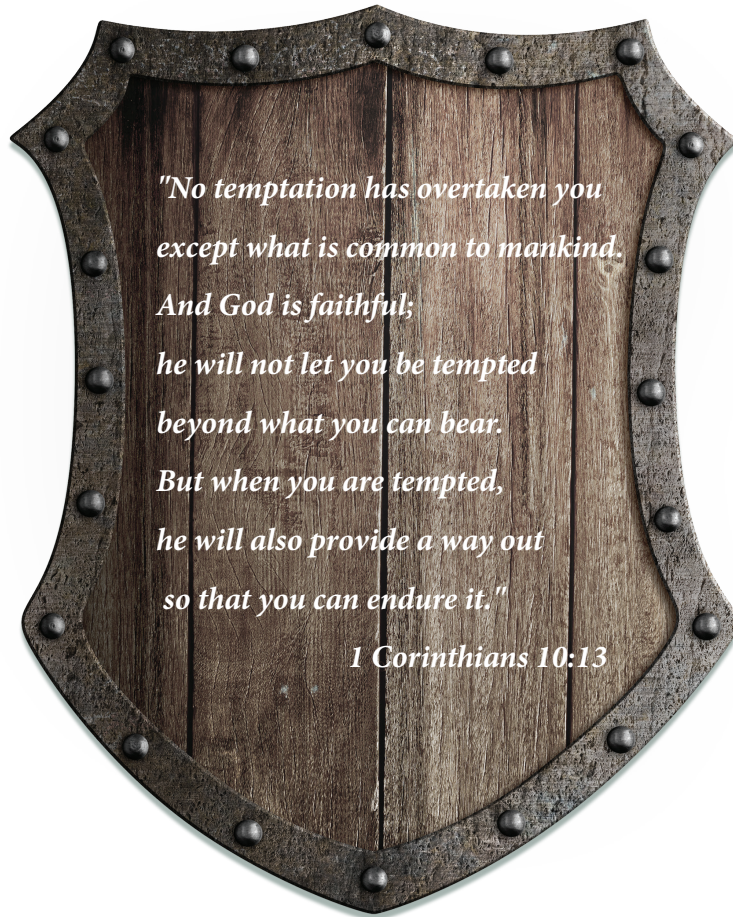
PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Do you know your personal spiritual enemies that are harming you? What are they?

2. Are you actively searching God's word (logos) for God's word (rhema) to conquer your personal enemies? How?

PRAYER

Thank God for his word that enables you to destroy the ideas that would harm and defeat you. Pray that you would truly hunger for his truth and hide it in your heart so that your sword would always be sharp and ready.





PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What is the difference between the first five items in the armor of God and the sword of the Spirit?
The first five are defensive armor. The sword is an offensive weapon.
2. What does our defensive armor protect?
Our new life in Christ.
3. What is the sword of the Spirit designed to do?
Defeat Satan and his deceptive ideas, the world and its temptations, the flesh and its evil desires.

LESSON FOCUS

The first step is knowing what the armor of God is. This lesson will look at how we put on the armor of God. Armor doesn't do any good unless it is actually put on.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

PRAYING ON THE ARMOR

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.





Note: In the Greek text there is no sentence break between verses 17 and 18. In addition, verse 18 doesn't begin with the coordinating conjunction kai (and), rather it begins with the preposition dia (through). The Greek preposition dia, which in English is "through," is an agency of causation (i.e., by the means of, that which brings something about). Read verses 17-18 and substitute "through praying" for "And pray."

1. How do we put on the armor of God?
We put on the armor of God through all kinds of prayer in every situation.
2. What does all kinds of prayer mean?
There are different prayers with different purposes: praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, etc. Our prayers are directed toward what we need to put on.
3. Why can't we think or speak on the armor of God without prayer?
They come from God so we humbly beseech him. They are not from us. We have to look to God for protection and recognize that our own resources are inadequate.
4. Once the armor of God is put on, does it automatically stay on?
No, if we give into sin or start to rely on our self it falls off. Arrogance will take off the breastplate of righteousness and drop the shield of faith. Not looking to God's Word causes the sword to drop.
5. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
We pray prayers that are led by and in concert with God's will. The only effective prayers are ones that are led by the Spirit. Prayer is not a rote exercise.



Illustration: In order to produce light, a light bulb must be connected to a switch that is connected to a power supply. The Holy Spirit is like the power supply and prayer the switch that allows power to flow. That power is then manifested in our lives in the way that a light bulb illuminates connection to a power supply. If there is no connection, then there is no illumination.

6. What does it mean to always keep on praying?
It means we are continually in an attitude of humble dependence upon God. Our thought life needs to be our prayer life. Our thinking either connects us to or disconnects us from God.
7. What happens when our prayers stop?
We slowly lose the power that supplies our new life in Christ. We lose vision, vigor, protection, etc.



Illustration: One of the most effective strategies in war is to cut off the enemy's supply lines. Without supplies, an army becomes weaker and weaker until it is easy to defeat. Prayer maintains our supply line.

THINKING IT THROUGH

In the passage we are told to pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. We need to think through what that would look like in terms of putting on the full armor of God.

1. What does the belt of truth protect us from?

Pretension, hypocrisy

How do we pray on the belt of truth?

Prayers of confession. We confess our sin and agree with God about who we are and who he is. We don't try to hide anything from God or deny our sin.

2. What does the breastplate of righteousness protect us from?

Accusation of guilt

How do we pray on the breastplate of righteousness?

Prayers of acknowledgement. We acknowledge that we aren't righteous on our own. We thank Christ for the righteousness that comes through him.

3. What do the shoes of peace protect us from?

Provocation, conflict

How do we pray on the shoes of peace?

Prayers of gratitude. We are thankful in all situations, and grateful for what God has given us that can't be taken away. We thank God he gives us the ability to respond rightly in all situations.

4. What does the shield of faith protect us from?

Temptation

How do we take up the shield of faith through prayer?

Prayers of submission. We humbly submit to God and his truth. We relate what is true and believe it.

5. What does the helmet of salvation protect us from?

Condemnation

How do we pray on the helmet of salvation through prayer?

Prayers of affirmation. We affirm what Christ has done for us and thank him that we are forever safe in his hands.

6. What does the sword of the Spirit enable us to do?

Defeat the enemy

How do we take up the sword of the Spirit through prayer?

Prayers of confirmation. We speak God's specific truth appropriately into the deceptions and temptations of the enemy. We thank God that the truth is powerful and can defeat the devil's schemes.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

PRAYING ON THE ARMOR

Ephesians 6:13

¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

1. Why can't we ever escape our enemy by running away?
**He is faster and smarter than we are. Temptation and deception are everywhere.
He can pursue us.**
2. If we can't run away from evil, what are our remaining options?
To take our stand and stand firm to fight.



Illustration: People often believe that if they lived in a different or better place they would be safer and more content. The idea is that there is a geographical solution to all that ails us. The truth is that we need a spiritual solution, which only comes through communion with and standing firm in Christ.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PRAYING ON THE ARMOR

On the following pages write out prayers for putting on the armor of God.

1. Pray on the belt of truth through a prayer of confession. (p.47)
2. Pray on the breastplate of righteousness through a prayer of acknowledgment. (p.48)
3. Pray on the shoes of peace through a prayer of gratitude. (p.49)
4. Pray to take a hold of the shield of faith through a prayer of humble submission. (p.50)
5. Pray on the helmet of salvation through a prayer of affirmation. (p.51)
6. Pray to take up the sword of the Spirit through a prayer of confirmation. (p.52)

PRAY ON THE BELT OF TRUTH

THROUGH A PRAYER OF CONFESSION



PRAY ON THE SHOES OF PEACE

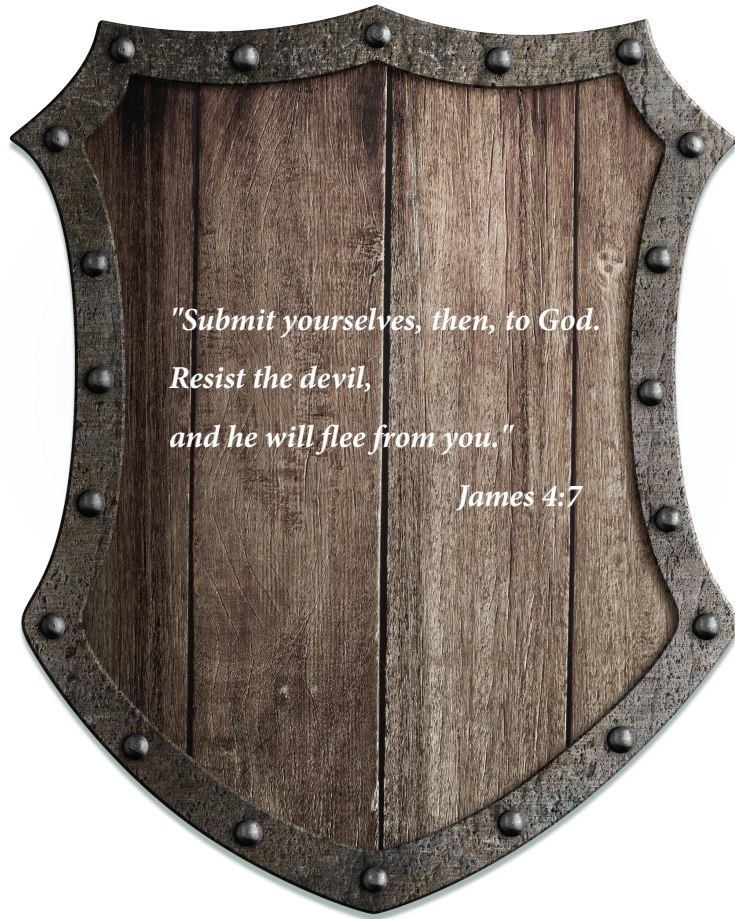
THROUGH A PRAYER OF GRATITUDE



PRAY ON THE SHIELD OF FAITH

THROUGH A PRAYER OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION





*"Submit yourselves, then, to God.
Resist the devil,
and he will flee from you."*

James 4:7

