

# EQUIPPED

## A STUDY OF THE ARMOR OF GOD

### WEEK 6: The Sword of the Spirit

#### God's Word provides the only offensive weapon.

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:17*

#### DAY ONE: DESERT DAYS

**BIG IDEA:** We can learn from Jesus' example to wield God's Word as a sword to fight the enemy.

Some days I feel like I'm standing on top of a mountain. I look down and see God's huge blessings in my life, but when I'm walking through the desert of insecurity, grief, or feeling the sting of rejection, I desperately need God's last piece of protective gear from the armor arsenal. As we come to our last week of study together, we will focus on the only offensive weapon listed in Ephesians six – the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. **What comes to mind as you think of your seasons of trekking through the desert of difficult circumstances?**

We always need God's Word, but it becomes especially necessary on desert days. Typically, the Greek word used for the Word of God is *logos*. However, in Ephesians 6 we find the word *rhema* meaning "that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word." (Strongs Concordance) *Logos* is the Word of God, *rhema* is the word applied by the Spirit of God specifically in our lives. "The difference between the *logos* and the *rhema* is the difference between a stockpile of weapons and a sword in a highly skilled hand. One is the invaluable arsenal; the other is a specific, well-timed deployment." (Chip Ingram Invisible War, p 140)

Jesus gives us the best example of wielding the sword against the enemy in Matthew 4:1-11. Right after He was baptized and right before He began His public ministry, Satan attacked Him. Notice how Jesus refuted Satan's attempts to derail His ministry even before it began. **Fill in the following chart:**

	Satan's request	Jesus' response
1st attempt (verse 3-4)		
2nd attempt (verse 5-7)		
3rd attempt (verse 8-10)		

**What do all of Jesus' responses have in common?**

They all include references to God's Word. He was teaching us to use our swords when the enemy tries to get us off course in walking closely with our God. In fact, in Matthew 4:4 when He said man doesn't live by bread alone but by the "word" of God, it is translated from the word, *rhema*. We need the Spirit's help in applying that word. **What insights can you apply from this passage when you feel attacked in your desert days of life?**

Here are some truths gleaned from the passage. **Which of these encourages you?**

- Testing can come after a spiritual high point in my life.
- The Holy Spirit goes with me even in the difficult desert seasons of my life.
- Times of physical weakness can cause spiritual vulnerability so I need to be on guard.
- I need to know and study God's Word whether I'm in the desert or on the mountain or anywhere in between so I will be prepared for Satan's slander and twisting of truth.

Take time today to pray asking God to help you strap on your sword and continue to learn to use it in combat against a close and very personal enemy.

## DAY TWO: EVALUATING OUR APPROACH

**BIG IDEA:** Evaluating our approach to God's Word will help us use it against the enemy instead of guiltily ourselves or wounding other people.

Our sword is alive, active, and a very sharp instrument. Spiritually it cuts right through to the intent of the heart. We should approach it for what it is – the very words of our God. Without complete dependence on the Holy Spirit, we can be guilty of using God's Word as a weapon to cut others down rather than build them up. Let's look at some passages that might help us see how we should approach God's Word that don't resemble guilt, proving our own point, trivia facts, or even homework we have to get through.

**According to these passages, how would you finish this sentence:**

"It's important to read and study God's Word because \_\_\_\_\_."

Psalms 1:1-3

Isaiah 55:10-11

Romans 15:4

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Here are a few examples to help get you started:

It brings stability (Psalm 1)

It's never a waste of time (Isaiah 55)

It brings hope and encouragement (Romans 15)

It helps me realize what's wrong in my life and prepares me for the work God has for me (2 Timothy 3)

These are only four of many passages that reveal the benefits of God's Word in our lives. Matthew 24:35 says it will last even when heaven and earth disappear. Ephesians 5:26 describes it as a cleansing agent. Psalm 119 speaks of the joy, freedom, and many other benefits of God's word. **As you reflect on the any of the passages mentioned, what benefits of God's Word stand out to you in your life right now?**

As I see His Word as alive in my life, it brings me stability, purpose, hope, and deeper relationship as I get to know and understand my Creator better. In light of these things, why would I ever not want to read it? Francis Chan said this in his book titled Multiply, "Though we primarily think of the Bible as something we read in order to gain knowledge, we actually have it backward. The Bible reads us – it penetrates to our core and exposes who we really are. If you ever find yourself reading your Bible and not changing, then you can be sure that you're approaching the Bible the wrong way. It's not about finding support for our lifestyle or way of thinking; It's about approaching the mind of God and letting Him change and redefine who we are." (Chan 98-99)

As we close our lesson today, spend a few minutes writing out a prayer. Confess to your Maker any wrong postures you have been taking recently toward His Word. Ask Him to give you a hunger to study His Word so that you can know and love Him more. Invite the Holy Spirit to open your spiritual eyes to see and apply the truth in your life today.

## DAY THREE: BASICS OF INTERPRETATION

**BIG IDEA:** To wield the sword effectively, we need to consider some principles of interpretation in studying Scripture.

While our approach to God's Word must be one of humility, curiosity, and a desire to know God, our methods of interpreting the Bible greatly influence our ability to wield our sword effectively in battling Satan.

Scripture has many applications in our lives. We can all read a verse from the Bible and the Holy Spirit may use it in a variety of ways to encourage, convict, or teach us truth that applies specifically to our lives. God's Spirit helps us apply Scripture differently according to our individual situations, but only one interpretation for a passage exists. The interpretation is the actual meaning of the text.

**Look at the following verses and match them by drawing a line to the corresponding concept in Scripture:**

Mark 12:31	Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.
1 Corinthians 11:14	Greet one another with a holy kiss
Leviticus 19:19	Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.
Colossians 3:13	Love your neighbor as yourself.
1 Corinthians 16:20	If a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him

**As you read the truths found in these passages, do you think they all hold the same weight in how you live your life?**

Some passages require a study of the original audience in order to unwrap biblical principles which we can reapply in our culture. For example, we likely aren't sinning if we didn't greet others today with a holy kiss. We can lift up the principle of warmly greeting others with a hug, handshake or wave within the body of Christ.

Yet forgiving one another and loving our neighbor seem to be transcultural truths that transcend time and culture. Do you see how these verses in isolation could cause some confusion as to what they mean and how then we should apply them in our lives? Interpretation becomes especially important as we consider controversial subjects like women's roles in the church, homosexuality, the ordinances of baptism and communion, etc.

In our teaching time this week, we'll explore three important principles of interpretation (often referred to in theological circles as hermeneutics.) **Read these three principles and then briefly describe why our methods of interpretation matter in our approach to the text:**

1. Consider context.
2. Let the text speak. Don't read your ideas into it.
3. Don't think you have to have all the answers, but keep asking questions.

**Methods of interpretation are important because:**

End today by asking God's Spirit to help you implement these principles as you study the Bible. The last piece of armor is the sword of the Spirit. He can help us take these steps to correctly interpret so that we can best apply the Scripture in our lives.

## DAY FOUR: LIVING IT OUT

**BIG IDEA:** Using the sword doesn't mean just knowing the Word of God, but also obeying it.

This week we've talked about our approach and interpretation of God's Word. Today we find ourselves where the rubber meets the road. After we've approached God's Word, humbly asking the Spirit to lead, and practiced good hermeneutics as we study these truths, we then must allow God to change us through His Word.

We cannot do this on our own. We need God's Spirit. Too often we attempt to train our flesh to obey God. It can't. Remember Romans 8:7, "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." In order to obey the Bible, we must yield to God's Spirit living inside us.

Too often we complete our Bible study, attend conferences, listen to sermons and find we are challenged by God's Word. While this is good, we want to go one step beyond. We want God's Word to change us.

If we are struggling with fear, God wants to give us peace. If we hear God's conviction regarding our attitudes toward our husbands, our lack of generosity in our giving, or a habit of gossip, we don't want to continue on in these patterns. The sword of God's Word to fight Satan is given so that we can have real victory.

**What is your most recent, "if" - "then" statement? If I am struggling with \_\_\_\_\_, then God wants to give me \_\_\_\_\_ according to His Word.**

As examples, you can fill in these blanks with word like:

- Doubt - faith
- Worry - peace
- Lack of direction - clarity
- Loneliness - His presence
- Laziness - purpose

While I can know these things intellectually, how do I allow God to work them out in my life? James 1:22-25 uses a metaphor for our relationship with the Bible. **What object does it say God's Word is like?**

When we go back to the Greek, we find that James used two different words for how we look into the mirror. In verse 23, we find *katanoeo* meaning, "to perceive, remark, observe, understand" which is translated "glance," "look," "behold," or "observe" depending on your translation. This verb describes the person who looks at herself in the mirror by opening God's Word and sees herself as God sees her. Then she walks away and forgets what she saw. In other words, God's Word might have challenged her, but it didn't change her.

In verse 25, James uses *parakuvptw* which means, "to stoop to a thing in order to look at it; to look at with head bowed forward." Different versions translate this word as "look carefully," "look intently," or "looks." This verb involves a change of posture. We come with humility and intentionality. Bending low means letting go of my self-righteousness and submitting to the authority of God's Word over me. **What are two additional insights into living out God's truth found in verse 25?**

1. Look intently into God's Word with humility
- 2.
- 3.

We must do what it says and also refuse to forget when the realities of life intersect God's truth. When our flesh suggests we buy what we can't afford or repeat information we know is private, what we really believe is revealed in our actions. When we humbly obey God even when it's hard and remember His truth in the thick of the battle, we are wielding the powerful sword of God's Word. He says in James that He will bless us.

This is where we struggle. Most of us look in the mirror multiple times a day. We do this to check our appearance. Looking in the mirror helps us remember things that need attention as well as recognize things we hadn't noticed before. Similarly, regular time in the Bible helps us see ourselves as we really are so that we can make necessary changes.

Today, pray for the Holy Spirit's help in seeing areas of your life where you need to make changes to grow closer to God and His help in making those changes.

## DAY FIVE: JESUS IS THE SWORD

BIG IDEA: Jesus is the Living Word of God!

Today we will find that like every other piece of armor, the sword is Jesus. Each piece of armor gives us insight into the character of Jesus. Being protected with the full armor of God means wearing Jesus from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. **Turn to John 1:1-5 and make each of these false statements true according to this passage by crossing out and changing a few words. The first is done for you:**

- The Word existed ~~when Jesus was born~~, from the very beginning.
- The Word was with no one.
- The Word was a man.
- God created some things through the Word.
- Nothing was created except through angels.
- The Word gave death to everything that was created.
- His life brought darkness to everyone.
- The light can never extinguish the darkness.

Through making these false statements true – I pray you felt the impact of these 5 verses. **Go back and read each of the new, true statements. Who is this Word?**

We need not fear the darkness. The powers that come against us according to Ephesians 6:12 are “the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” May we never forget that this darkness can never extinguish the light of Jesus according to John 1:5.

Battles rage all around us – in our minds, relationships, and circumstances. God knows that and provides for our protection. Ephesians 6:13 goes on to say, “Therefore, 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.”

Let’s end our seven sessions of study together thanking God for His armor and praying for Him to clothe us today. Feel free to use the prayer guide below, or just to get on your knees or your face before Him and ask Him to help you put the armor on:

*“Jesus, I ask you to buckle the belt of truth around my waist. Help me to keep you at the center of my life just as the belt is at the center of my body. Hold my life together with your truth.*

*Protect my heart today with your breastplate of righteousness. Thank you for being my righteousness and enabling me to make right choices to honor You today.*

*Help me to lace up the shoes of peace so that everywhere I walk today, your good news of peace will tread. Thank you for replacing my fears and worries with your peace.*

*I’m holding up the shield of faith. As I believe the things I can’t see, I pray you would increase my faith to put out the fiery arrows of doubt Satan aims at me.*

*Lord, place the helmet of salvation on my head. Help me fix my mind on you and take every runaway thought captive.*

*Jesus, you are the living Word. Thank for putting on flesh and coming down to us. I’m so grateful for the Bible and the ability to freely study it. Help me to continue to grow closer to you through it.”*

**If someone asked you to sum up what you learned from your study of the armor of God in Ephesians 6, how would you explain in a few sentences what God has taught you:**

Remember these pieces of protection from God are to be a lifestyle, not a checklist. My prayer for you is that you will continually put on God’s armor just as often as you put on your own clothes. May we march onto our personal battlefields at work, home, school, church, and community protected and prepared for victory.