

# EQUIPPED

## A STUDY OF THE ARMOR OF GOD

### WEEK 4: The Shield of Faith

**Our faith shields click together as a wall of protection.**

*"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."  
Ephesians 6:16*

#### DAY ONE: EXTINGUISHING FLAMES

**BIG IDEA:** The shield of faith reminds us that God is real and God is good.

I sat looking at the blue screen of death with a crashing and dumping message. I tried everything I could and even consulted my super smart computer savvy brother but ultimately found that a virus had crashed the whole thing.

My anti-virus and spyware shields didn't properly do their job leaving me vulnerable to attack on my laptop. This is a picture of what happens when our faith shields come down spiritually. Satan wants to launch his attacks and find us unprotected. He goes to great lengths to keep us from the life our Maker designed us to live. God wants to connect with us in deep relationship.

He used the analogy of the Roman shield to help us understand the protection faith can provide. A soldier's shield at the time of Paul's writing:

- Was about four feet high and two and a half feet wide.
- Had hooks on the sides to link it to the other shields in a line.
- Made so that an entire row of soldiers could advance without exposing themselves.
- Protected them from enemy arrows dipped in pitch and lit right before they were shot.
- Made with iron and two layers of wood, wrapped them in linen, and covered with leather.
- Made with a gap between the layers so flaming arrows could penetrate far enough into the shield to be quickly extinguished.

This Roman shield looked nothing like Captain America's disc that could be thrown like a Frisbee. The size, weight, and hooks that allowed it to join ranks with other soldiers allowed great protection from the flaming arrows assailing them. **What spiritual observations can you make about the shield of faith from the description of the Roman battle shield?**

**Let's write God's clear definition for faith in Hebrews 11:1:**

**Faith means believing what we cannot see. Read Hebrews 11:2-6 and record anything else you learn about faith:**

We can examine all the evidence, have experiences, and mentally assent to God's concepts. It takes a leap of faith to make the jump of really believing He is God and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The shield of faith protects us from the enemy by reminding us that God is not only real, but He is good. He rewards those who honestly seek Him. **In your life, what are you struggling to believe God is working for good because it doesn't make sense to you?**

God wants to give you faith to help protect you from the enemy in this area. He has a plan and He also knows that Satan wants to take you down with fire. God wants to protect you by linking up with the faith of others around you, not only those physical people in your church family, but also the examples He gave us in Scripture.

Begin the week asking God to help you recognize the fiery darts of the evil one and to deflect with the shield of faith.

## DAY TWO: THE POWER OF FAITH

**BIG IDEA:** God's power knows no limits, and our faith in Him never disappoints.

Sometimes an unsuspecting guest discovered our home's secret charms by accident. Our family members all knew that you can't use the blow-dryer and the microwave at the same time. It never fails to blow the power in half the house each and every time.

Today we will find that the shield of faith is much different than the electrical power in my house. It never gets overloaded or runs out of energy. In fact, the strength of its force field to protect us against Satan cannot be overstated. It will never blow a breaker.

**Turn to Mark 5:21-43 and let's do a little profile on each of these women. Answer the questions in the chart below:**

|   | Jairus' daughter | The woman in the street |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|
| What was their age group?                             |                  |                         |
| What were they suffering from?                        |                  |                         |
| What did they think would heal them?                  |                  |                         |
| What level of determination was shown through action? |                  |                         |

Jairus' daughter was only 12 years old. She was born right about the time the woman began to have a bleeding problem. Both women grew worse initially instead of getting better. **Can you think of a situation when things you were praying about got worse instead of better?**

**How did this affect your faith?**

Faith isn't easy. Believing God's promises when others laugh, criticize, or when your heart hurts for long periods of time requires a firm faith. Yet, great results come to those who persevere in trusting God against all odds. **What happened to both the girl and the woman?**

**Find the words of Jesus in verses Mark 5:34 and 36 and write them below:**

Jesus longs to say to us, *"Don't be afraid. Just have believe."* Then when we do place our faith in Him alone, He touches us and says, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."*

Imagine what God could do in our lives if we only had more faith. So, does this mean I can ask for a million dollars and if I have enough faith, I'll get it? 1 John 5:14-15 clarifies this for us, *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."*

Did you catch the phrase, “according to his will?” Go back and circle it in the verse. We can ask and hope for anything, but when it comes to faith – we must confidently submit to His will over ours. We must evaluate our motives, even in prayer. Why do we want what we are asking for? Do we want recognition, comfort, and a life of ease? God never seems to value these things as highly as we do. His priorities seem more in line with building character, learning to trust, and people hearing the gospel. It’s not that He wants us to be miserable. His priorities just focus on long term goals of intimacy and peace with the Father rather than momentary luxuries that don’t ultimately satisfy anyway.

I pray we would hold up our shields, hooked together with others who study today alongside us. He longs for us to believe Him, so He can protect us and demonstrate His great power in our lives. His circuits never overload like my crazy house wiring. His power knows no limits, and our faith in Him never disappoints.

Today, pray that your desires will align with God’s plans - “God, help me want what you want for me!”

## DAY THREE: FLOWERS AND WEEDS

**BIG IDEA:** We must learn to identify the faith growers and faith killers in our lives.

Jesus used the soil as an illustration in many of His stories to teach spiritual truths. Plants need tilled soil, carbon dioxide, fertilizer, sunshine, rain, and sometimes an insect or the wind to pollinate them. God provides all of these things, yet we must still get our hands dirty to give our flowers the best opportunity at growth.

God wants to arm us with His shield of faith to protect us from the evil one. His Word tells us what will fertilize the soil to help faith grow, and also spells out some faith killers that act like a squirt of Round Up (a herbicide) on our growing faith. Let’s delve into the Scriptures today to see how we can prepare the shield with layers of truth to quench the flaming arrows of Satan.

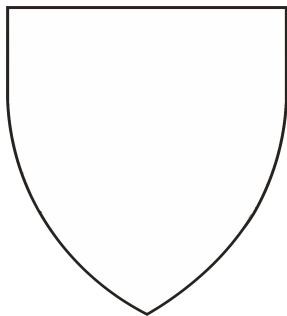
**As you look up the passages below, write a word or short phrase on the shield next to it that would fill in this blank:**

\_\_\_\_\_ will help grow my faith. The first one is done for you.

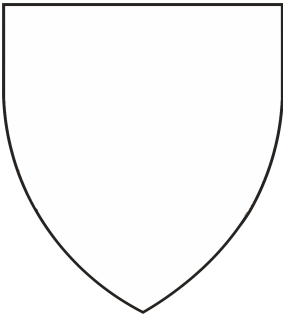
1 Samuel 23:16, “Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God.” NLT



Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”



1 Corinthians 16:13, *"Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong."* NLT (1 Timothy 6:12, 1 Thessalonians 3:5-10)



This list is by no means exhaustive. Many things can contribute to faith growing, but we find God specifically tells us that encouragement, His Word, and being on guard all prepare good heart soil for faith to grow.

In order for faith to grow, we have to be armed against faith killers. "The equipment enables the soldier to ward off the attacks of the enemy and make a stand against him. *Stete* (stand) is a military term for holding on to a position. Before any offensive can be launched, one must first of all maintain his own ground." Soldiers that are on guard are looking around, watching their step, with their shields ready as they look out for fiery darts of the enemy. So, let's get back into God's Word to see what we need to guard against in regard to our faith. These flaming arrows found in James and the book of first Timothy help us identify what we must be on guard against.

**Match up the Scripture with the arrow by drawing a line from the reference to the arrow it speaks about on the next page:**

James 1:6

James 2:1

Romans 14:1

1 Timothy 1:19

1 Timothy 4:1

1 Timothy 6:10

Arguing

Violate conscience

Doubt, wavering

False teaching

Favoritism

Loving money

**As you looked at some faith killers, which one hits closest to home for you right now?**

In order to hold our shields of faith high, we need to get our hands dirty and do the work of investing in encouraging relationships, being intentional about God's Word and prayer, and be on guard watching for weeds that want to creep in.

Pray today asking God to help you with the specific thing you most need - relationships, time in His word or time to pray. hose in your circle of influence.

## DAY FOUR: FAITH IN THE GAPS

BIG IDEA: Drawing near to God helps us overcome doubt.

“God never leans over the balcony of heaven and gasps.” Sometimes it feels like maybe He didn’t see what was going on in our lives or He would have intervened. When I can’t understand circumstances in my life, it’s tempting to think God might not know about them.

God knows everything, He is omniscient. He is all-powerful, omnipotent. He never forgets except when He chooses to forget our sins because of the payment His Son made on the cross. His Word says He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The problem comes for me when I am living in the gap between His truth and my circumstances. From my human perspective it doesn’t seem like He is rewarding us or answering our prayers in a way that makes sense to me. I know He is loving, patient, and worthy of my faith, but I struggle to believe it when life doesn’t make sense. **Can you think of anything in your life right now that doesn’t make sense to you?**

When divorce, illness, betrayal, and disappointed hopes assail us, how can we still hold tightly to our faith? We are not alone in our struggle to hold up the shield of faith. Others in Scripture wanted to believe, but needed to work out their faith. **Read Mark 9:14-29 and note the father’s response in verse 24 below:**

When the father said he believed but asked for help with his unbelief, Jesus prayed and the boy was healed. We know that anything is possible with God, but we need God’s help to believe sometimes. We can be honest with Him that we want to hold up the shield, but the weight of it can sometimes be too much for us. Jesus wants to reach His hand down and lift up our arms so that we can be protected. He doesn’t respond to our cry for help with shame, anger, or laughter at our struggle. He never leans over the balcony of heaven at all because He is always present, waiting for us to come to Him for help.

**Read John 20:24-29. What does Jesus say to Thomas in verse 27?**

Jesus wanted to help Thomas believe. He heard His doubts and He came to help Thomas have faith. **What does this tell you about God’s knowledge of your uncertainties and His desire to help you?**

God calls us to faith even when our trials scream Satan’s lies –“God doesn’t care.” “God is busy with others.” “You aren’t good enough to warrant His time.” Only through time with our Savior and abiding in Him will we come out on the other side of our gaps still believing Him.

Think of an area where you are struggling to believe God’s promise. Pray asking God to help you overcome your unbelief!

## DAY FIVE: THE FAITHFUL ONE

BIG IDEA: .

Each piece of the armor is Jesus. As we wear Him from head to toe, we find our greatest protection against the enemy. Jesus is the Faithful One.

**Spend a moment recalling at least two ways that God has been faithful in your life recently:**

- 1.
- 2.

**According to Romans 12:3, who has given us our faith?**

Hebrews 12:2 reminds us that it is Jesus who is the champion that initiates and perfects our faith. God gives us the faith we need to believe. The shield isn't something we come up with on our own through great effort. We don't gather our own iron, wood, and leather to assemble our shield. God provides the materials that will begin and perfect our faith. Our ability to believe Him comes with His initiation and continued work in our lives. We do have a choice to reject His offering of the shield - he won't force it into our hand, but we can't create or hold it up apart from Him. **What does John 15:5 tell us we can do apart from Him?**

Nothing. We need Him to be the belt of Truth holding our whole lives together. We need His breastplate of righteousness covering our heart from the enemy's accusations and shame. God's shoes of peace through the power of the gospel keep us from living in constant conflict and give us firm footing. And this week we found that He is our shield of faith to help extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy. **What have you learned about God's ability to be your shield this week that will help you fight your current daily battles?**

The Lord longs to be our shield of protection against Satan's fiery darts. The enemy is relentless and consistent in his aim, but God promises to continually surround us as we work out our faith over and over. He is the faithful One.

End this week praying the words of Paul from Colossians 1:9b-12

*"We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience."*