

EQUIPPED

A STUDY OF THE ARMOR OF GOD

WEEK 1: THE BELT OF TRUTH

Truth provides stability at the center of our lives.

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,”

Ephesians 6:13

DAY ONE: THE BATTLE

BIG IDEA: As Christians, we are in a battle that will last all of our lives.

No one has to convince us that we are at war. A battle rages all around us as well as inside of us. There is an attack on our marriages, finances and children. We struggle with emotional distress, addictions and patterns of habitual sin. The war is intense and the stakes are high.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul gives us insight into the war we are in and the enemy we face. He tells us that it is not what is seen (flesh and blood) but the unseen spiritual forces of evil that are the true enemy.

The good news? God provides protection, spiritual armor for the battle! When we are suited up in our spiritual armor we are equipped to withstand the assault. When we choose not to put on each piece of our equipment, we set ourselves up spiritual defeat.

Read Ephesians 6:10-20. As you reflect on this verse, list the battles you are currently facing in your life? (Consider all areas: relational, emotional, financial, physical health?). You'll need this list on DAY 2.

What world events or circumstances currently cause you distress and concern?

Look up the following verses.

John 14:27

John 16:33

Romans 8:38-39

Galatians 6:9

Psalm 37:7-9

In the space below, write the verse(s) that strengthens your resolve and encourages you in your current battle.

End today praying this verse for you, your family and friends who need strength for the battle.

DAY TWO: THE ENEMY

BIG IDEA: Our enemy is invisible and real.

We have a real enemy who comes to steal, kill and destroy. We see his work in failing marriages, family tensions, and cultural chaos. He works continually to divide and disrupt. He accuses and deceives. He shames and condemns.

We are at war but who, exactly, is the enemy? Let's look at Scripture to get a better understanding of our foe.

Read each passage on the left and match it up with enemy information on the right by writing the letter in the blank.

_____ Job 1:6-7	A. Serpent from the garden who deceives
_____ John 12:31	B. Disguises himself as an angel of light
_____ 2 Corinthians 4:4	C. God of this world who blinds the minds of unbelievers
_____ 2 Corinthians 11:14	D. Ruler of this world
_____ 2 Thessalonians 2:9	E. He deals in counterfeits
_____ 1 Peter 5:8-9	F. Prowls around like a lion seeking someone to devour
_____ Revelation 12:9	G. Accuser who watches everything going on in the earth

Now write a summary sentence of all that you learn about the enemy:

We must be careful not to overemphasize and give Satan too much credit, blaming him for things that are within our control. On the contrary, we also must not underestimate his schemes and ability to attack us.

Satan celebrates when we see the battle in our heart and home as only physical, emotional, or mental. He will do anything to keep us from seeing with spiritual eyes.

Now think back to the battle you identified in yesterday's lesson. How could Satan (or his demons) be the enemy lurking disguised behind the enemy you think you are fighting?

Let's end today in prayer, asking God to help you see your battles clearly and identify the real enemy who wars against your soul in the specific front where you are fighting today.

DAY THREE: THE ENEMY'S STRATEGIES

BIG IDEA: Knowing our blindspots helps us stand firm.

Today we will look at the devil schemes, his tactics and strategies. The more we understand his ways, the better able we are to withstand and defeat him. He specializes in tempting us by targeting our desires.. Desire and deception lead us into disobedience and disobedience ultimately leads to spiritual death. Satan often targets a God-given desire and twists or corrupts it into something sinful, destructive and harmful.

Where are you vulnerable to the devil's attacks? Where do you have an unmet need that you are tempted to fill in wrong, sinful ways?

It's important to be aware of our vulnerabilities, to know our blind spots. Consider the following list. It is not exhaustive - there are countless ways that we are susceptible to attack. Mark the ones that apply to you.

Distraction - I am easily drawn away from the pursuit of God and godly activities. (Phil. 3:13-14)

Disinterest - I have trouble prioritizing bible reading, prayer and Christian community. (Matthew 6:33)

Identity - I struggle with fear, doubt and insecurity not believing what God says about me. (John 15:16)

Family - Strife and tension in relationships are creating chaos in my home. (Psalm 51:10)

Shame - I struggle with shame and guilt not able to let go of past mistakes. (2 Corin 5:17)

Confidence - Fear and doubt keep me from moving forward with God's plan and calling. (Joshua 1:9)

Purity - I am tempted to sin in ways that dishonor God and go against his clear commands. (1 Peter 14:16)

Unforgiveness - Bitterness and resentment grow because I cannot let go of wounds from the past. (Eph 4:31-32)

Materialism - A desire to have and possess is causing financial pressures and inability to give. (Luke 12:15)

For each area that you marked, turn to the verse in parentheses beside it. Write out the verse(s) here. Use God's Word to help you overcome your weaknesses.

Today, spend time asking God to help you see your personal blindspots, those places where you are vulnerable. Ask God to equip you with truth from the Bible to help you resist the enemies schemes.

DAY FOUR: THE BELT

BIG IDEA: Wearing the belt of truth means you *live* truth (integrity) based on *the* truth (God's Word).

Each morning, we get up and get dressed. We get ready for the day by putting on what seems most appropriate for what we will face. In the same way, we must consistently and intentionally get dressed spiritually. If we do not put on the spiritual equipment that God provides, we are vulnerable and weak. We feel defeated and wonder why.

The first piece of armor that we are to put on is our belt of truth. Because Satan's main play against believers is deceit, we must be strong at our core. The Roman soldier's belt was used to hold other weapons and as a method of tucking in the long skirts of a robe for greater mobility.

How can believing Satan's lies restrict our spiritual movement like cumbersome robes?

Think of lies our culture speaks through advertisement, the media, music or movies that contradict one of God's truths found in Scripture.

How do these lies affect a person's spiritual, physical or emotional health?

Let's read the first biblical account of the enemy's anti-truth campaign. This will help us see the need for discernment when dealing with the enemies deception.

What question did the serpent ask Eve in Genesis 3:1?

He uses craftiness in questioning God's goodness and truth. He begins with throwing a shadow of doubt on what God has said through a question.

What lie does the serpent then move on to tell Eve as you read through to verse 5?

We know Eve did die. Both physically and spiritually she experienced death as a result of her bite of fruit. Now let's identify some of Eve's verbs in hopes we can learn what not to do when the enemy comes with subtle lies. Fill in the blanks below: (check the New Living Translation on www.biblegateway.com if you are having trouble.)

Verse 6 The woman saw was _____ so she _____ it.

Verse 6 She _____ some to her husband.

Verse 8 When she heard God walking, she _____ among the trees.

Verse 13 She _____ the serpent for her bad decision.

Pray: God, help me live a life of truth. I want the truth found in Scripture to transform the way I live and serve others. I want to be a person of integrity who correctly handles the Word of God.

DAY FIVE: THE TRUTH IS A PERSON

BIG IDEA: Knowing truth requires knowing the One who is Truth, Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for belt of truth is *aletheia*. Defined as "what is true in any matter under consideration," this is not a relative truth or changing perspective. The book of John uses *aletheia* 20 times. Look up a few of these references with the question in mind "Who is the Truth?"

Write a statement summarizing what you learn. The first is done for you.

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (NIV)

Answer: Truth comes through Jesus (along with grace).

Now it's your turn, look up the verses and answer the question 'WHO is truth?'

John 14:6 _____

John 14:17 _____

John 15:26 _____

The truth that holds the other pieces of armor in place isn't merely concepts, but God Himself. Where on the body is the belt worn? The belt hits right at the center of our bodies. When we make Jesus the center of our lives by giving Him first place, we will find He holds our lives together. The Old Testament sheds even more light on truth as foundational to our spiritual wardrobe.

Write Psalm 25:5 below:

Now circle the word truth in the verse. The Hebrew word here is *emeth* which comes from the root word *aman* defined as "to support, stable."

How does a belt support or provide stability?

God sent us His Son Jesus because of the weakness of our sinful nature (Romans 8). When Jesus left behind his humanity to join His Father in heaven, He didn't leave us as orphans. He sent His Spirit to be with us always. When we cling to Jesus and the Holy Spirit as the center of our lives, we find stability in the truth of who they are.

What are some things you have made the center of your life at one time or another that have failed you? (ie. people, circumstances, money?)

End the first week of our study with this prayer. From Ephesians 1:17-19, pray these words for yourself, your family and friends to know God better. Pray specifically, using the names of those you are lifting to God.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.