

EQUIPPED

A STUDY OF THE ARMOR OF GOD

WEEK 2: THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Right living protects our hearts from shame.

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

Ephesians 6:14

DAY ONE: POSITIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

BIG IDEA: Knowing that we are declared righteous because of Christ protects our heart from shame.

I messed up again. I can feel the shame targeted right at my heart. This week's piece of armor guards us from the enemy's condemnation. When negative self-talk speaks loudly, we can strap on the breastplate of righteousness. The Roman soldier's breastplate connected to his belt. Our righteousness must be connected to God's truth.

Satan aims fiery arrows of condemnation right at our hearts, but God protects us from shame through both positional and practical righteousness. Theologians refer to the first type as justification. Tomorrow we will look at practical righteousness, also referred to as sanctification.

Let's break down justification in the simplest terms so that we can wear it with confidence to protect us against the shame-giver's shots to the heart. We begin by finding out what we must do in order to attain positional righteousness from God.

Romans 3:25-26 says that God declares sinners to be right in His sight when

So according to these verses, God's declaration of righteousness positionally comes when we place our faith in Christ. This doesn't mean we have become sin-less. God *chooses* to see us through the lens of Christ's shed blood and declares us justified. In other words – JUST AS IF I'D NEVER SINNED. **Share below about the time when you clearly understood that Christ's righteousness was available to you and decided to follow Jesus:**

God offers His righteousness to us through Christ's payment for our sin, and we must receive it by faith. (If you aren't sure if you've made this commitment, your leader would love to talk with you about making sure!)

Take time, now, to thank God for forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. Pray for those you know who are far from God to be drawn to the Savior for freedom from sin's hold and new, abundant life.

DAY TWO: PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

BIG IDEA: God calls us to live rightly according to His standards because He made us and knows what's best for us.

After we have committed our lives to Jesus receiving positional righteousness, we then consider how God wants us to live practically today in light of His sacrificial gift. I know it seems weird to put yourself in God's shoes, but think for a minute: **Why might God care about our daily obedience since Christ's blood is going to cover it all on judgment day?**

As a mom, I couldn't help think about my relationship with my children. They don't earn my love with their behavior. Nothing they could do will make me love them more or less, yet, I care deeply about their choices. As the perfect parent, God knows our human tendency toward sin, but He longs for us to live a practical righteousness here on earth. Since righteousness is not common in our modern vernacular, **how would you define righteousness?**

The Greek word means "uprightness, right living, integrity in one's lifestyle and character." In my mind, I translate righteousness with two words – *right living*. *Practical* righteousness flows out of the life that truly understands *positional* righteousness. When we constantly remind ourselves of what God did in sending His own Son to die for our sin, we want to live in obedience to His Word. Theologians refer to the process of becoming more like Christ through spiritual growth as *sanctification*. **What does 1 John 3:7-10 reveal about God's thoughts on His children keeping a practice of sinning?**

Our Lord explains this even more fully in John 16:5-10. **How does He say our righteousness is available?**

Jesus told us that right living would be possible through the Holy Spirit. When we yield to His Spirit, our lives change. We cannot reverse the order. We don't try to live right and earn God's favor. Out of the overflow of the Holy Spirit working in our lives, we desire to live in obedience to His Lordship.

The enemy wants us to stay unfamiliar with God's directives for right living, but also disconnected from a close personal relationship with God that would lead to conviction and change. When we say we believe God's Word, but live in direct defiance to what it says, we position ourselves for pain – right to the heart.

Where is the Lord calling you to right living today? (think of anything in your life that is not in line with God's commands as given through His Word)

God doesn't want us left defenseless against the enemy of our souls. He gives us His righteousness and also shows us how to live righteously by His Spirit and His Word.

Today, pray for discernment to know the Holy Spirit's working in your heart and mind. Is He bringing an area to light, a place where you are out of step with God's best for you? Pray that you will honor God with your choices, not to earn His love but because of His love.

DAY THREE: HURTING HEARTS

BIG IDEA: Sin brings sufferings so the breastplate of right living can protect us from potential heartaches.

As women we live with a lot of heartache. A majority of women I know struggle with fear, anxiety, depression, and shame. The causes of these spiritual heartaches sometimes have nothing to do with right or wrong living. Childhood abuse, the absence of a father, abandonment, and betrayal by loved ones can cause us heart pain. The enemy loves to take the evil done to us and use it to shame us.

Some of our heartache results from our choices to disobey God's biblical guidelines for life. Over-shopping, overeating, gossiping, telling half-truths, or any number of things can result in real life consequences for us.

How have some of your unbiblical decisions contributed to personal heartache in your life?

What does Proverbs 1:31 describe that we eat when we insist on living our own way?

Bitter fruit of choosing our way instead of God's can take many forms. In my life, it can be something small like gaining weight because I want to eat junk food instead of healthy things to nourish my body. I've also experienced anxiety accompanied by sleepless nights and lack of appetite when I chose to care more about the approval of people rather than God.

God gives us His breastplate of righteousness to protect us from the condemnation. **Write Romans 8:1 below:**

I usually experience two voices on the other side of sinful choices I've made. The enemy condemns me. God through the Holy Spirit convicts me of my sin. He doesn't want me to keep practicing things that will harm my soul if left unchecked.

What are some characteristics of conviction that you have experienced? (what is it like, how does it feel, what is the end result?)

The longer we go without our breastplate, the more we invite Satan to condemn us. The more he assaults us with lies, the greater the chance he will wear us down into believing his shame. Holy Spirit conviction leads to change. The heart behind it is love. It doesn't feel good at the time, but after grieving my sin, I usually feel lighter knowing God understands my weakness and can even perfect His power through my failings when they lead me to depend more on Him. (2 Corinthians 12:28)

Pray today for yourself or someone you know who suffers with shame. God's conviction is loving and empowering as He helps us grow. Shame keeps us stuck in an cycle of defeat. Pray for courage to receive complete forgiveness and live in full freedom in Christ!

DAY FOUR: RIGHT LIVING APPLIED

BIG IDEA: We can know what right living looks like through God's Word and applying His practical wisdom to our personal situations.

In a world where all the lines get blurred, it's hard to always know the right choice. In order to live rightly, we need to walk closely with the Holy Spirit to guide us. Some things are "right" for us but could be wrong for others.

Can you think of something that is right for you, but not necessarily universally right for everyone?

Our amazing God equips and calls each of us to do His work in a way that looks different for each of us. However, some things are the same for each of us. We don't have to ask God when we're shopping for Christmas gifts, "should I steal this or pay for it"? He makes some things universally clear for all of us in the Bible.

What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveal about the connection between God's Word and right living?

We want our study of the breastplate to meet our reality. Let's look at one area where God gives clear directives.

Circle the letter that best represents the verse:

Proverbs 22:7 says:

- a) The poor will rule the rich.
- b) Debt is a good way to buy things you can't afford.
- c) The borrower is a slave to the lender.

Malachi 3:10

- a) Give any leftover money you have to God.
- b) Test God with bringing the whole tithe (10%) and He will pour out blessings.
- c) God doesn't care how much you give.

Acts 20:35

- a) You are more blessed when you give than when you receive.
- b) You will be really happy when you spend a lot of money on yourself.
- c) Blessed are the rich for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Okay, these are just three passages of the many that tell us about right living with money. God tells us the truth about our relationship with money, yet often, we live as though the opposite were true. We go into debt, don't tithe to our church, and find more joy in retail therapy for our blues than in giving our resources away.

In the area of money, is there an obvious area of "right living" that is weakening your breastplate of protection?

We could have camped on passages about sexual sin, thought life, kindness, or so many areas where God tells us how to put our breastplate on. We want to practice right living in every area so that we protect our heart as much as possible and know that blood of Jesus will provide the righteousness we need when we mess up.

Today, talk to God (pray!) about any area where you are not living as God has asked us to. Confess the area to Him, receive His forgiveness and begin to make daily, practical changes to line up with His ways.

DAY FIVE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

BIG IDEA: God's name is Yahweh Tsidkenu, and He provides the righteousness needed to protect us from spiritual chest pain.

In Biblical times, names carried great meaning. As we conclude our week studying the breastplate of righteousness, we will find one of God's names is righteousness! The Bible tells us that each and every piece of armor identifies an aspect of Jesus. Putting on the armor is really like wearing Jesus from head to toe.

How do you think wearing Jesus might protect you from the enemy?

Every piece of the armor tells us something about His character. This week we find He doesn't just give us righteousness; He is our Righteousness. Fill in the blanks below of what God says will happen in Jeremiah 23:5-6, "For the time is coming says the

Lord, when I will raise up a _____ from King David's line. He will be a King who: _____.

He will do _____.

And this will be His name: _____.

In that day, _____."

Jeremiah proclaimed this prophecy 600 years before Christ was born. **Do you see any descriptions in this text that might cause you to see fulfillment in Jesus's birth, life, and death?**

This Messianic prophecy refers to the coming of Jesus to be our Righteousness. Did you notice that He would be a righteous branch, a wise king, and a doer of just and right deeds? He also identifies this person as the source of salvation and security. Certainly, Jesus fits the bill as the only source of salvation and safety for our own lives. The Hebrew name found here in Jeremiah is *Jehovah-tsidkenu*, The Lord our Righteousness. We need to walk closely with Him and continually surrender ourselves to Him.

End this week by writing a short prayer below, agreeing with God about your own attempts at right living and thanking Him for offering His righteousness to you. Also, pray for those you know who are far from God to be drawn to the Savior for freedom from sin's hold and new, abundant life.