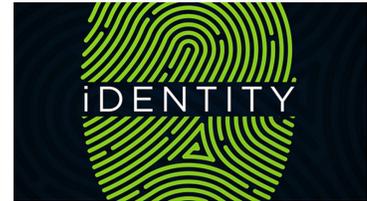


TALK IT OVER GUIDE

BREVARD COMMUNITY CHURCH
IMPRINT: LIVING OUR YOUR IDENTITY
SUIT UP FOR BATTLE
EPHESIANS 6:10-18
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MAIN POINT

We are engaged in a real and ongoing spiritual battle, and God has given us the necessary pieces of armor to equip us for victory.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What was your favorite costume you wore as a kid? Why?

What about now? Does your work require a dress code or a uniform? What happens if you don't dress accordingly?

What's the overall purpose of a uniform? Why is it necessary?

Whether a doctor, a firefighter, or a soldier, a uniform is an important part of many people's working lives. In most cases, the uniform does more than help other people identify the kind of work you do; it serves a vital purpose to accomplishing the task at hand. The same thing is true for the Christian. Whether we recognize it or not, we are engaged in a very real and ongoing spiritual battle. But God has not left us without the right equipment. He has given us the necessary pieces of armor to equip us for victory if we are willing to pick them up and put them on.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EPHESIANS 6:10-18.

Verses 11-12 remind us of the true nature of the battle. Why is it important that we recognize that our true battle is not against flesh and blood, but is instead spiritual in nature?

What happens if we don't recognize that fact?

What are some of the ways our spiritual battle is similar to a physical battle? What are some ways it's different?

Most people, even Christians, fail to recognize the real spiritual forces at work in the world today. When we fail to recognize this, we might have the wrong target in our sights, and we might focus our prayers in the wrong direction. Because this battle is spiritual in nature, we must do battle with the spiritual weapons God has given to us.

The first piece of the armor of God that Paul mentions is the belt of truth. The belt of truth pictures the large leather belt the Roman soldier wore. It held other weapons and kept his outer garments in place.

In what sense does the truth of God hold everything else together for us?

Why is that important when we do battle against the Evil One?

Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). When we encounter him, we will also encounter his lies. In order to do battle, we must be equipped with the truth of God so we can discern the difference between what's true and what's not. When we know God's truth, it holds all the other armor together because regardless of what we hear, we are convinced of what truth really is.

The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. The metal breastplate was standard for a battle soldier; it protected his vital organs during combat.

What is righteousness? How does righteousness protect our hearts?

How can we take up this piece of armor without being prideful about our own righteousness?

Ultimately, the only reason we are righteous is because Jesus has given His righteousness to us. When the devil accuses us and brings shame upon us, our hearts are protected not because of our own goodness but because of the righteousness of Christ that has been credited to us. The next pieces of armor are the shoes of the gospel of peace. The Roman soldier's hobnailed (cleated) shoes kept his feet from slipping. The gospel helps steady us on our feet when Satan brings distraction.

In what ways does the enemy bring distraction into your life? How does the gospel keep you focused and steady in the midst of that attempt?

Paul continued with the next piece of armor—the shield of faith. The Roman shield Paul had in mind was probably a long, oblong, leather-covered device that covered much of the body during active battle. It was effective at dousing flaming arrows.

What form do the flaming arrows of the enemy usually take? How does faith extinguish them?

In battle, the enemy will try and cause us to be anxious about our lives or the future. Faith is the day-to-day defense against that kind of anxiety. When we choose faith instead of worry, we extinguish this attack. The next piece of armor is the helmet of salvation. In a battle, the Roman soldier's metal headgear provided both protection and decoration. It protected the head, and therefore the mind which controls action, from attack.

What are some ways the enemy might try and attack our minds?

One of the ways that happens is through doubt. Why is doubt such an effective battle tactic for the enemy? How does the gospel help us to counter that doubt?

Our feelings will deceive us. That's why our head and mind must be protected. The question in battle cannot be what we feel, but instead what we know. When we doubt, we can call to mind again and again the truth of the gospel and center our minds back on the victorious Jesus who has given us salvation.

The final piece of armor is the sword of the Spirit. The Roman short sword was used for both defense and offense. It was efficient in hand-to-hand combat. As a piece of the armor of God, Paul tells us that this sword stands for God's Word. On the one hand, this refers to the entirety of the Scriptures, which has been inspired by the Spirit and is His gift to God's people. On the other hand, it refers to the specific biblical message that is apt for the need at hand.

Notice that the sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon. Why is that?

How have you seen the Word of God be a sword that cuts deeply?

God has given us what we need for the battle at hand. The question for us is not whether we are equipped; it's whether we will pick up the equipment God has given to us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Which of these pieces of armor do you most need to pick up this week?

How are you going to take it up?

How can we help each other in this fight?

PRAY

Thank God that He has given us what we need for spiritual battle. Ask Him for the courage and strength to stand against the inevitable attack that will come our way.

COMMENTARY

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

6:10. Paul's concluding teaching challenged believers to recognize their spiritual weaknesses and to draw on the Lord. We cannot strengthen ourselves. We need power from outside. The Lord Jesus is the One who supplies spiritual strength. Paul had already used the phrase "His vast strength" in Ephesians 1:19 to refer to God's active power in the lives of believers.

6:11-12. The full armor of God is required not only because we are weak but also because our spiritual enemies are strong. Our strongest adversary is the devil. We should never doubt that the devil is a real, supernatural person. He opposes God and His people with tactics, a term suggesting how wily he is. The believer's responsibility, once clad in God-given armor, is to stand. We need not flee the devil, but rather we are to boldly hold the fortress of our own souls. We do not face a physical army (flesh and blood, human beings). We face a spiritual army. Paul listed some of these evil beings. Evidently there is a hierarchy of evil spirit-beings in hostile opposition to God and His people.

6:13. For the second time, the apostle urged believers to use the full armor of God—the complete kit of spiritual equipment. God the heavenly Warrior-King wears such armor (Isa. 59:17). He has now shared it with His people. In this verse, the verb "take up" is parallel to "put on" in verse 11. Both verbs suggest intentional action. "To resist in the evil day" means during the days until Christ's return as the conquering King.

6:14-15. Paul likened the three pieces of equipment Roman soldiers put on at the beginning of a day to God-given character traits we believers are to build daily into our lives.

“Belt.” This wide leather strap kept a Roman soldier’s undergarments from getting tangled and also held his sword at the side of his body. By application, the belt stands for truth. Many Bible students believe this refers to a Christian’s sincerity or integrity of speech. For believers to lapse into intrigue or dishonesty is to fall into the devil’s own game.

“Armor on your chest.” The metal breastplate was standard for a battle soldier; it protected his vital organs during combat. For the believer, it stands for righteousness. Since Paul had Isaiah 59:17 in mind, he meant uprightness of character (godliness or Christlikeness). To neglect developing our character according to God’s standard of virtue is to give the devil a gaping hole through which he may attack us.

“Feet sandaled.” The Roman soldier’s hobnailed (cleated) shoes kept his feet from slipping. In the analogy, it stands for a Christian’s readiness for the gospel of peace. The meaning is probably the steadiness that comes to us because we have received the good news of Christ. Without assurance that we have peace with God through the gospel, the devil will gain a great advantage, throwing us into doubts of all kinds.

6:16-17. Paul went on to speak about three more pieces of equipment. Understanding these pieces shows us actions we can take when we face spiritual battles.

“Shield.” The Roman shield Paul had in mind was probably a long, oblong leather-covered device that covered much of the body during active battle. It was effective at dousing flaming arrows. In the analogy, this stands for a believer’s faith—active day-to-day trust in God to provide the strength to resist onslaughts that the evil one sends. Faith looks to the power of God when there is temptation.

“Helmet.” The soldier’s metal headgear provided both protection and decoration. Paul had written to the Thessalonians to put on “a helmet of the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). So what is the salvation Paul had in mind? Probably he meant our hope or expectation of future deliverance when we receive full salvation at last. Confidence that we will be with Christ forever and that we will enjoy a future resurrection with Him provides believers strength to endure all devilish assaults.

“Sword.” The Roman short sword was used for both defense and offense. It was efficient in hand-to-hand combat. It stands for God’s Word. On the one hand, this refers to the entirety of the Scriptures, which has been inspired by the Spirit and is His gift to God’s people. On the other hand, it refers to the specific biblical message that is apt for the need at hand. (Ps. 119:11; Heb. 4:12).

6:18. Four times in this verse Paul used Greek forms for “all” or “every.”

“All kinds of prayer.” There is more than one way to talk to God. Here, the apostle used both a general term (prayer) and a specific term (request).

“All times of prayer.” There is no wrong time to pray! Morning prayers, mealtime prayers, bedtime prayers, and battle-time prayers are all acceptable. Yet they are to be motivated by the Spirit, not just become a ritual or something perfunctory. Believers are to stay alert in prayer.

“All perseverance in prayer.” Prayer is to be continual. Jesus Himself made this clear in the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8).

“All objects of prayer.” Believers should pray for each other—all the saints—knowing that they are also experiencing spiritual warfare in their own lives.