

Ephesians: Sit. Walk. Stand. (Adapted from HTB)

Session Six: Battle - Standing against the enemy

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group, and enjoy a short time of worship together (e.g. singing, soaking, waiting on God in silence, praying through a Psalm, journalling etc.).

Introduction

(5 minutes)

[Read the paragraphs below aloud to summarise the main points of the previous session.]

In the last session we thought about practical relationships. The key verse for understanding the context of the relationships Paul mentions is verse 21: 'And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.' All the relationships Paul discusses have to be seen in the light of this verse.

In this session we focus on the last part of Paul's letter (Ephesians 6:10-20). It's easy to forget that we are in a spiritual battle. One of the mistakes that it is easy to make as Christians is to forget that by becoming Christians we enter into a spiritual battle. It can be confusing – we know that through Jesus' death and resurrection the victory has been won, so it seems strange then to say that there is still an ongoing spiritual battle happening around us. This is because we live in the in between times – the NOW AND NOT YET.

The New Testament scholar Oscar Cullmann describes it like this: 'This is a bit like the time between D-day and V-day in the Second World War. On D-day, 6th June 1944, the Allies invaded France through what were known as the Normandy landings with the hope of liberating mainland Europe from Nazi occupation. D-day marked the turning point in World War II when the Allied forces began to win their fight against the Axis powers. From that point on, it was clear that the Allies had won the victory. However, it was almost another year, until the Germans finally acknowledged their defeat and surrendered – on V day, 8th May 1945. V-day marks the end of the War with Germany. We know that through Jesus' death and resurrection, the enemy has been defeated. Jesus has claimed the victory. But until Jesus comes back to claim this victory once and for all, the enemy still attempts to cling on – and thus we are in the midst of a spiritual battle.'

Bible study

(20 minutes)

1. **Read Ephesians 6:10-20.** What are the various pieces of armour that Paul mentions? Choose one and discuss what this armour is and how it protects us against the enemy.

2. Verse 11: 'Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.'

It can be helpful to recognise when we might be at our most susceptible to the enemy's schemes. When we are more aware we are both more able to avoid these times, and be on our guard when we are particularly vulnerable to the enemy.

For example the word **HALT** can be used as an acronym for: **Hungry Angry Lonely Tired**. We need to learn to halt and think, 'Am I in a particular vulnerable position at the moment? How can I put things in place so that I avoid these vulnerable times? – i.e. get enough sleep!' Note that when Jesus was in the wilderness with no food, he was particularly vulnerable to the enemy. Share some examples of when you find you are most susceptible.

3. **Read Ephesians 1:18-22.** We often totally underestimate the power that we have in Christ and when we call on his name. This in itself is a scheme of the enemy's at work! **CALLING ON THE NAME OF JESUS:** this is where our power lies. What do you think about this? Have you ever tried 'calling on the name of Jesus in a time of battle?'

One clear sign of the battle is the persecution of the church around the world, especially in countries like North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Brother Andrew, who started the 'Open Doors' organisation, talks about spiritual warfare and the Bible, which he calls the 'Dangerous Book'.

Watch/listen to the clip from the teaching by Brother Andrew.

Youtube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DXc8fG4AqU>

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?
2. The Bible is a dangerous book because it makes a new man of you. People in power fear the moment that God steps into anyone's life. Do you agree that the Bible is a dangerous book? What makes it dangerous?
3. "If you have never been shot at by the devil, it would scare me. I would think, am I not worth the shot?" Is there some way in which spiritual battle can be seen as a good thing? Is it something we are to expect? In what situations?
4. Read the following quote: "The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came...Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory." (R.A. Torrey)

Brother Andrew tells us that prayer is our big weapon in spiritual warfare. Prayer, not just for the sake of our own personal prayer lives, but always in relation to reaching out to a lost world with the message of Jesus. How is this kind of prayer different? What do you think Brother Andrew is trying to say?

5. We should conquer the world for Christ, proving to the world that there is a different life possible. Show with your different lifestyle that there is a Kingdom of God and that you've entered into it. Is living a distinctive life and identifying yourself as a soldier for Christ important, or is it more effective to stay underground as a guerrilla fighter?

Pray for God to make us real. Pray for God to speak to us. If you are ready to make the commitment, tell God that 'whatever You ask me to do, I will do it'. Pray for God's protection in the battle.

[Ministry idea: Pray for the spirit to reveal afresh the power we have in Christ, and where in our lives we are needing to exercise this power more.]