

Small Group Guide

Strength for the Battle

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what each person needs in your time together.

As I have been meditating on the truths of this passage, I have been caught by several indicators that point out my need for utter dependence on Him. Notice the first phrase, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." That, all by itself, gives me an amazing challenge. I am always wanting to be strong. I want to look strong emotionally, like I am well composed. I want to look strong physically. That is partially why I work out so faithfully. The problem is that all those are about me being strong in me. I am so guilty in trying to be strong in Jeff. The truth is, Jeff is incredibly weak. My first challenge to you and to myself is a challenge to cultivate a more accurate view of our desperation for Him, for his strength over ours, for his power, and not that of the world around us. We need to stop looking for power and strength in our own accomplishments, achievements, degrees, friends, possessions, looks or talent, and to start fostering a clear and unwavering commitment to embrace our weaknesses, our short-coming, our fragility and to humbly lay our brokenness and insufficiencies before him.

OK, hold on a second, don't just take my word for it, look up the following scriptures and decide for yourself. Does God want you to bring your strength to the table or battlefield, if we're talking about the "armor of God", or does he want you to pick up His?"

How do the following passages relate?

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 "9 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

James 4:7-10 "7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."*

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 “3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

Mike Singletary, undoubtedly a great sports warrior, said: 'Until we realize how weak we really are, we'll never know how strong He is.'

1) Share with one another how you are learning to embrace your weaknesses as well as your strengths? It is counter intuitive to own our weaknesses and to admit them freely to one another.

How have you experienced this challenge and are you making any progress in being transparent with your weaknesses and shortcomings?

What do you think happens to the trust of a group, family or business when we can share at this level of vulnerability?

2) Read the whole passage (Eph. 6:10-20) together and ask your group to comment on the following:

Who's armor are we putting on?

What is our responsibility throughout the passage?

Try and list the things we are to do, and the results, if we do them.

3) Are you ever distracted by people, thinking they are the "enemy"?

What needs to change about your perspective on how to look at people the way God does and how to be more aware of the true enemy?

4) How is the word "Stand" used in the passage and what do you think the significance is to the idea of being able to "Stand", especially in a battle?

Share the following questions with your group and let them respond to any question they are drawn to.

How important is it to stand together with others?

Where have you seen households divided and unable to stand?

How does knowing who the real enemy is affect our ability to stand or fall?
Looking over today's notes, how can you make the choice each day to choose whose side you'll be on; who you'll stand with.

Where does Romans 5:2 say where we stand? *"through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God."*

The Bible tells us that our standing is in Grace, and God is absolutely and unconditionally committed to you in all things. How might that change your view of yourself, your mistakes and your personal fight with guilt and regret? How do these passages give support to our understanding of grace?

Romans 3:24 *"and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

Galatians 5:1 *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

1 Peter 5:12 *"With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it."*

Here are 2 options for your group for daily connection

1. We have provided a few scriptures with this material that your group can soap daily
2. Work on memorizing Ephesians 6:10-20. If you work on 1-2 verses per week you will finish by end of series

The purpose of daily work is to encourage more than just once or twice a week connecting in the word.

Blessings to you this week as you fight the good fight. If you are standing in a relationship with Christ, he has the strength you need. (1 Timothy 6:12) "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Pastor Jeff

Small Group Guide

The Belt of Truth

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what each person needs in your time together.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. This week's study and conversation fits perfectly into the need for a daily engagement with TRUTH. If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The apostle Paul was writing his instructions to the believers in Ephesus from a prison cell in Rome while chained to a Roman guard. As he was putting the finishing touches on his letter, he must have thought: "How can I convey the critical need these believers have to be fully invested in the spiritual war going on around them? How can I empower them to not only see the reality of the battle, but to also be prepared to meet the challenges and the enemy that is right in front of them?" As he looked up at the soldier fully adorned in his armor, I wonder how long it took him to begin to assign spiritual significance to each piece of armor. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul was led to challenge the Ephesian believers and now us, to come to terms with the fact that we

are vulnerable to attack. Then and now, we are all fragile to stand and often ill-equipped to meet the enemy who so skillfully disguises himself that we lose sight of the spiritual contest taking place around us. The two concepts that I will reference each week to help catalyze this new mindset are: KNOW YOUR ENEMY and KNOW YOUR ARMOR. Paul's objective in giving this metaphor was to help each believer have a word picture that coincides with the essentials for an effective walk with God.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

As a group, discuss the notion of "knowing your enemy". Answer one or two of the following questions:

- 1) What do you think Paul means by "The devil's schemes"?

Eph. 6:11 *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

2 Corinthians 2:11 *"...(Satan)... we are not unaware of his schemes."*

- 2) How have you failed to "Know your enemy"? By that, I mean, how have you missed the fact that in the challenges of life we can fail to recognize Satan as our adversary? So, instead of resisting him or standing firm in truth we become distracted by people, criticism, insecurity, bills or interpersonal conflict. Have you ever found yourself fighting the wrong fight, if so, describe your experience?
- 3) How would the following passages help you to recognize Satan's tactics or schemes? As a group, list out what might be some of Satan's dominant schemes?

John 10:10 *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

John 8:44 *"... the devil, ...was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

2 Corinthians 11:3 *"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived, so your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."*

KNOW YOUR ARMOR - THE BELT OF TRUTH

From this week's sermon notes discuss one or two of the following questions under each of the sermon's main points:

1. Recognize your need for truth.

QUESTIONS: How do the following scriptures and quotes from Scott Peck and MLKing Jr challenge your personal dedication to truth, especially as it relates to self-examination?

How have you learned to do self-examination? Do you feel like this is something you do well or poorly and why?

John 8:31-32 “... *Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’*”

Psalms 139:23-24 “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.*”

Psalm 51:6 “*Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place... What you're after is truth from the inside out. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.*” (NIV & The Message—MSG)

GROWTH AREA-Self-examination

"I have tried to be honest. To be honest is to confront the truth, however unpleasant or inconvenient the truth may be, we must expose it and face it, if we are to achieve a better quality of life."

—Martin L. King, Jr.

What does a life of total dedication to the truth mean? It means, first of all, a life of continuous and never ending self-examination. To have such discipline, we must be totally dedicated to the truth. That is to say we must always hold truth, as best we can determine it, to be more important, more vital to our self-interest, than our comfort. Conversely, we must always consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant and indeed welcome it in the service of search for truth. When one is dedicated to the truth this pain seems relatively unimportant - and less and less important (and therefore less and less painful) the further one proceeds on the path of self-examination.”

—Scott Peck

2. Organize your routine for truth.

QUESTIONS: Do you allocate regular time to engage the scriptures and the truth around you (about you and about God)?

How does Ephesians 6:11 & 13 “Put on the full armor...” and the following passages re-enforce the idea of a routine?

What needs to happen for someone's self-discipline to be improved?

Ephesians 4:22-24 *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

1 Peter 1:13 *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

GROWTH AREA-Self-discipline

3. Prioritize your relationships with truth.

QUESTIONS: Why do we need to speak the truth to one another? What is the danger of speaking the truth without love? How are you at this skill? What would be needed for you to improve at making this a common practice in your life?

Ephesians 4:15 *“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”*

Ephesians 4:25-27 *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”*

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Possible passages to SOAP this week:

- Colossians 3:12-14
- Psa. 139:23-24
- Ephesians 4:23-27
- Galatians 3:27
- 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Small Group Guide

The Breastplate of Righteousness

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what it means to possess the righteousness that God desires we experience by faith.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. **This week's study and conversation fits perfectly into our need for a daily realization of how God views us-ie. Clothed in His Righteousness.** If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

One of Satan's primary tactics is simply to distract us. We have an assignment from God and if Satan can get our eyes off of God's intentions for us, then we find ourselves feeling like something is missing. Satan understands perfectly well that the problem between God and us is our sin. Even though God has dealt with the sin issue on our behalf, Satan knows that if he can distract us with our own faults or the faults of others, we'll fail to focus on Christ's grace and fail to extend that grace to others. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Last week, we looked at the fact that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and that he uses deception to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Today, we focus on Satan's commitment to wage a constant assault on believers by accusing us before God or accusing God before us. Satan is an excellent tactician when it comes to attacking us. He knows that if he can hit us on more than one front we are less likely to "stand our ground" (Verses 11-13 of our text). Take a moment and ask yourself which front you are most vulnerable to attack:

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

1. He (Satan) wants to accuse you, or use you to accuse others? Do you tend to judge and condemn yourself or are you more likely to judge and condemn others (both of which cooperate with the enemy's objective)? Either way, he is distracting you from your calling as an ambassador for the forgiveness we have in Christ.

- As a group share your response to the above questions: how can you recognize where you are more vulnerable; judging self or others and why?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 and list the things that God has done for you and what He wants you to do for Him. Do you see anywhere in the passage where He calls you to judge others or accuse others? What does God call us to do?

2. He wants us to distract you with doubt by accusing God, you or others?

Just like Eve was deceived (Genesis 3:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 11:3) into questioning God's intentions for her, we are vulnerable to questioning God's desires for us. If Satan can keep you doubting, how much God loves you and wants to do in you and through you, you'll never be a threat to the kingdom of darkness, or an ambassador to the Kingdom of light.

- Describe to your small group if and how you have doubted God's intentions or desires for you or others? Look at James 1:16-17 below, how does this passage relate to this area of vulnerability-doubting God's goodness?

James 1:16-17 *"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

KNOW YOUR ARMOR - The Breastplate of Righteousness

Look over the following notes and questions and select one or two to share/process with your group?

RIGHTEOUSNESS in the Greek is *Dikaiosune*: It means "to be justified" or "to be in right standing" or "right relationship with." This piece of armor is not about doing everything right but about receiving **credits** from God that make us right.

FAITH in the Greek is *Pistis*: It means to **believe or trust** in someone or something. Faith is the way we obtain/receive the Breastplate of Righteousness.

- What do the following passages say about how we receive these credits to give us right standing, or make us right before God?

Romans 1:17 *"For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"*

Genesis 15:6 *"Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."*

Romans 4:19-22 *"Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. **20** Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, **21** being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. **22** This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

- How does Faith work in your experience and what have you discovered that strengthens your faith or helps it to grow?

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NLT) *"God alone made it possible for you to be in Christ Jesus....He is the one who made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and he gave himself to purchase our freedom."*

Isaiah 61:10 (NLT) *"I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels."*

2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

When we put on the Breastplate, we are reminding ourselves of God's promises of acceptance, grace, forgiveness and mercy. He wants us to live in the truth of these promises as we walk in our relationship with Christ.

HOW DO I PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

- In the following sermon points (below) Pastor Jeff challenged us to recognize any vulnerability to self-righteousness. Are you ever distracted by the list below (a desire for credit, to be right, etc...) if so how might these things distract you from humility and trusting in Christ?
- Do you think one can "put off" such motives or attitudes, if so how?

1. Recognize and take off any vested interest in Self-righteousness. (Remember you cannot be right on your own), OWN YOUR SIN.

Romans 3:10 "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'"

Isaiah 64:6 "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags." (NLT)

- **Recognize your desire:**
 - **for credit,**
 - **to be right,**
 - **to be better than someone else,**
 - **to have a higher view of yourself because you "keep the rules",**
 - **as self-righteousness.**

Ephesians 4:22-24 "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off** your old self, which is being corrupted by its **deceitful desires**; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to **put on** the new self, created to be like God in **true righteousness**"

- In the following passage where does Paul's new confidence come from and what is his new priority and why?

Philippians 3:4-9 "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit (Credit) I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

Look over the final points in the sermon (given below) and answer one or two of the following questions.

- The “put off”/ “put on” metaphor is a common one used by the apostle Paul, how does Paul’s use of the in Ephesians 4:22-24 help us to understanding and apply putting on the armor passage in Ephesians 6:10-20, and especially our application today with the breastplate of righteousness?

Ephesians 4:22-24 *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off** your old self, which is being corrupted by its **deceitful desires**; **23** to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **24** and to **put on** the new self, created to be like God in **true righteousness**”*

- Look closely at the Isaiah 61:10 passage and the Matthew 6:33-34 passage below, how do these passages relate to finding our right standing in Christ and what experiences would they indicate are available for the person who is able to “put on” this piece of spiritual armor?

2. Prioritize your commitment to put on His righteousness. (Remember you are made right through Jesus), OWN YOUR POSITION IN HIM.

Ephesians 6:11 & 13 *“Put on the full armor of God...Put on the full...with the breastplate of righteousness in place.”*

Isaiah. 61:10 *“I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness.” (NLT)*

- **Commit to spending time with Him and you will find yourself in Him.**

Matthew 6:33 *“Seek first **His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things**”*

Matthew 6:33-34 (MSG) *“What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.”*

- **This fosters greater dependency on Him for what He wants to do in you and through you.**

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Soaping Suggestions:

- Isaiah 61:10
- Ephesians 4:22-24
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 1 Corinthians 1:30
- Romans 1:17

Week Four Chosen for Battle
Small Group Discussion Guide
Gaining traction from the Gospel of Peace

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what He wants us to learn to build spiritual stability and preparedness from the Gospel (of peace).

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline.

This week's study and conversation will challenge us to look closely at what kind of discipline we exercise around the words we speak, to ourselves, God and others. If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the introduction to this week's message Pastor Jeff spoke about two objectives or outcomes from "Having our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace."

- How does the analogy of shoes, especially those of a soldier or an athlete affect their stability and readiness or preparedness?

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Over the last several weeks we have learned that Satan deceives, accuses and tempts with the purpose to steal, kill, and destroy. This week the focus of "Know your enemy"(see notes below) was around how he wants to disrupt our peace by gaining a foothold, and thereby disrupting our relationships and our fellowship (Our relations and interactions).

- Can you describe a time you may have experienced a disruption in a relationship or even in a simple interaction, and how Satan may have gained a foothold in your life; disrupting somethings you love and cherish?

From the sermon notes:

He wants to disrupt, and distract us from the Gospel of peace; through anger, gossip, betrayal, unforgiveness. Anything that creates unresolved emotional issues that give Satan an opening and a foothold.

1. Disrupted **relations** (Relationships)

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 *"I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his **schemes**.*

(MSG) *"...**we don't want to unwittingly give Satan an opening.**"*

2. Disrupted **interactions** (Fellowship)

Ephesians 4:26-27 *"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. **"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.**"*

Proverbs 18:2 (GN) *"Fools have no interest in understanding they only want to air their own opinions."*

Know your Armor (The Gospel of Peace)

The points in this section are built around the notion that one of God's great purposes for us, as his children, is to SHOW, reflect and display His peace or His presence to a troubled world, as we learn to stand firm against our real enemy.

- What does the phrase mean, "the world cannot see the Good News if we cannot be Good News." Do you agree/disagree, why or why not?

The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians – when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."

-Sheldon Vanauken

- The simple progression of ideas is to Show peace, we have to know peace and then grow peace. What does that mean to you?

"The Gospel is the good news that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked upon with compassion, people, who are more sinful than we would possibly admit, and sent Jesus into history to establish His kingdom and reconcile people and the world to Himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, came to sacrificially die for us so that, by His death and resurrection, we might gain through His grace, what the Bible defines as new and eternal life."

-Ed Stetzer

- Looking at the notes below, how have you learned to trust God or anyone else for that matter; do you believe trust and confession are critical to building intimacy in a relationship, if so why?

KNOW PEACE

NO JESUS-NO PEACE

KNOW JESUS-KNOW PEACE

Romans 5:1 *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

- **Knowing peace is a product of trust.**

John 16:33 *“I’ve told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable...”*

Isaiah 26:3 *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.”*

Romans 15:13 *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.”*

- **Nothing builds trust like confession.**

1 John 1:9 *“If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

Looking over the following passages how significant is the concept of Sowing and Reaping; how have you experienced reaping something that was a direct result of what you sowed? Can you share a story?

- Looking at the three ways (listed below) to sow with “your words”, what stands out to you the most and what role might gratitude play in sowing peace? How might one gain better spiritual traction from more effort in these areas?

GROW PEACE- You cannot grow peace if you don’t sow peace.

This is the preparation piece to cultivating peace.

Galatians 6:7-8 *“What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he’ll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God’s Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.”*

Hebrews 12:14 *“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone...”*

Ephesians 4:3 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.”

Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace...”

Romans 12:18 “If it is possible as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Colossians 3:15 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful”

- Sow peace in the words you speak to **yourself**/meditate on.

Philippians 4:8-9 “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things....And the God of **peace** will be with you.”

“Our minds are like a garden which can be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild. But whether cultivate or neglect they must and will bring forth, each to its own kind. If no useful seeds are put into it then an abundance of useless weed seeds will fall therein and continue to produce their kind.”

-James Allen

- Sow peace in the words you speak to **God**/pray on.

Philippians 4:4-6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the **peace** of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

- Sow peace in the words you speak to **others**/build on.

Colossians 3:15 “Let the **peace** of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.”

Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

*“Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred let me sow love
Where there's injury let me so pardon
Where there is doubt let me so faith
Where there is despair let me so hope
Where there is darkness let me so light
Where there is sadness let me see the joy
Oh divine master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be love, as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And that is dying that we are born to eternal life.”*

-St Francis of Assisi

SHOW PEACE

Matthew 5:9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."*

James 3:18 *"Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."*

- Ask each person to share what they believe they can do (practically this week) to more effectively sow good seed into the life that they have been given? How would this empower them to have greater stability, readiness, and spiritual traction in their faith?

Close your time in prayer and encourage everyone to Be on Mission.

Possible soaping verses

- **Philippians 4:29**
- **Ephesians 4:26-27**
- **John 14:27**
- **1 John 1:9**
- **Philippians 4:8-9**

Week Five Chosen for Battle
Small Group Discussion Guide
Taking Up the Shield of Faith

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what He wants us to learn to enlarge our shield of faith.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline.

This week's study and conversation will challenge us to focus on our faith by doing what God commands, not what our flesh demands. We are all either living more by our flesh or by our faith. We will look at four practical ways to exercise greater faith. If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the introduction to this week's message Pastor Jeff spoke about a simple principle that if we feed our faith our faith will grow; if we feed our doubts our doubts will grow, whichever one we feed will grow the most.

- What kind of habits are you working on to build a stronger faith (a larger shield)?**

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Over the last several weeks we have learned that Satan deceives, accuses and tempts with the purpose to steal, kill, and destroy. This week the focus of "Know your enemy"(see notes below) was around how he wants to hit us with flaming darts (arrows) to darken our understanding, lead us astray, and create instability in our lives.

- Pick one of the three darts or arrows and describe a time when you experienced one of these three effects (darkened understanding, lead astray, instability) of the enemy?**

Ephesians 6:16 "... taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one." (Revised Standard Version—RSV)

1. The dart of **darkness** keeps people from seeing spiritual **truth**.

John 1:2-3 "The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it."

2 Corinthians 4:4 "Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News."

Ephesians 4:17-19 "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." (NIV84)

2. The dart of **deception** leads people **astray**.

2 Corinthians 11:2 "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, so your minds may somehow be led astray..."

Revelation 12:9 "Satan, who leads the whole world astray." (NIV)

3. The dart of **doubt** creates spiritual **instability**.

James 1:6-8 "The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ... Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

II. Know Your Armor

- Pastor Jeff gave a definition of faith below. We know from many scriptures that we are saved (brought into a relationship with God, apart from works) yet there is an action piece to faith. How do you reconcile that true faith requires action but not works for salvation?

Faith is believing, trusting and acting on what God says is true.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been **saved, through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy."

Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a person is **justified by faith** apart from the works of the law."

James 2:14-17 "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing

about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

- Under the second half of the message Pastor Jeff gave four ways (see the notes below) to exercise our faith that can shield us from the devil’s darts (Our adversaries arrows). Looking over the notes discuss one at a time, how you are learning to:**
 - Believe when you don’t see it.
 - Trust (obey) when you don’t understand it.
 - Forgive (serve) when you don’t feel it.

- How might all three of the above actions, if not performed, be neglecting one’s faith?**
- In what ways can you be confident that you are not neglecting, but building your faith shield?**
 - Build when you don’t neglect it.

How To Take Up and Enlarge your Shield of Faith

Galatians 5:6 *“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”*

1. Believing when you don’t see it.

Hebrews 11:1-3 *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. It’s our handle on what we can’t see. ... By faith, we see the world called into existence by God’s word, what we see created by what we don’t see.”* (NIV & MSG)

2 Corinthians 4:18 *“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

2 Corinthians 5:7 *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”*

2. Obeying (Trusting) when you don’t understand it.

Hebrews 11:8 *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *“Trust God with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and he will direct your path.”*

John 14:1, 23 *“Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”*

3. Forgiving (serving) when you don’t feel it.

Acts 26:17-18 *“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”*

Colossians 3:13 *“Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

Ephesians 4:32 *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

3. **Building** when you don't **neglect** it.

Hebrews 11:6 *“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

1 Timothy 4:14 *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you...”*

Hebrews 10:25 (LB) *“Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do but encourage ... each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.”*

Romans 10:17 (ESV) *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*

Hebrews 12:1-2 *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.”*

- What importance does your interaction with others play in building a stronger faith?**
- Describe how your relationship with other believers is or could be strengthened and thereby have a larger shield?**
- How might any of the above actions/choices tie into or empower you, to be on Mission?**

Soaping scriptures:

- **Proverbs 3:5-6**
- **Ephesians 4:17-19**
- **James 1:6-7**
- **James 2:14-17**
- **Hebrews 12:1-2**

Close your time in prayer and encourage everyone to Be on Mission.

Week 6 Chosen for Battle-The Helmet of Salvation

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what He wants us to learn in order to build spiritual stability and preparedness for the hope of our salvation.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. This week's study and conversation will challenge us to focus on the outcome of life Jesus lived (a Holy Sacrifice for our sin to offer salvation to all who believe), not the outcome of lives we live. You are either focused on the life of Jesus and are hopeful or are looking at your life and are hopeless. Scripture tells us that we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). We will look at the 3 areas that salvation gives us greater assurance. If anyone is working to commit scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week.

What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the introduction to this week's message, Pastor Jake spoke about how the battle is in our minds. How we think about ourselves or others, what we think or dwell on either good or bad, has a direct impact on our outlook on life. It will also determine what side of the battle we are on.

What kind of habits are you working on to keep your mind focused on the hope of Jesus and not the chaos of today's world?

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Over the last several weeks we have learned that Satan deceives, accuses, and tempts with the purpose to steal, kill, and destroy. This week the focus of "Know your enemy" was around how he wants to hit our minds with a double-edge sword (a broadsword was often used during battle by housemen swinging their swords over the heads of the foot soldiers) to create doubt in God's love and plan for us, and to discourage us in our faith when faced with trials.

- Pick one of the 2 edges of the enemy's sword and describe a time when you experienced one of these 2 attacks of the enemy?**
- How long did the devil have a foothold (Eph 4:27) on you with the lies that caused you to doubt or be discouraged?**
- How did you replace those lies with God's truth?**

KNOW YOUR ARMOR - THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Pastor Jake said, "Salvation is, at the very core, God's way of demonstrating His Love and desire to spend an eternity in heaven with you." There are several scriptures that remind us of our Salvation. While it is true that all believers in Jesus have salvation, it is also true that many believers live absent of the hope of salvation.

Does salvation bring you to hope? Do you find it easier to get through the difficulties of life knowing that this isn't forever?

How would you articulate how God has demonstrated His love and desire to spend eternity with you?

Under the second half of the message, Pastor Jake gave three ways to "take on the Helmet of Salvation" in order for us to experience the full assurance of salvation. Looking over the notes discuss one at a time, how you are learning to:

- Trust that, in Jesus, you have been saved from your life of sin.
- Persevere in the difficulty of life.

- Keep your mind fixed on the hope of eternity.

How might all three of the above actions, if not performed, be difficult to accept the assurance of salvation for our past, present, and future?

In what ways can you be confident that you are saved?

How might any of the above actions/choices tie into or empower you, to be on Mission?

Take time to ask your group if they have any prayer requests. Close in prayer.

Passages to SOAP this week

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Ephesians 1:13-14

James 1:3-5

Romans 8:38-39

John 10:27-29

God Bless,
Pastor Jake

Week Seven Chosen for Battle
Small Group Discussion Guide
THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what He wants us to learn to better wield the sword of the Spirit.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. **This week's study and conversation will challenge us to focus on knowing how to use God's word (Rhema) to stand strong in our faith and walk with Christ. Knowing how to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) only happens through intentional use. We will look at what using God's spoken word can do in our lives and how we can more powerfully advance the kingdom that we have been invited into.** If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, (a key habit in this endeavor) give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Choose from the boxes below a few questions to process in your group time.

In the introduction to this week's message Pastor Jeff spoke about a simple principle that "We will never be proficient with a tool we do not use." The tool that God has given us is His Word.

- As you begin your discussion on this week's theme, talk about this principle and the following two quotes. How might the principle (and the quotes Pastor Jeff shared) motivate your engagement with the scriptures?**

Principle: You will never be proficient with a tool you do not use.

"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."
— Aristotle

"The real challenge is to make good communication a handy and well-used tool. Then you are likely to pick it up and use it without thinking." —Max Depree

Over the last several weeks we have learned that Satan deceives, accuses and tempts with the purpose to steal, kill, and destroy. This week the focus of “Know your enemy” (see notes below) was around how Satan wants to steal God's word for your heart, misquote God's word, and distort God's word.

- Share with one another a time when any one of these three things has happened to you or someone you love.

I. Know Your Enemy

1. He'll **steal** the word.

Matthew 13:9 “When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart....”

- He wants to rob you of its influence.

2. He'll **misquote** the word.

Matthew 4:6-7 “(Satan) If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you,... so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- He wants to lead you astray.

3. He'll **distort** the word.

1 Timothy 4:1 “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”

- He wants you to **abandon** your faith.
- Pastor Jeff spoke about “Strongholds” this week in the message and devotions. How could any of the above tactics of Satan create a stronghold in someone's life?

II. Know your Armor

- Look over the three Greek words (see the notes below) that were defined in this week's sermon and see if someone from your group can articulate how they differ and why being able to speak God's rhema is critical for breaking strongholds, resisting temptation and protecting your thought life.

1. What is the sword?

Ephesians 6:17b “... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

There are three words in the greek that describe the “Word of God”

- **“Graphe”** = Most often translated “Scripture”. The written scriptures (66 books of the Bible), the written “Word” of God”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All scripture God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

- **“Logos”** = Most often translated “Word”. The Message (motivated and intended meaning) of all that God has revealed.

John 1:1-2 (NIV84) *“In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of the world....The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

- **“Rhema”** = Most often translated “Word”. The spoken or declared word of God for a specific person or situation.

Luke 1:37 (AMP) *“For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.”*

Romans 10:8-10 *“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”[c] that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”*

Luke 21:37 (ISV) *“Nothing is impossible with respect to any of God’s promises.”*

2 Corinthians 1:20 *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.”*

Matthew 4:1-11 *(The temptation of Jesus by Satan) “Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

Hebrews 4:12-13 *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

2. How to use the sword well.

A. Prioritize it.

2 Timothy 2:15 *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Joshua 1:8 *“Don’t for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it.”* (MSG)

Psalms 119:11 *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”*

- Pastor used the following quotes to emphasize why knowing God's word and making it a priority is important. Read the quotes to your group and wrestle together why we struggle to commit God's word to memory.**

“I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture...No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified”

— Chuck Swindoll

“As a pastor, teacher and counselor, I have repeatedly seen the transformation of inner and outer life that comes simply from memorization and meditation upon Scripture. I would never undertake to... guide a program of Christian education that did not involve a continuous program of memorization of the choicest passages of Scripture...”

— Dallas Willard

Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs.

— Dallas Willard

- **What you commit to memory you can commit to life.**

B. Practice with it.

- As you look over the notes below, ask everyone to share how they have, or would like to, “Practice” using the “Sword of the Spirit, which is the rhema of God” in their daily lives?**
- Ask, “Do you believe that using God’s word (rhema-speaking His word), would make any difference in your experience of God’s truth (Logos-message)?**

James 1:22-25 *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”*

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

- **DO IT: By saying it, praying it and obeying it.**

2 Corinthians 10:5 (MSG) *“Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.”*

- Process as a group how you can build stronger accountability around this powerful tool (Sword) that we have been given?**

Close your time in prayer and encourage everyone to seek to speak God’s truth into their personal circumstances this week as they are on Mission.

Soaping Suggestions: Hebrews 12:12, 2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 199:11, Matthew 15:11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Week Eight Chosen for Battle
Small Group Discussion Guide
Taking Up the Power of prayer

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal what He wants us to learn to engage prayer at a deeper level; to define what prayer is and to refine prayer in our personal lives..

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Chosen for Battle" series, Ephesians 6:10-20. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. **This week's study and conversation will challenge us to focus on our intimate connection to God, i.e. prayer. This is the glue that holds all of the armor in place, it is the dependent relationship that we have with Christ and his Spirit that lives within us.** If anyone is working to commit a scripture to memory, give them the opportunity to quote the passage they are working on.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to ask your group if anyone was "On Mission" this week. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission": 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join; 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts; 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way; 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis; 5) Be open as a group to serve our community; 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the first point of this week's message Pastor Jeff gave a very simple definition and a more weighty definition of prayer. Looking at the note below what stands out to you the most concerning his definitions?**

I. Define Prayer "Pray in the Spirit..."

A simple definition:

Prayer is our intimate connection to God (the Father/the Son/ the Spirit).

Ephesians 3:18 *"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit..."*

- **The dominant contrast in the NT when the Spirit is mentioned is in juxtaposition to the flesh.**

Galatians 5:16-17 *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (flesh). For the sinful nature (flesh) desires what is contrary to the Spirit,*

and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature (flesh). They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

- The goal of prayer is to maintain our awareness of, and dependence on Christ’s presence (the Spirit); accessing His power and control for any given situation.
- Prayer has much less to do with getting what we want from God and much more to do with submitting to what God wants for us; it is less about getting something from God and more about getting connected to God.

A weightier definition:

Prayer is the constant consciousness of my **dependence** on Christ's presence in me and the continual integration of who He is into who I am, expressed through a frequent dialogue to accentuate His presence, His purposes and His power in my life; resulting in an increased ability to keep in step with, and to be controlled by, the Holy Spirit.

- Can you describe how you are learning to differentiate between being controlled by the Spirit versus by the flesh, and how would either one (being in the flesh or in the Spirit) affect your prayer life?

II. Refine Prayer

- As we process together how to “refine” our prayer life to more closely align with the above definition, how does the little word “All ” influence each of the categories in which it is used and one’s overall attitude toward prayer?
- Under each of the following points there is an application question. Select two or three for your group to process/answer together.

1. Praying on ALL **occasions**.

Ephesians 6:18 “And pray in the Spirit on **all** occasions...”
(NASB) “...pray at all times in the Spirit...”

”Time” in Greek is “Kairos” and can mean season or opportunity.

Colossians 4:1&5 “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful... make the most of every opportunity...”

- Prayer is how we connect God to the **opportunities** around us.
- How might you increase your awareness of opportunities to insert prayer into situations and circumstances around you?

2. Praying with ALL kinds of prayers.

Ephesians 6:18 “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with **all** kinds of prayers and requests...”

1 Timothy 2:1-5 (MSG) *“The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how...”*

Types or (“kinds”) of prayer: Confession, gratitude, intercession, fasting, petition/requests, worship/meditation, tongues, centering, healing, contemplative, conversational and corporate.

- Prayer is how we connect our, or others' needs with His **resources**.

Philippians 4:6-7 & 19 *“Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus....And my God will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory.”*

- We are clearly called to have a greater repertoire of prayers that we can draw upon for the specific needs around us. How big is your repertoire and how could you expand your repertoire?**

3. Praying with ALL **perseverance**.

Ephesians 6:18 *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and **always** keep on praying...”*
(MEV & NASB) *“... be alert with **all** perseverance...”*

- Prayer is how we **maintain** our connection to Christ’s presence, his power, and his purposes (His will).

Matthew 26:41 *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 *“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

- What might equip you to be in a greater state of awareness of God’s presence so as to keep a spiritual conversation with God going?**

4. Praying for ALL the Lord’s **people**.

Ephesians 6:18 *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for **all** the saints (the Lord’s people).”*

- Prayer is how we strengthen our connection to our spiritual **community**.

John 17:20-21 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

- If Paul prayed for all of God’s people as did Jesus, how does that impact your thoughts about prayer for God’s people/church in general?**

5. Praying for all **ambassadors** of the Gospel

Ephesians 6:19-20 “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be giving me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.”

- Prayer is how we leverage our connection to the **lost**.

2 Corinthians 5:20 “**We** are therefore Christ **ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us.”

1 Timothy 2:1-5 (MSG) “The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know....He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we’ve learned: that there’s one God ... one Priest-Mediator between God and us—Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free.”

- **Prayer should empower us as Christ followers and disciples to be “On Mission”. What might happen to your “other awareness” if you would discipline yourself to pray for lost people and our role as ambassadors on a daily basis?**

Close your time in prayer and ask each member of your group where they would be willing to commit to “REFINE” their prayer life?

Soaping Suggestions:

- Galatians 5:16-17
- Mathew 26:41
- Ephesians 6:19-20
- 2 Corinthians 5:20
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17