

life group study guide

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

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(Ephesians 6: 10-14)

As believers, we are to be dressed in “spiritual armor”. Why spiritual armor? *“For though we walk in the flesh,*

we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). “Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”. (Ephesians 6:13)

Ironically, before we can put on the spiritual armor and go into battle, we must first surrender and die. Surrender completely to our possessions, desires, all our sin - and die to self. And in exchange, He gives us His righteousness.

READ - Romans 13:12; Jeremiah 46:3-4; 1 Corinthians 14:8

THE BELT OF TRUTH

All the defensive parts of the armor were girded close to the bodies of the soldiers using an ornamented belt. It was the belt that held the scabbard, without which there would be no place to put a sword. The Matthew Henry Commentary says the belt "girds on [secures] all the other pieces of our armor." Our sword—the sword of the Spirit—likewise needs a sheath. Truth is vital because, like a Roman soldier's belt, it allows us to carry the sword of the Spirit and use it effectively. The belt covers an important area of our body, one that is unseen. It's that inward, private part of you. It's your character. The loins represent the lodging place of strong desires and longings. We gird our loins with truth so that our desires and longings, both material and sensual, are protected, cleansed, and controlled by God's truth. Girding our self with God's truth will not prevent our being attacked by lies or liars but will protect the believer from being destroyed by them.

Truth should hold tight to us as a belt holds to our body. In the same way, Christian warriors wearing the armor of God should bind salvation, faith, righteousness and peace unto themselves using the Truth. The Word of God is the Truth. (John 17:17) Jesus is the Word. (John 1:14) Therefore, the Truth is always a Person. (John 14:6)

Q. Is that hidden part of you truthful or not?

Q. Does your conviction to the truth completely encompass you?

By Truth alone we discover who our enemies are, and how they come on to attack us. By Truth alone we know where our strength lies, and with Truth alone will we prevail. We are to gird ourselves with Truth against all false religions and against the various winds of doctrine of the devil that is aiming to deceive us. Truth should always be near and close to us. Truth will keep us close to God and strengthen us against the assaults and attacks of Satan.

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- The Truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)
- The Truth is the judge of your heart. (Hebrews 4:12)
- The belt was also used to protect the sensitive reproductive organs of the soldiers. Only by having the Truth will you be fruitful in ministry and able to multiply spiritually. (John 15:5)
- The belt also protected the legs of the soldiers. Without the Truth you will lose your ability to move freely in the Spirit and will always be dependent on others. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)
- We must become proficient in working with the Truth. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The belt of truth, just like the rest of the armor of God, is Christ himself. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

- Ephesians 6:14 - *"...fasten the belt of truth around your waist..."*
- Isaiah 11:5 - (NIV) *"Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist".*
- Exodus 12:11 - (NIV) *"This is how you are to eat it [the passover lamb]: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand..."*
- 1 Kings 18:46 (NIV) – *"The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel".*
- John 4:24 (NIV) - *"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."*
- Colossians 3:8-10 (NIV) – *"But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator".*
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10 (NIV) – *"...They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved".*
- Ephesians 4:25 (NKJ) – *"Therefore, put away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor."*

Q. What other lessons can we learn from the biblical analogy of having our waist "girded" by a belt? (Luke 12:35-37; 1 Peter 1:13)

Q. What are the dangers of not wearing the belt? (Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 2:15)

Q. How secure is your belt?

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate was a central part of the Roman soldier's armor—it provided protection for the torso, which contains vital organs like the heart, lungs and so on. Without a breastplate, a soldier would be asking for death, as any attack could instantly become fatal. With a sturdy breastplate, the very same attacks become ineffective and useless, as blows glance off the armor. The physical breastplate defends all the vital organs that are contained in the thorax. In the same way the breastplate of righteousness defends everything on which the man's spiritual existence depends.

To be righteous is to do what is *right* in God's eyes. God's commandments are righteousness. In contrast, lawlessness is sin, and sin is the opposite of righteousness. So to be righteous is to obey God's laws of love.

1. What is the principle of righteousness? (1 Peter 3:12)

Righteousness is a condition that pleases God. This condition is provided by the breastplate of righteousness. (Proverbs 15:29; Hebrews 10:38; Psalm 119:172; 1 John 3:4; 1 Corinthians 15:34)

2. How do we practice righteousness?

Righteous practice is to live a holy life. It is to think right, to speak right and to do right. A life regulated by the word of God shall inevitably lead to works of righteousness that will form a fence against the

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attacks, reproaches and accusations of the enemy. (1 John 3:7; Romans 2:13; Galatians 5:22-23)

A life without righteousness is an indication of spiritual immaturity. (Hebrews 5:13)

The breastplate of righteousness is not just about being righteous, but about doing righteous deeds, as the Holy Spirit empowers you.

3. How does God justify sinners? (Romans 4:9; 4:23; 5:17)

God ascribes to us faith and love, and we receive righteousness by faith. The breastplate of righteousness can never work independently of the shield of faith.

Our righteousness is to be found in Christ. He is our true Breastplate of righteousness. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9) The breastplate of righteousness, just like the rest of the armor of God, is Christ himself, our righteousness.

In a spiritual battle you need protection for your heart, because, as Jesus once said, out of the abundance, the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34) If your heart is not right then the rest of your life will not be right either. In the spiritual battle we need to be sure that our hearts are directed by God and not given over to Satan. It is completely an issue of acting in a consistent manner. One of Satan's favorite schemes is to convince us that our will is more important than God's will. If our hearts are not protected our wills can be damaged. The most important thing is to have our wills aligned with God's will. If Satan can get at our hearts, then our wills can become more important to us than God's will, and our whole life can get out of line.

Paul himself used this breastplate of righteousness when he was under pressure to be discouraged and defeated. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not without effect"* (1 Corinthians 15:10a). Paul is using the breastplate of righteousness. I don't care, he says, what I have been; I don't defend what I am. I simply say to you, by the grace of God, I am what I am. What I am is what Christ has made me. I'm not standing on my righteousness; I'm standing on His. I am accepted by grace, and my personal situation does not make any difference at all. So his heart was kept from discouragement.

Q. Are we still trying to be good in order to please God?

Q. Have we been met by our short-comings and resulting guilt?

Q. How can we constantly preclude this from happening?

Q. What separates us from God, causing Him to withhold His protection? Isaiah 59:1-2

Q. Whose righteousness should we be wearing? Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 23:6; Job 36:3; Psalm 5:8; 23:3; 24:5; and 71:16.

"Since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled.

Putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet".

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NIV)