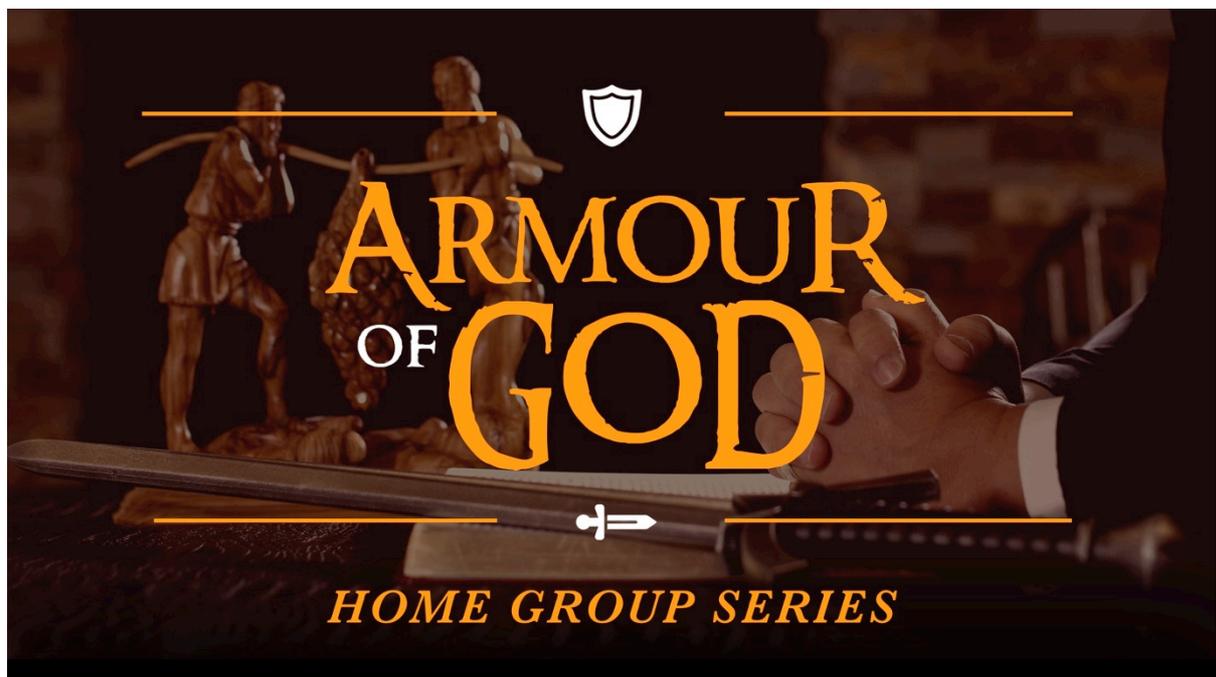


ARMOUR OF GOD

Home Group Series

September - December 2016



*FGA MELBOURNE
MEMBER'S NOTES*

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OVERVIEW

Summary of Armour of God

Series passage: *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." (Ephesians 6:10-18, NKJV)

INTRODUCTION TO THE "ARMOUR OF GOD" SERIES

We know how strong we are in God when we face a crisis. The spiritual armour of God is specifically given to help us become strong in God and in His mighty power.

The Armour of God Home Group series is based on the story of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to survey the Promised land, Numbers 13-14, and the full Armour of God in Ephesians 6:1-18. Ten spies saw the giants living in the land and viewed themselves as frail grasshoppers unable to inflict defeat (Num 13:31-33). While only two, Joshua and Caleb, saw the situation through eyes of faith and refused to be daunted by the challenge. During their exodus from Egypt all the Israelites encountered the same supernatural events. However, instead of the miracles transforming their mindset from being slaves to the chosen people of God, sadly the majority could only see their small strength and limited capability.

The main purpose of this series is to help us become "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph 6:10) in our everyday lives. It is so easy to see ourselves as grasshoppers in the face of insurmountable difficulties, and feel incapable of overcoming our problems. Like the ten spies, many of us have a tainted view of God (as a hard taskmaster or unwilling to help) so rely on our own strength and wisdom. We need to understand the loving heart of God and know that God is for us and not against us. God has not left us defenceless. With the armour of God we can become giant slaying grasshoppers.

Through the six sessions we will come to understand the armour God has given us to protect ourselves from the enemy and to advance the kingdom of God. This series also includes daily spiritual exercises which teach us how to practically apply the teaching. God has given us the resources to have victory in every situation we face.

THE ARMOUR OF GOD		
<p>Belt of Truth</p> <p>Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth.</p>	<p>Breastplate of Righteousness</p> <p>Find your identity and standing with God.</p>	<p>Sandals of Peace</p> <p>Be emotionally healthy and live in an atmosphere of peace.</p>
<p>Shield of Faith</p> <p>Live by faith and not by sight (freedom from fear).</p>	<p>Helmet of Salvation</p> <p>Think spiritually (with the mind of Christ) – have the right perspective.</p>	<p>Sword of the Spirit (Word of God)</p> <p>Speak words of life that will change your environment and circumstances.</p>

THE BOOK: "FULLY ARMED GRASSHOPPERS" BY ROLAND SEOW

This Home Group series originates from the book "Fully Armed Grasshoppers". It was birthed by FGAM's Founding Pastor, Roland Seow, as he and his wife Evelyn personally discovered the hidden power in applying the armour of God to their daily lives. Over 36 years in ministry, they have witnessed many Christians who are weak even to the point of leaving the faith altogether. In the book he shares, in depth, the secrets gleaned from Scripture and personal experience that can help followers of Christ live in the power of the Holy Spirit by learning to tap into the resources (like the spiritual armour).

The key message of the book is *"If your strength is small and can't run with horses (Jer 12:5), do not despair or give up because there's hope for you. You can be transformed simply by learning how to put on the spiritual armour He has given us. Like the Marvel comics hero, Iron Man, you can put on God's spiritual suit that will transform you into a mighty warrior. Without his armour Tony Stark is like any other human being but with his special iron suit on, he becomes the invincible hero, Iron Man. It's amazing what a difference armoury and weapons can make in a battle."*

The book retails at \$19.95 and is available by emailing the FGAM church office at info@fgam.org.au.

Keywords: Spiritual war • The devil • Protection • Truth • Identity • Peace • Speech
F.A.I.T.H. emphasis: All

2016 Anchor Verse

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

Session 1: The Belt of Truth

Welcome the Holy Spirit

Key passage: "...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.."
(Ephesians 6:10-13, NKJV)

A. INTRODUCTION

Whether we like it or not, we are at war. The devil attacks us on six main fronts: against truth, our identity, emotions, faith, mind and speech. That's why God has given us six pieces of armour to protect ourselves using strategies of the Holy Spirit. Aligning with God, by grace, means we will have strength in each area to win the battle, always remembering that we fight from a place of victory that Jesus has already won for us.

Truth is the foundation for Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Without committing ourselves to wearing the belt of truth we are in danger of being exposed. God cannot protect us (our armour will fail) if we lie and manipulate to protect ourselves

B. MAIN POINT

Satan is a liar so only those whose lives are controlled by truth will defeat him

We start the armour of God with the Holy Spirit of truth, who sets us free from lies and deception. In life we face many battles: against the world, our flesh and the devil. However, rather than being defeated, in Christ we can be victorious because we fight from a place of victory.

We cannot be ignorant of our enemy. Jesus knew Satan or the devil as a real spiritual being which he personally encountered during his temptation in the wilderness (Lk 4) and referred to him as a liar and the origin of deception (John 8:44). In contrast, Jesus, the Word of God, is the Truth (Jn 1:1,14;14:6). It is our revelation of truth that sets us free from the enemy's snares (Jn 8:32).

When Jesus ascended into heaven he sent the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth who guides us into all truth (Jn 16:13). Hence, putting on the Belt of Truth simply means welcoming the Holy Spirit into your life and alerting yourself to his promptings and presence. We do not have to fight Satan, rather we are called to place on our armour and to stand (Eph 6:11). We can stand as the Holy Spirit is our helper, counsellor, comforter, transformer and teacher who convicts, inspires and empowers us to be more like Christ. Without the Holy Spirit we are powerless and cannot live the life God intends for us.

Like it or not, we are all engaged in a spiritual battle and the sooner we learn to wear our spiritual armour the better off we are. Even God Himself puts on His armour as He goes forth into battle against the enemy (Isa 59:16, 19b). How much more do we need our spiritual armour when we face our enemies? The Armour of God provides weaponry against the enemy of our souls so that we cannot just survive but have great victory over the Kingdom of darkness.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Isn't it automatic when we become Christians that Jesus blood protects us and keeps the devil at bay? Why do we need to welcome the Holy Spirit every day?

2. How do I know what is true?

3. What happens when we invite the Holy Spirit to reveal truth?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

"If you are a Christian, you are at war. But our approach to spiritual warfare usually falls into one of two extremes - either we place an undue emphasis on Satan and his powers or we completely ignore the existence of a personal enemy." Chip Ingram
Satan is equally pleased with either extreme. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

During each session we will learn to apply the teaching, providing prayer points as an example of how to effectively cooperate with the Holy Spirit to equip yourself with the armour God has given for your protection. A spiritual exchange takes place with God as we put on each piece of the armour which creates a healthy inner environment for our spirit and soul to thrive in and be strong. Regularly applying the armour will help you to be spiritually strong, similar to regular exercise for our physical bodies.

Firstly, you need to believe Jesus died for your sins and rose again from the dead. If is only after you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Saviour you will be empowered by God's Holy Spirit (we advise you to talk and pray with someone about this decision).

When we put on the belt of truth, we welcome the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

- Place your hands on your waste to symbolise wearing the Belt of Truth
- Ask the Holy Spirit to awaken and alert your spiritual senses to the truth.
- Apologise to Him for grieving or quenching Him and invite the gentle Holy Spirit back into your life.
- Renounce every known lie, deception, blindness and foolishness in your heart so that God's truth can remain in you. (If specific situations come to mind that you have not confessed then ask for forgiveness and be reassured that it was given to you)
- Renounce every devious, fraudulent, insincere and crooked spirit you may have acquired over the course of your life.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to refresh you and open your eyes, ears and heart to receive His light, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, discernment and the revelation of His truth so that you can see Jesus as he really is.

After praying this prayer, we need to keep listening to the Holy Spirit as he will alert us to areas in our lives where we need more of God's truth. If we welcome him each day he will show you things that are not right. When this happens quickly thank him and ask for forgiveness. This is how we learn to be sensitive to God's voice and live in the Spirit.

E. LOOKING FORWARD

In the next session we will look at the second piece of the armour, the Breastplate of Righteousness which relates to knowing our identity in Christ.



Session 2: Breastplate of Righteousness

Worship God with confidence

Key passage: "And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he's listening. And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours." 1 John 5:14-15 (MSG)

A. INTRODUCTION

The Breastplate of Righteousness is one of the most important pieces of the armour as it deals with the core of our beliefs - our identity. It follows after the belt of truth, as without truth we will not understand what righteousness is. There are many different views on the definition of righteousness. It is not good works or being a good person, or even doing things sacrificially for the sake of others. Far from it! Jesus is the only way by which we have true righteousness as it is a gift from God (Rom 3:22). When we are born again the Father sees us as he sees Jesus.

This Breastplate of Righteousness is given to us by God so we can be confident in coming to him. We can worship him freely and unashamed, and in doing so we are made holy.

B. MAIN POINT

Righteousness is arguably the most important area in our lives, as it has to do with our identity, position and standing with God, our Creator. A simple definition is being in right standing with God. The New Testament concept of righteousness through Christ is not based on fulfilling a set of legal requirements but on a healthy relationship with the Lord, *Yahweh Tsidkenu*, the imputer of righteousness (Rom 3:22).

Loss of identity is one of the root causes of social and psychological ills. This has resulted in myriads of emotional problems plaguing our society, such as feelings of insecurity, fear, inferiority, hopelessness and even depression. We need to be convinced of our origin and destination beyond this life to enjoy true security and an assurance of our destiny on earth.

We can search for our identity in things such as career, status in society, fanciful cars, houses, human relationships, sex, and even religion. But we fall short. Even seminars on building positive self-image and confidence are like the fig leaves Adam and Eve used to cover their shame.

The breastplate of righteousness deals with all our guilt and condemnation and gives us true confidence that God is with us and has forgiven us. Positionally, we are seated with Him in heavenly places (though at times we may not feel so) and accepted in His presence like a beloved child (Eph 1:6, 20). We are accepted by God and already have His favour through Jesus who became our ultimate sacrifice. We can come to Him just as we are (with all our hang-ups and idiosyncrasies) and don't have to try to be someone else or even the "perfect" you (Heb 4:16).

When we are confident of our identity we can have true intimacy and gain a clearer understanding of our purpose. That way we stop working for God (to gain identity), but work from God as we exercise the authority and dominion as kings and priests, sons and daughters, with our inheritance available for us to use.

When we are confident of our identity we can have true intimacy and gain a clearer understanding of our purpose. That way we stop working for God (to gain identity), but work from God as we exercise the authority and dominion as ki You don't have to be holy to worship but you have to worship to be holy

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Being in right standing with God (Righteousness) is not something that should be taken for granted. What can get in the way of us being righteous?

2. Whatever the barriers you've discussed above, Jesus' work on the Cross has overcome them all, making "right relationship with God" accessible for all. However, sometimes we don't feel accepted by God even though we are. What are some of the barriers that prevent you from FEELING accepted by God?

3. Worship transforms us. It is part of our daily spiritual exercise. How do we worship God?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

"The major strategy of Satan is to distort the character of God and the truth of who we are. He can't change God and he can't do anything to change our identity and position in Christ. If, however, he can get us to believe a lie, we will live as though our identity in Christ isn't true." Neil T. Anderson

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

This spiritual exercise on the Breastplate of Righteousness helps you worship God with confidence, be in his presence and face the world with renewed vision and purpose. Come into his presence to exchange all the peace robbers in your life for God's peace.

- Come to Jesus in worship.
- Thank the Lord that you possess His righteousness through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.
- Confess your sins and forgive those who have hurt or sinned against you.
- Renounce all guilt and condemnation associated with your past sins and mistakes as well as any negative emotions, such as bitterness, resentment, anger or hatred.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you (Ps 51:10).
- Thank the Lord that you are accepted as you are and have become His precious son/daughter with the constant freedom to enter boldly into His throne of grace (Eph 1:6, Heb 4:16)
- Declare that God's special favour is upon your life enabling you to be fruitful and blessed in all you do (Ps 1:3).
- Picture yourself seated with Jesus in heavenly places, reigning with Him as a son/daughter, king and priest (Eph 2:6, Rev 5:10) and continue praising and worshipping Him.

E. LOOKING FORWARD

Next session we will look at the third piece of the armour the Sandals of Peace.

Session 3: Sandals of Peace

Build emotional strength

Key passage: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27, NKJV

A. INTRODUCTION

Each piece of the armour of God connects to another. Without knowing truth we are unable to receive righteousness, without knowing our identity we cannot experience the peace that the gospel brings. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace and Yahweh Shalom (the Lord our peace).

Being guided by peace in our decision making is crucial to make right choices.

B. MAIN POINT

*Peace is our guiding compass.
When we walk in peace we become emotionally strong.*

God had intended for the Israelites to move into the Promised Land soon after leaving Egypt. However their orientation was wrong because they had lost their spiritual compass. Unfortunately, their hearts were more inclined to Egypt and more sensitive to their fears than the voice of God. Letting the peace of God rule in your heart and mind will help to keep you on the right track.

Putting on the sandals of peace builds our emotional health. Even Christians who may know their Bibles well can be weak emotionally and unable to cope with life's challenges. The peace of God is meant to strengthen us emotionally and dispel negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, worry, suspicion, confusion and anger. It is the guiding compass of our lives. Peace is not the absence of trouble but a positive element from the Holy Spirit that drives out negative emotions and changes the atmosphere around us.

God has called us to be peacemakers, not troublemakers. Jesus calls peacemakers "blessed" and "children of God" (Matt 5:9). The devil is a thief and is constantly trying to rob us of our peace. One of the keys to keeping our peace is to identify our peace robbers. These are commonly fear, worry, anxiety, confusion, broken relationships (hurts, resentment, anger, hatred), ungodly perfectionism and even being FOMO.

The secret to peace and rest is meekness. Meekness is total surrender to God and trusting his will for your life. It is not striving to do things, even for God, but coming to a place of rest and confidence in being God's steward. With this heart posture all our ambitions are directed to enhance God's kingdom, not our own. We can be assured of his peace resting on our lives.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the things that rob you of peace?

2. What is meekness? Why is it the secret to peace and rest?

3. What happens when we confess our anxieties and our storms?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

"If we only desire a small piece of God in our lives, we will similarly have only that same measure of His peace in them". Brian G. Jett

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

To start this spiritual exercise on the Sandals of peace, touch your feet as a symbolic act. Begin declaring peace (*shalom*) to the storms of your life.

As you put on the sandals of the gospel of peace, begin with the notion that you are standing before the Lord with His hands stretched out to you waiting to carry your cares, anxieties, burdens, confusion, fears or anything that robs you of peace. By creating an atmosphere of peace in our lives we woo the presence of the Holy Spirit.

- Thank the Lord, our *Yahweh Shalom*, as you cast all your peace robbers to Him.
- As you name them, let him exchange each one with his shalom peace and rest.
- Receive with thanks His beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Is 61:3).
- Speak to the storms in your life, "Peace, be still" and expect them to obey your command.
- Name each storm one by one – e.g., relationship conflicts, business turmoil, depression and confusion.
- Take some time to soak in His presence where His love, joy, peace and glory dwell (Ps 16:11).

E. LOOKING FORWARD

Next, in the next session, we look at the fourth piece of the armour, the Shield of Faith.

Session 4: Shield of Faith

Put off unbelief and put on faith

Key passage: "If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:21-25 (NKJV)

A. INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 6:11 tells us to "put on the whole armour of God". It is not something God does for us, but something that we need to do for ourselves. For this session, as well as putting on the shield of faith we also need to put off things that rob us from our faith. Put off doesn't mean we leave the issue to one side and try to ignore it, but it means we work through things honestly.

What we need is not more repetitive prayer but more effective prayer that is empowered by faith and an understanding of God's Word

B. MAIN POINT

It is not the insufficiency of faith that troubles us but the level of doubt and disappointment in our hearts that robs us of our faith in a good God.

Is it biblical to ask God to increase our faith as the disciples did in Luke 17:5? When asked that question, Jesus replied that the faith they need is as small as a mustard seed. This is the smallest seed sown by the local farmers in Israel. What Jesus was saying is that we don't need bigger or more faith, as the measure of faith given to us when we first believed (Rom 12:3) is more than enough. The problem is not the insufficiency of our faith but the level of doubt that imposes a heavy weight on our hearts and displaces our faith in God.

The shield of faith guards and defends us from things that rob or attack our faith and trust in God. Disappointments in life, for example, can easily turn into disillusionments where doubt and unbelief can fester. If we fail to address disillusionment it can shipwreck our faith. One of the ways to work through issues is to have trusted friends and/or family where you can safely share your doubts and disappointments. Talking things over honestly with others and allowing the presence of God to come in, can bring tremendous healing and empowerment to your life. It raises your shield of faith and quenches the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph 6:16), building resilience into your life.

Release your faith robbers to Jesus and ask him to cleanse your heart and mind of doubt and unbelief. Purposefully read God's Word and allow it to wash us and renew your mind (Eph 5:26). Doing these things will restore your faith and confidence in the only one who is truly good and faithful.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of life's faith-robbers?
2. Share about some of the ways you have overcome disappointment.
3. How do you build faith in your life (in practical terms)?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

"Beloved, I say, let your fears go, lest they make you fainthearted. Stop inspiring fear in those around you and now take your stand in faith. God has been good and He will continue to manifest His goodness. Let us approach these days expecting to see the goodness of the Lord manifest. Let us be strong and of good courage, for the Lord will fight for us if we stand in faith." Francis Frangipane

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

To start this spiritual exercise raise one hand as if holding a shield. As you take up the shield of faith symbolically begin thanking Jesus that He has given you more than enough faith to remove all the mountains confronting you and your family.

- Acknowledge that you have a measure of Jesus' faith the moment you accepted Christ into your life.
- Cast away the fiery arrows of unbelief and doubt from the devil – doubt your doubts and believe that you believe.
- Renounce all your disappointments and disillusionments in your life that have robbed you of your faith.
- Thank God for five things for which you are grateful
- Declare that God is working all things together for your good because you do love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).
- Affirm your faith and trust in the Lord and in His Word, the source of your faith (Rom 10:17).
- Speak to your mountains to be removed and cast into the sea.

E. LOOKING FORWARD

Next, in the final session, we look at the fifth piece of the armour, the Helmet of Salvation.

Session 5: Helmet of Salvation

Align your thoughts with Christ

Key passage: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6 (NKJV)

A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SESSION

Our mind is so powerful and valuable, but it is also vulnerable to the enemy's attack. The devil's thoughts can be so subtle they often sound like your own thinking. We need the helmet of salvation to guard our hearts from engaging with thoughts that are not God's and bring our minds into alignment with Christ.

The Holy Spirit enables us to know the mind of Christ. Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit will help us to stand strong against thoughts contrary to Christ's.

B. MAIN POINT

The Helmet of Salvation symbolises the protection and renewal of our minds

Our mind is the battlefield where the devil is particularly engaged because he knows it's the control centre for the whole person. No one is exempt from attack. An unrenewed mind is incompatible with God's thinking as it stems from human reasoning and logic. While we are often well and capable to resolve problems we face in our school or workplace, an unrenewed mind is incapable of discerning or understanding the things of the Kingdom of God (2 Cor 2:14-15).

We need the Spirit of God to renew our minds and help us to see from a Kingdom perspective. To understand more clearly, we will look at the eight characteristics of the unrenewed (negative) and regenerate (positive) mind in the Table below. Defining it more clearly will help us to see what areas we need to be renewed to have a positive mindset.

	Negative (Unregenerate) Mindset	Positive (Renewed) Mindset
1.	Weary, Faint, Sorrowful Mind Deut 28:65, Heb 12:3	Willing, Fervent, Zealous Mind to serve God Ps 110:3, 1 Chr 28:9, 2 Cor 8:12, 2 Cor 9:2
2.	Double, Shaken, Doubtful Mind Jas 1:8, 2 Thes 2:2, Lk 12:29	Focused and One Mind Is 26:3, Rom 12:16, Rom 15:6
3.	Alienated, Reprobate (rejected, twisted) Mind. Ezek 23:22 (KJV), Rom 1:28, Eph 4:17	Sober and Sound Mind Luke 8:35, 2 Tim 1:7, Tit 2:6
4.	Despiteful (scornful, disrespectful) Mind Ezek 36:5	Loving Mind Luke 10:27
5.	Hardened/Prideful Mind Dan 5:20	Humble Mind Phil 2:5-8, Rom 12:16, Col 3:12

6.	Corrupt/Defiled/Wicked Mind 1 Tim 6:5, Tit 1:15	Pure Mind 2 Pet 3:1
7.	Blinded Mind 2 Cor 3:14	Wise Mind (Wisdom) Rev 17:9, 1 Jam 1:5
8.	Carnal/Fleshly (worldly) Mind Rom 8:6, Col 2:18	Spiritual Mind Rom 8:6, 27; 1 Cor 2:16

No individual can have the full mind of Christ, because no one has the capacity to contain it. Rather the mind of Christ is expressed through the whole body (all of his followers). This is one of the ways we need plurality of leadership and accountability to one another. We do not compete with one another in God's Kingdom but we complete one another. There is no room for pride as we genuinely value and honour one another.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Choose one or two of the positive mindsets from the Table above. Discuss the negative and positive aspects by looking up the relevant scriptures.

2. How can we hear God? What do we do if we think we hear God but find out we are wrong?

3. Why do we need one another to know the mind of God? What are some of your blindspots?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

As we guard our minds and learn to control our thinking we experience greater peace for "the mind is an excellent servant but a terrible master" Robin S. Sharma

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

Before you start your spiritual exercise on the Helmet of Salvation, re-read the table that shows the negative and positive aspects of the mind of Christ. Ask yourself, in which areas do you particularly want to be renewed?

Place your hands on your head as you symbolically put on the helmet of salvation.

- Thank the Lord for His new spiritual mindset that will totally change your attitudes and the way you live and behave.
- Renounce each of the 8 negative mindsets listed previously and replace them with the corresponding characteristic of the mind of Christ.
- Begin to believe that His thoughts are now your thoughts and His ways your ways.
- Renounce your own worldly humanistic thoughts as well as those from the devil.
- Believe and declare that your mind is now completely purified by His blood and you are worthy to have His thoughts.

E. LOOKING FORWARD

Next, in the final session, we look at the last piece of the armour, the Sword of the Spirit.

Session 6: Sword of the Spirit

Speak words of life

Key passage: "Life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV)

A. INTRODUCTION

In this session we cover the last piece of the armour, the Sword of the Spirit which the Bible describes as the Word of God (Eph 4:17). The previous pieces have been for sanctifying, protecting and preparing ourselves against enemy attack and helping us to be alert to the Holy Spirit. The sword of the Spirit is the only piece of the armour that is used to both defend and attack. In life there will be situations where we need to confront the enemy and in doing so we will need to speak the word of God.

Correctly wielding the Sword of the Spirit occurs by taming our tongue and declaring the Word of God until change takes place.

B. MAIN POINT

Speak words of life that will change your environment and circumstances.

Ephesians 6:17 describes the Sword of the Spirit as being the Word of God. Jesus clearly demonstrated to us that words carry life and power (John 6:63, Rev 1:16). Jesus used God's words to resist the temptations of the devil, heal the sick, set the captives free, deliver people from demons, multiply food, calm the storm and raise the dead. Jesus words were filled with so much power that they changed the conditions and destinies of the people around Him.

Similarly our words carry power and carry the potential to do what Jesus did, and even more so (Jn 14:12). A key to being entrusted with His power is the ability to could control our tongue (Jam 3:7-8). Let us take a moment to consider the impact of our words. Jesus said that every idle or careless word of ours would eventually be judged (Matt 12:36). Are we sometimes negative, derogatory, sarcastic, deceitful or discouraging in the things we say? Have we hurt others with our caustic remarks and damaging gossip? Aussies tend to be sarcastic with their humour, but we need to be careful with words spoken in jest and consider the impact it can have on others. Our language should always display honour, respect and love. Remembering, when mixed with faith and love, our words have power to transform lives.

The term "two-edged" sword mentioned in Hebrews 4:12 in the original Greek actually means "two-mouthed" (*distomo*) sword. *Distomo* is a Greek adjective to describe things which have two mouths, such as a river, branching roads or sword (edges). When our mouth and God's mouth meet together like the point of a two-edged sword, God's words become our words and they become sharp and powerful with the ability to set captives free. Furthermore, when we declare the Word of God we can create things which were previously non-existent (Rom 4:17). There is a place in the spiritual battle for us to decree and declare something so that it becomes established. What we hear from the Lord we declare the word, so that light will shine on your way and things will become clear.

Do you use the sword of the Spirit to confront life's "giants" or do you drown yourself in negative speech?

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Our words are powerful. Share an experience where someone has said something positive to you that has greatly impacted your life.

2. How should we be thinking about the words we use? What are some guidelines for good speech?

3. Have you tried declaration prayers? What has been the result?

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home

"The Kingdom of God is voice activated" Brian Simmons

D. START YOUR SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

The sword of the Holy Spirit is not only manifested in our speech but more so in prayer. Declaration of God's Word to our situation is also one of the many kinds of prayer mentioned in the Bible.

To start this spiritual exercise place hand on your mouth.

- Begin by thanking the Lord that His weapons are not weak but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor 10:4).
- Take the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and declare that you shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from His mouth.
- Ask the Holy Spirit, to anoint your words today and let it be life to those who hear them and health to their flesh – words of truth that will set people free (Prov 4:22).
- Renounce and repent of every careless and negative word or curse that destroys you and others. Ask the Lord to forgive you and cleanse your lips with the coals from His altar and season your speech with His grace and love.
- Declare blessings to yourself, your family and your environment.
- Call into existence the things which you want to see in your life and take the Sword of the Spirit to cut off those things that are hindering you from fulfilling the purposes of God (Rom 4:17).
- Begin speaking God's word to your situations and see the sword of the Spirit do what you cannot achieve in the natural.
- Declare resurrection life to the dead aspects of your spiritual life and expect life to flow into you and bring about supernatural transformation (Jer 29:11).

APPENDIX I: Praying the Armour

As you put on the full armour of God, your interaction is primarily with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Belt of truth (Place hands on your waist)

Good morning Holy Spirit, thank you for being in my life. I alert myself to Your presence and ready myself for the changes You have in store for me. You are the Spirit of Truth sent to teach me all things (Jn. 14:26) so that I would not be ignorant of the devil's devices and would not be taken advantage of by him (2 Cor. 2:11). I renounce all insincerity, foolishness, lies and deception in my heart. Let your light shine into my darkened heart and fill me with your wisdom, knowledge, understanding and discernment that I may see clearly and navigate successfully through this dark and chaotic world. May you grant me the spirit of revelation so that I will be able to see Jesus as He really is and become more like Him with each passing day.

Sorry for grieving and quenching you, Holy Spirit. Alert and sharpen my spiritual senses right now so that I can be more sensitive to your promptings and voice. Help me to exercise my spiritual senses to be able to discern good from evil (Heb. 5:14) and life from death. Gird me now with your truth that sets me free and lead me in paths of righteousness for your Name's sake. I declare that Yahweh Raah (the Lord, My Shepherd) is constantly directing my paths and leading me to green pasture and still waters (Prov 3:6, Ps 23:2).

Breastplate of Righteousness (Place hands on your chest)

Thank you Lord Jesus for your marvelous love to me and paying the incredible price on the cross for my salvation. I receive your righteousness by faith and I renounce and repent all of my known and unknown sins - sins of commission and omission (*there's no need to dig too deeply into your past; just repent and renounce any specific unconfessed sin the Holy Spirit highlights to you*). I have now no more condemnation or guilt in me for your precious blood is more than able to cleanse my conscience of all my sins (Rom 8:1).

Through your sacrifice and precious blood shed on the cross I have Your righteousness and full access to your presence. Just as Queen Esther entered into the presence of the king I come now boldly to your throne of grace as the wall/veil separating us has been removed (Heb. 4:16). Through Jesus, I am now accepted as I am and seated with You as Your son (or daughter) in heavenly places, reigning with full authority and dominion as joint-heir, king and priest with You (Rom. 8:17, Rev. 1:6).

What a privilege it is to be identified with You dear Lord, for You are the Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. In You I find my identity, purpose and destiny. I no longer feel ashamed or inferior to anyone and my worth is founded on Your love and acceptance of me. I am a brand new person, old things have passed away and all things have become new. I declare that I am your favoured child and your presence and blessing are with me wherever I go. As I carry Your presence daily, the mountains (problems and challenges in life) will melt like wax before me (Ps 97:5).

Sandals of Peace (Touch your feet)

Thank you dear Lord Jesus for the sandals of the gospel of peace. Let Your peace that passes all understanding take over my life right now. I exchange my fears, cares, worries, anxieties, confusion and everything that weighs me down for Your Shalom peace and rest that overcomes even the greatest storm. I cast all my cares unto you for You do care for me. I declare: "Peace, be still!" to my turmoil and chaos in my life. I rebuke the spirit of confusion, strife, chaos and fear and I command my affairs to come into God's divine peace and order.

Let the Prince of peace rule in my heart right now as I absorb the atmosphere of heaven and bring it down to my environment around me. Let Your peace saturate the atmosphere around me so that all who interact with me today will be impacted by Your peace. Let the peace of God rule and umpire my heart so that I will know when I am doing things out of Your will.

Shield of Faith (Raise one arm as if holding a shield)

Thank you Jesus for the shield of faith You have given me to quench the fiery arrows of doubt and unbelief which the enemy shoots at me. I hereby doubt my doubts and believe I have mountain-moving faith for faith comes from hearing Your Word (Rom 10:17) and not from myself. Since Jesus, the Word of God, is in me and given me a measure of His faith larger than a mustard seed (Rom 12:3), I have more than enough faith to command my mountains to be removed and cast into the sea (Matt 11:23). I cast aside all my disappointments and disillusionments that have robbed me of my faith and I acknowledge that you are working all things together for my good as I love you and follow your purpose. He is directing my paths and leading me to green pasture and still waters (Prov 3:6, Ps 23:2).

I declare that God is faithful and He will work all things together for my good as I love Him and pursue His purposes for my life (Rom 8:28). God will do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that works in me. I acknowledge that the King of kings and the Lord of lords has given me the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt me without His permission (Lk 10:19).

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am more than a conqueror through Him who loved me. I can run through a troop and leap over a wall through the power of Your Holy Spirit (Ps 18:29). Hallelujah! It is my faith that releases God's overwhelming favour towards me and overcomes the world.

Helmet of Salvation (Place a hand on your head)

As I put on the helmet of Salvation over my head, Holy Spirit I invite You to renew my mind with the mind of Christ. I cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every vain thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). I renounce a weary, weak and discouraged mind and put on a mind that is passionate, focused and zealous in the things of God. I renounce a corrupt, wicked and de led mind and put on a pure and holy mind that seeks rest God's kingdom and righteousness. I renounce a twisted, reprobate and alienated mind that is rejected by God and put on a sober and sound mind that can think clearly and rationally, a mind which is free from depression, dementia or any mental disease.

I renounce a despiteful and hateful mind and put on a loving mind that loves You and my neighbour as myself. I renounce a proud mind that is hardened against God and replace it with a humble, meek and gentle mind that is open to whatever changes God wants in my life. Heal my blinded mind and replace it with a mind of understanding, knowledge, wisdom and discernment that will enable me to see things from your perspective. Finally, transform and renew my mind from a worldly or carnal mindset and replace it with a spiritual mind that brings life and peace (Rom 8:6). I renounce all thoughts that are not from You. May my thoughts now be Your thoughts and my ways Your ways.

Sword of the Spirit (Place hand on your mouth and then extend it out as though holding a sword)

I take up the sword of your Spirit, which is the Word of God, to defeat the devices and schemes the devil has set for my life. I shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from Your mouth (Matt 4:4). Lord I repent of my loose and careless words that have opened the door to the enemy and brought curses upon my life. Cleanse my mouth today and forgive me of all my gossips, curses and negative words I have ever spoken. May my words be spirit and life to the hearers and health to their flesh (Prov 4:22).

NOTES