

Study Guide for the Week of June 1

Passage: Ephesians 6:10-20

Prayer Guide:

This prayer guide is meant to help you facilitate a guided prayer time based on the discussion of the Word. You can be flexible in how this is used but we do want to pray in response to God's Word and collectively as a church for certain request. Remember, in communal prayer we are not a bunch of individuals having individual conversations with God and only taking turns doing so. We are having a communal conversation with God. Help remind people to "share the time" by being mindful of the length of prayers while also reminding them to pray as many times as they would like.

Facilitate through the following prayer topics:

- Ask for God to help us realize our battle is spiritual
- Thank God for the victory that is found in Christ
- Ask for God to equip us with everything we need to "stand"
- Confess any times we have neglected the weapons we have been given and not been dependent upon God in this life

Collective prayer request this week: (this will feature a request for our church, city, or world that our whole church will be praying over. Encourage everyone to write this down somewhere or make a note and continue to pray for it each day)

-Pray for our church to be unified in the message of the gospel and against the disunity and schemes the devil uses to destroy the church

Context and Main Aim of the passage:

Main Aim:In this passage, Paul describes both the nature of the spiritual battle in which we find ourselves as well as the nature of our weapons for the battle. In Ephesians more than any of his other letters, Paul stresses the "spiritual hostility of the principalities and powers against the church." We have come to describe this hostility and our reaction to it as "spiritual warfare." As well as detailing our enemy through this letter (Paul uses the terms "powers," "dominions," principalities," and "authorities"), Paul also explicitly states that Christ has won the victory in a general sense by stating that Christ is "over every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come." He says that "Christ is above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given." This passage helps us understand how to specifically appropriate Christ's ultimate victory in our individual lives.

"The key theme of verses 10-17 is the exhortation to stand in God's strength against the powers arrayed against the believer. The battle lines are drawn between God and the armored believer on one side and the Devil, the rulers, authorities, world powers of this darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavens on the other. Christ followers need the spiritual armor of God because the battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual foes. Paul further heightens the intensity and closeness of the conflict by using the word for "wrestling" instead of more customary terms for warfare. Believers can overcome these forces only in God's strength. They receive this by putting on his armor. The various pieces of armor at the

believer's disposal reflect the arsenal of a fully armed Roman foot soldier. The OT also serves as a backdrop. In particular, Paul's description of the armor of God draws on imagery in Isaiah. These texts portray God and his Messiah as warriors dressed in armor, going out to fight for God's people. Hence, the armor God gives to his people is the armor God himself has already used to gain victory for his people."

Our weapons are primarily defensive, with the one noteworthy exception being the sword of the Spirit, which Paul tells us is the word of God. While not tied to the armor metaphor necessarily, prayer should be seen as a further weapon in spiritual warfare. Paul also emphasizes the importance of the church as he urges intercession for all believers."

Paul describes our enemy's tactics throughout the letter. The same devil who attacked with schemes and flaming arrows has already been described as attempting to gain a foothold through anger and other conduct that reflects the old man and the old way of life.

Context:" Against a cultural background in which successful magical manipulation of evil powers was commonly believed to be predicated on the knowledge of the power's name, Ephesians emphasizes the triumph and sovereignty of Christ over every power- known nor unknown, real or imagined, present, or future." - D.G. Reid.

Potential Difficulties: There are different interpretations and difficulties with the reference to one particular piece of our armor - the shoes for our feet. The ESV expository commentary handles the issue in this way: "The third piece of armor is "shoes for your feet" (6:15). These particular shoes represent "the readiness given by the gospel of peace." Isaiah 52:7 reads, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace." In Ephesians 6, Paul's imagery signifies that those who have their feet properly fitted will be equipped and prepared for spiritual warfare. One debated issue is whether "the readiness of the gospel of peace" (literal translation) means (1) the preparation that comes from the gospel or (2) the readiness to proclaim the gospel. The first option would mean that believers are prepared for spiritual warfare and able to stand firm through the powerful message of the gospel, a message of peace. The focus would then be on the defensive posture of the believer as he keeps his ground, holding steadfast against the forces arrayed against him, since his victory has already been won through the work of Christ. The second option would involve the willingness of the believer to announce the good news about Jesus Christ, including the peace Christ brings through reconciling God and man. This view would imply a more offensive posture, seeing the shoes (or soldier's boots) not merely as something to help him hold his position but as something to help him advance into enemy territory in order to attack (cf. Isa. 52:7).

Supplemental Passages:

God's armor in the Old Testament - Isaiah 11:5, 52:7, 57:19

Different "schemes" of Satan - John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 11:13-152
Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Matthew 4:1-9, 1 Thessalonians 3:5, Luke 13:16,1
Thessalonians 2:17-18

Further Reading

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/satans-ten-strategies-against-you>
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/sacred-weapons-for-spiritual-war>

Discussion Questions to Consider: each week use this set of questions (feel free to add to, re-order or take-away as needed) as a guide to discovering the truth of the passage and the application for our personal lives and missional family

1. What stood out to you as we read this passage? Were there any lightbulb or “Aha!” moments?
2. What does this passage tell us about who God is or what He has done?
3. Is there an example to follow, a sin to avoid, or a command to obey?
4. How does this passage reveal our need for the person and work of Jesus?
5. What would our lives look like if we believed and submitted to these truths, avoided these sins, followed these examples, or obeyed these commands? What would our missional family look like?
6. What in this passage helped you to see more of Jesus and the gospel? Or what moved you to love/appreciate him more?
7. What actions and beliefs do you need to turn from based on the truths from this passage?
8. What is something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedience to this passage?