

# Once Weak, Now Strong

## Summary and Goal

God has exchanged our weakness with His strength in preparing us to stand firm in battle against our true enemy, Satan and his forces of evil. We have been given spiritual armor from God that enables us not only to stand firm against his attacks but also to advance the gospel no matter the opposition we face. We wage war against the enemy and against his designs and his minions as the church's final victory march, celebrating the win Christ has achieved for us.

### ***Main Passage***

Ephesians 6:10-20

### ***Session Outline***

1. Strengthened to Stand Against the Enemy (Eph. 6:10-12)
2. Strengthened to Stand Firm in Spiritual Battle (Eph. 6:13-17)
3. Strengthened to Prevail in Prayer (Eph. 6:18-20)

---

### ***Theological Theme***

God strengthens His people to stand against the enemy.

### ***Christ Connection***

The apostle Paul commanded Christians to be ready to engage in spiritual battle against the powers and principalities of this world. Because Jesus died and rose again, victorious over evil, we follow in His steps—not fighting for victory but fighting from victory.

### ***Missional Application***

We are called to put on the full armor of God so we can be equipped and ready to take the gospel of peace into a world of spiritual strife.

## Session Plan

# Once Weak, Now Strong

## Session 10

### Pack Item 13: In My Savior's Strength Handout

Pass out copies of this handout to group members as they arrive and form them into groups of 3-4 to discuss the quote from John Newton and the questions. As you begin the session, call for some responses for the benefit of the whole group.

### ? For Further Discussion

Why is it difficult for us to maintain a posture and mind-set that reflects we are involved in a spiritual war?

In what ways does your daily life show that you believe yourself to be engaged in battle? In what ways does it not?

## Introduction

Review the David and Goliath story (*or consider enlisting a volunteer to recap this biblical narrative*). Establish why we should identify ourselves with the frightened Israelites (leader p. 130; PSG p. 101).

- ? What are the dangers of reading the Bible and always putting ourselves in the role of the hero of the story?

Show how the David and Goliath story connects to the victory Christ purchased for us by defeating Satan, sin, death, and hell through the cross and resurrection. Then summarize this session on how God strengthens us for spiritual warfare (leader p. 130; PSG pp. 101-102).

## 1. Strengthened to Stand Against the Enemy (Eph. 6:10-12)

Establish Satan's competence as our enemy. Then read Ephesians 6:10-12. Emphasize that our enemy is the devil, not our fellow man, and he attacks us from the spiritual realm (leader pp. 131-132; PSG pp. 102-103).

- ? Why can it be so tempting for us to take the fight to other people instead of the true enemy?

Note that we need spiritual weapons and spiritual armor to engage in a spiritual war. Mention that in the next section of the passage, Paul used the image of a Roman soldier to describe how God has armed us for spiritual battle (leader p. 132; PSG p. 104).

- ? When can we be tempted to take off our armor? Why?
- ? What are some ways you have found strength from the Lord to withstand the ploys of our enemy?

## 2. Strengthened to Stand Firm in Spiritual Battle (Eph. 6:13-17)

Stress that we must see all of life as the place of great spiritual battle (leader p. 133), and then read Ephesians 6:13-17 (leader p. 133; PSG p. 105).

- ? Why do you think the shield that protects us from the devil is our faith and not our works?
- ? In what ways does salvation serve as a helmet?

Comment on each piece of armor and how it corresponds to something God does and supplies. Highlight Jesus' use of Scripture when He was under satanic attack (leader pp. 133-134; PSG pp. 105-106).

*Allow group members a couple of moments to sketch out their understanding of our spiritual armor and to note some ways to remember to take up the armor on a daily basis (leader p. 135; PSG p. 106).*

*Ask group members to fill in the blank for this session on **Pack Item 4: Handout** from the list on **Pack Item 3: Hearing the Old Testament in the New:** "The LORD: Armored..." (answer: "The Armor of God: Strength...").*

### 3. Strengthened to Prevail in Prayer (Eph. 6:18-20)

Clarify how we should think about prayer (leader p. 135). Then ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:18-20. Explain that prayer isn't magic but expressed helplessness. Stress as well that prayer is not commanding the Spirit but putting ourselves in a posture of *submission* (leader pp. 135-136; PSG p. 107).

- ? What does it mean to "keep alert" in prayer?
- ? How should understanding prayer as expressed helplessness shape the way we pray for ourselves and others?

Emphasize the way God wants us to prevail—in advancing the gospel. Add that our spiritual armor protects us so that we can make the gospel known rather than guard it from others (leader pp. 136-137; PSG p. 108).

- ? Paul mentions twice the need for boldness. Why do you think he asked for prayer specifically for that attribute?
- ? Why must boldness for the sake of the gospel come as a result of prayer instead of being something we work up on our own?

### Conclusion

Remind the group that as Christians, we are involved in a war that requires us to fight constantly, but Christ has already won the decisive victory (leader p. 137; PSG p. 108). *Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission"* (PSG p. 109).

### ? For Further Discussion

How can a failure to pray indicate a refusal to believe we are at war with spiritual forces?

**Christ Connection:** The apostle Paul commanded Christians to be ready to engage in spiritual battle against the powers and principalities of this world. Because Jesus died and rose again, victorious over evil, we follow in His steps—not fighting for victory but fighting from victory.

**Missional Application:** We are called to put on the full armor of God so we can be equipped and ready to take the gospel of peace into a world of spiritual strife.

## Expanded Session Content

# Once Weak, Now Strong

## Session 10



### Voices from Church History

“Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.”<sup>1</sup>

—Jonathan Edwards  
(1703-1758)

### Introduction

Most Christians are familiar with the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Many times we ponder this historical narrative and see ourselves in the place of the shepherd David. Certainly there are lessons to be learned from the bravery and determination he demonstrated in slaying the giant soldier. When the Lord is on our side, we need not fear any opposition. This is how the story has been taught in countless Sunday School classes for decades. But maybe the best place to see ourselves in this story is not in the place of David. What if we ought to see ourselves in the place of the Israelites? Frightened, intimidated, passive, weak. We look at our enemy and realize we don't have what it takes to defeat him.



What are the dangers of reading the Bible and always putting ourselves in the role of the hero of the story?

Enter the Good Shepherd from Bethlehem, Jesus the Christ. He faces off against death, hell, and the prince of the power of the air—and He defeats them all. Then, as with the Israelites after the slaying of Goliath, we get to enjoy the victory purchased for us, the victory we did not and could not accomplish for ourselves. After David stood victorious over Goliath, his countrymen jubilantly stormed the enemy camp and plundered all their goods.

This is a great illustration of spiritual warfare for the Christian. We get to work *from* victory, not *for* victory. The victory is won by Christ. Now we get to take dominion out of the conquest He has already accomplished, declaring His lordship and staking claim for His dominion in every sphere of existence.

### Session Summary

In this session, we will learn how God has exchanged our weakness with His strength in preparing us to stand firm in battle against our true enemy, Satan and his forces of evil. We have been given spiritual armor from God that enables us not only to stand firm against his attacks but also to advance the gospel no matter the opposition we face. We wage war against the enemy and against his designs and his minions as the church's final victory march, celebrating the win Christ has achieved for us.

## 1. Strengthened to Stand Against the Enemy (Eph. 6:10-12)

Satan is a fantastic student of humanity. And he should be because he's been at it for centuries. Millennia actually. Satan understands our weaknesses, blind spots, and vulnerabilities. He knows which sins we struggle with the most and what often and easily irritates, frustrates, and distracts us. He knows what we desire, the fleshly longings of our hearts. And everyday, Satan takes all of this information that he has been gathering for so many years and puts it to work, playing all the angles he can exploit in order to bring us down. He is at work every minute of every day to make sure we fail.

Do you ever think about it that way? The enemy is often more conscious of our weaknesses than we are. And he will do whatever it takes to get us to neglect our faith and forget the grace of God. If he can get us to stumble or use us to get others to stumble, he will not let up until he's done it. All because he hates Jesus and wants to see Jesus' glory obscured in the world.

It is for this reason that Paul's words are so strong on the subject of the spiritual war. This is not something we can afford to be nonchalant about. The apostle Peter warned us: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Here is how Paul informed our preparation in Ephesians 6:10-12:

*<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

The first rule of warfare is practical awareness of the enemy. You can't fight well if 1) you don't know whom you're fighting, and 2) you don't know where they are. Knowing your enemy's character (what they're willing to do) and their position (where they may be attacking you from) are key components to successful warfare. Here Paul tells us two things that are of utmost importance.

First, our enemy is the devil, not our fellow man. This is important because we often mistake the unbelieving world as our battle targets. But Paul said we don't war against "flesh and blood." Because sin is in all of us, even those justified by the blood of Christ cannot carry out the fight against other sinners justly. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Unbelievers, by definition, are unenlightened to the things of the Spirit, but they are not our enemy in this war.

### Further Commentary

"Paul has already mentioned 'the Devil' in Ephesians (4:27). His Greek title, *Diabolos*, means 'slanderer.' He opposes. He accuses. 'Satan' in Hebrew means 'adversary.' Consider some other titles:

- 'The Devil' (Matt. 4:1; 13:39; 25:41; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)
- Satan is head of the demons and his minions (Eph. 6:12; also Job 1:6; Luke 11:18)
- 'The serpent' (Gen. 3:1,14; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)
- 'Beelzebul' (Matt. 10:25; 12:24,27; Luke 11:15)
- 'The ruler of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- 'The god of this age' (2 Cor. 4:4)
- 'The evil one' (Matt. 13:19; 1 John 2:13)
- 'The dragon' (Rev. 12:9)

His various names display the fact that he is wicked, powerful, and cunning."<sup>2</sup>

—Tony Merida

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 32. Angels

Besides the creation of humanity and animals, the Bible also speaks of other beings that God created—angels, who are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God,” “holy ones,” “spirits,” “principalities,” and “powers.” In the original languages of the Bible, the word *angel* carries the meaning of a messenger, which indicates one of their primary reasons for existence. Angels carry out a number of other functions throughout Scripture: bringing God glory, carrying out God’s plans and purpose, and reminding humanity that the unseen world is real.

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 33. Demons

Demons are angelic beings who sinned against God and now continually work evil in the world today (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1; Luke 10:18). Demons oppose God and seek to destroy His work, as seen in the Bible’s description of Satan, the head of demons, who seeks to “steal, kill, and destroy.” Though demons have power, they are limited by God’s control and can only act within the constraints of what God permits. In the end, all of the demons will be cast into the lake of fire, for which it was originally created.

Second, we also need to remember the enemy’s position. He attacks us from the spiritual realm. Very often, Christians try fighting the devil’s wiles in the devil’s ways. We assume, for instance, that legalistic behavior will solve our sin problems. But the devil is totally fine with all of us becoming more “religious” so long as we don’t actually love Jesus. No, we cannot wage a spiritual war with human strength. We have to be “strong in the Lord,” operating under “the strength of his might.” We can’t do it in our own power.

- ❓ Why can it be so tempting for us to take the fight to other people instead of the true enemy?

Because we are engaged in a spiritual war, we need spiritual weapons to protect ourselves and fight our enemy. This is why we must wear the spiritual armor constantly. We should never take it off. We should wear it to bed as pajamas. We should make sure we’ve got it on first thing in the morning by turning to the gospel as immediately as possible. This is wartime. You don’t take your armor off in war. You take it off only when there is peace. You don’t try putting on your seatbelt when you see the Mack truck bearing down on you at 70 mph; you put it on before you pull out of the garage. Likewise, don’t wait for the enemy to show himself before you start suiting up. You don’t know when the attacks will come, but you know they will. It is best to sleep with your boots on and your sword by your hand.

We always wear this spiritual armor not just so we can be protected but also so we can stand with strength. To visualize this, Paul used the image of a Roman soldier in the next section, which the first readers would have been quite familiar with. Roman soldiers were not given shields, helmets, and swords to cower in a corner. They were given this armor to stand strong and fight in battle. And we have been given spiritual armor for the same reason—so that we can stand with God’s strength as we defend ourselves. Our enemy is great, but our God is greater. We don’t have to hide in fear from our enemy; we can stand before him. But we can’t forget that when we do stand, we need to stand with our full armor on and rely on God’s strength to win the battle.

- ❓ When can we be tempted to take off our armor? Why?
- ❓ What are some ways you have found strength from the Lord to withstand the ploys of our enemy?

## 2. Strengthened to Stand Firm in Spiritual Battle (Eph. 6:13-17)

We have to become accustomed to seeing all of our life as the place of great spiritual battle. Remember when Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? He was hungry and tired, having spent forty days fasting in solitude. The devil's first temptation was simply for Christ to turn stones to bread and satisfy His hunger. You and I are tempted like this every day. No, not necessarily with food and drink, but to find our ultimate satisfaction in something or someone other than God.

Eventually, however, the devil moved on from such paltry appetites to the big bait. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promised Him they could all be His if He simply renounced His allegiance to God the Father. This is like our daily temptations as well. Every waking moment we stand vulnerable to temptation to exchange our spiritual inheritance for worldly treasures. What will protect us from this constant onslaught of temptation? Paul knew.

*<sup>13</sup> 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 firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*

-  Why do you think the shield that protects us from the devil is our faith and not our works?
-  In what ways does salvation serve as a helmet?

Paul gave us the blueprint for holistic protection against an unholy attack. We are to cover ourselves head to foot with God's armor for protection in the midst of the fierce battles we will face. But remember, this is God's armor, not ours. You will notice that every piece of armor listed corresponds to something God does and supplies. God gives it; we wield it.

The belt is the knowledge of God's truth. A Roman soldier would wear a loose tunic that needed to be secured tightly in combat so an enemy would not be able to grab his tunic and pull him down with it. A belt was used to pull the tunic tightly around him and hold it in place so he would be prepared for battle. That is what God's truth does for us. Knowing God's truth, and living in light of it, prepares us for battle against our foe.

### Further Commentary

“‘Flaming darts.’ Burning arrows were designed to destroy wooden shields and other defenses, but the ‘shield of faith’ is able to extinguish the devil’s attacks. ‘The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ The spiritual nature of the church’s resources is nowhere more plain than in its reliance upon God’s Word, which is the only offensive weapon mentioned in this list of spiritual armor. The Word of God is to be wielded like a sharp two-edged sword, in the mighty power of his Holy Spirit (see Heb. 4:12).”<sup>3</sup>

—S. M. Baugh

### Voices from the Church

“The only offensive weapon that a believer carries is the word of God—and that weapon has more than enough power to wound and defeat the enemy.”<sup>4</sup>

—Yusufu Turaki



## Voices from Church History

“A wicked world, and wicked heart, With Satan now are join’d; Each acts a too successful part, In harassing my mind. In conflict with this threefold troop, How weary, Lord, am I! Did not thy promise bear me up, My soul must faint and die. But fighting in my Savior’s strength, Though mighty are my foes, I shall a conqu’ror be at length, O’er all that can oppose.”<sup>5</sup>

—John Newton (1725-1807)



## Further Commentary

“Paul’s first source for the armor imagery likely included the Old Testament. Isaiah had referred to righteousness as a belt around the waist of the Messiah who would strike the earth in judgment (Isa. 11:1-5). He also had referred to the feet of those who bring good news of peace through preaching the gospel message (52:7). Isaiah’s description has distinct similarities to the shoes in Paul’s spiritual armor, but Isaiah did not directly connect the shoes to those of a soldier. In Isaiah 59:17, the prophet mentioned a breastplate of righteousness and a helmet of salvation the Lord wore as He prepared to judge His people...Though Isaiah mentioned some pieces of armor, Paul brought together an entire suit of armor the Christian should wear. He expanded the Old Testament imagery that Isaiah had begun.”<sup>6</sup>

—Gregory T. Pouncey,  
*Biblical Illustrator*

The breastplate is Christ’s righteousness. When the enemy attacks our hearts, we don’t want our self-righteousness standing guard but the breastplate of actual righteousness—Christ’s righteousness that has been imputed to us and that we seek to live out each day.

Our feet are to be covered with the good news of Christ’s work on the cross and resurrection from the tomb. We often take shoes for granted today or see them primarily as a fashion accessory, but for a Roman soldier, strong sandals were a must. You would not want to have to stand and fight in combat after marching over rocks and thorns with bare feet or poor footwear. In the same way, the gospel of Jesus enables us to stand firm in battle as we proclaim the gospel of peace in the world.

The shield represents the faith given to us by God, through which we have received His grace and live in it (Eph. 2:8). A Roman soldier’s shield was large enough to protect most of his body from both ranged attacks and close combat. Faith in God protects us in the same way. Faith will protect us even when the battle seems impossible to win. And faith has a neutralizing effect on the attacks of the devil, if only we will take it up and use it.

The helmet is salvation, God’s gift to us. A Roman soldier’s helmet was critical to protect him from the blows by an enemy’s sword. When the enemy whispers, or shouts, his accusations into our ears with his forked tongue, we don’t want a helmet based on some trite Christian saying to protect us. We want the helmet to be made of something solid and dependable—something like our salvation. If our minds are ready with the great salvation of the gospel encasing them like force-fields of grace, we are really prepared.

The sword is the Holy Spirit Himself, working through His own breathed-out Scriptures. This last piece of armor is especially important. We can neither defend ourselves from accusations and condemnations nor drive away the foul breather of accusations and condemnations without the powerful sword of God’s Word.

Even Jesus knew this, as we see clearly in His own temptation in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11). At each point of satanic attack, Jesus responded with Bible verses, specifically from the Book of Deuteronomy. The Word of God—all of it—is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword (see Heb. 4:12). The Word of God not only keeps us alive with spiritual nourishment but vanquishes the lies of our devilish accuser.

Take a moment to sketch your understanding of the armor of God as Paul described it, and note some ways to remind yourself to take up this armor daily for the spiritual battle we face.

Sketch	Notes

### 3. Strengthened to Prevail in Prayer (Eph. 6:18-20)

Paul ended his examination of our spiritual armor by calling on us to saturate the battles we fight in with prayer. But we have to be very careful in how we do this. Thanks to some fanciful fictions and inspirational clichés, a lot of bad theology has crept into the church’s thinking on these matters. The way some people talk about prayer owes more to New Age spirituality than biblical Christianity.

The apostle James said, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (Jas. 5:16). We need to take great care to notice that “as it is working” gives a shape to the prayer. Literally, this verse can be expressed this way: “The prayers that work, or the effective prayers, are very powerful.” This tells us two things.

First, some prayers don’t “work.” By this, James probably had in mind that we don’t always get what we ask for when we pray. We may ask God to provide a certain desire or heal a certain wound. Sometimes He says no. And second, we notice that the prayers that have effect have great power. Where could that power come from? Paul tells us:

*<sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

The power comes not from us but from God Himself. The Holy Spirit inspires our prayers and empowers our prayers and receives our prayers and applies our prayers. So we practice awareness of our own weakness that we might simultaneously practice awareness of the Spirit’s presence.

#### Further Commentary

“A believer needs to be fully sheltered within and completely reliant in God and his powerful provision of the gospel, which is the full armour of God. What is commonly called ‘spiritual warfare’ is being able to give a defence of what we believe, as well as evangelism that proclaims the gospel message. It also includes intercession for the spread of the gospel in all places, even when the bearers of the gospel are in prison like Paul (6:20).”<sup>7</sup>

–Idicheria Ninan

## Voices from the Church

“Prayer is the heart of spiritual warfare.”<sup>8</sup>

—Clinton E. Arnold

Prayerlessness is essentially forgetfulness of God. We don't pray more often because too often we think, *I've got this*. But the power that effective prayer has is nothing and nobody less than the Holy Spirit of God, who not only hears the prayer but carries the prayer and replies to the prayer and even inspires the prayer!

But let's take it a step further. Prayer isn't magic; certainly we have no power in and of ourselves. Prayer is expressed helplessness. But also, prayer isn't a magic formula, as if God needed us to move Him or unleash Him or activate Him in some way. I cringe every time I hear some well-intentioned preacher use the phrase “let God”—as in, “You have to let God take control of your life” and “You need to let God be God.”

To make it crystal clear, God doesn't need us to *let* Him do anything. He isn't restrained or controlled by us. God isn't like some tethered toddler on a parental leash at the mall, struggling for freedom to have at the world around him. We have forgotten whose armor we have on if we think we have the power to “let God” do anything. He's God. We're not.

So in prayer, we are not commanding the Spirit or summoning the Spirit like He's a cosmic butler. In prayer, we are not in the place of control but in the place of *submission*. Through prayer we bare our hearts, minds, and souls to the God who wants to be our friend and deliverer. And the more we do this baring, the more we will experience of His power, even in our lowest and weakest of moments. Prayer is essentially weaponized weakness.

No, prayer isn't magic; it is expressed helplessness. It is a verbalized acknowledgment of our own lack of power, of our own weakness. And it is in our weakness that God's power is perfected (2 Cor. 12:9).

It is for this reason that Christ's model prayer given to His disciples to teach them how to pray included an acknowledgment that the kingdom is God's, not ours (see Matt. 6:9-13). We will not prevail if God does not prevail. And since He *will* prevail, the only way for us to prevail with Him is to put our prayers of faith in Him.

-  What does it mean to “keep alert” in prayer?
-  How should understanding prayer as expressed helplessness shape the way we pray for ourselves and others?

We can't miss the way God wants us to prevail. We are to prevail in the same way that Paul desired—in advancing the gospel. With all of the talk about being protected with armor, we cannot forget that our mission is to advance the gospel, not guard it from others. Our prayers must be centered on this reality. We are protected so that we can stand firm against the enemy's attacks, and as God's armor repels each one, we have opportunities to make the gospel known to those around us.

Apart from Christ, we can accomplish nothing. But *in* Christ—having prevailed through Him over the enemy, having been strengthened to withstand spiritual attacks, and having direct access to His powerful presence through prayer—we are more than conquerors. Because of the blessings of the gospel, we who once were weak are now eternally strong!

- ❓ Paul mentions twice the need for boldness. Why do you think he asked for prayer specifically for that attribute?
- ❓ Why must boldness for the sake of the gospel come as a result of prayer instead of being something we work up on our own?

## Conclusion

In the letter to the church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), Jesus called on the church there to “wake up, and strengthen what remains” (v. 2) or else He would come upon them in judgment like a thief, at a time they would not expect. This warning surely resonated deeply with the residents of this city who knew their history. Most of the city of Sardis was located in the middle of a large plain; however, there was a portion of the city, a citadel, that towered 1,500 feet above and had no clear or easy approach. This made the citadel of Sardis nearly impenetrable. Yet there were two occasions in the city’s history when the city fell during a siege, both times due to the carelessness of its defenders. They had failed to be alert, and they had paid dearly for it.

Perhaps many of us today live as if we were in the citadel of Sardis when it comes to the spiritual battles being waged all around us. Perhaps we need to heed the same warning—to be on the alert and strengthen ourselves against the powers and principalities of this world. We are in the middle of a war, and we need to put on the spiritual armor God has given us and always be ready to fight.

The good news is that the result of the war is not up to us. The war has already been won by Christ, so we fight from victory, not for victory. We put on the full armor of God so we can be equipped and ready to join in with God as He advances the gospel of peace into a world of spiritual strife.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** The apostle Paul commanded Christians to be ready to engage in spiritual battle against the powers and principalities of this world. Because Jesus died and rose again, victorious over evil, we follow in His steps—not fighting for victory but fighting from victory.



## Voices from Church History

“God delights in our temptations, and yet hates them; he delights in them when they drive us to prayer: he hates them when they drive us to despair.”<sup>9</sup>

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

## Additional Resources

# Once Weak, Now Strong

## References

1. Jonathan Edwards, "Resolutions," in *The Works of President Edwards*, vol. 1 (New York: S. Converse, 1829), 72.
2. Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville: B&H, 2014) [WORDsearch].
3. S. M. Baugh, in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2273-74, n. 6:16-17.
4. Yusufu Turaki, "Ephesians," in *Africa Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 1464.
5. John Newton, quoted in *Newton on the Christian Life: To Live Is Christ*, by Tony S. Reinke (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 243-44.
6. Gregory T. Pouncey, "First-Century Armor," *Biblical Illustrator* (Summer 2005): 17-18.
7. Idicheria Ninan, "Ephesians," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1647.
8. Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 43.
9. Martin Luther, in *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. and ed. William Hazlitt (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), 40.
10. Michael Kelley, "Five Things Every Group Leader Should Do," *9Marks Journal*, January/February 2012, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalfive-things-every-group-leader-should-do>.



Get expert insights on weekly studies through **Ministry Grid at [MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**.  
Grow with other group leaders at the **Group Ministry blog at [LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry](http://LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry)**.

## Study Material

- "Satan's Strategy: Destroy the Spiritual Vitality of the Church"—Chapter 11 from *Spiritual Warfare and Missions* by Jerry Rankin and Ed Stetzer
- "The Truth About Spiritual Warfare and Why It's Important to Pray"—Article by Matt Erickson; find a link to this article at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "First-Century Armor," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon

H. B. Charles: "The Helmet of Salvation"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

## Tip of the Week

### Depend on God

"It's intimidating to be a church group leader. For a question regarding a biblical text, you're the de facto authority. It is largely in your hands whether the time is well spent or wasted. You stand before a group of people and help move them forward in their Christian walk. And then one day, you will stand before God and re-evaluate together how it all went (Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:1). Nervousness is healthy because it's just a reflection of what you (and probably your group) know to be true—you aren't smart enough, entertaining enough, or talented enough to bring about real spiritual change. That's actually good news, if you let it be. It can move you to paralysis and endless second-guessing or move you to deeper dependence and faith."<sup>10</sup>

*The Gospel Project*<sup>®</sup>  
Adult Leader Guide ESV  
Volume 6, Number 3 Spring 2018

**Eric Geiger**  
Vice President, LifeWay Resources

**Ed Stetzer and Trevin Wax**  
General Editors

**Brian Dembowczyk**  
Managing Editor

**Daniel Davis**  
Content Editor

**Josh Hayes**  
Content and Production Editor

**Ken Braddy**  
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

**Michael Kelley**  
Director, Groups Ministry

**Send questions/comments to:**  
Content Editor by email to  
daniel.davis@lifeway.com or mail to  
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project:*  
*Adult Leader Guide*, One LifeWay Plaza,  
Nashville, TN 37234-0102;  
or make comments on the Web at lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America

*The Gospel Project*<sup>®</sup>: *Adult Leader Guide* ESV  
(ISSN 2330-9377; Item 005573550) is published  
quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One  
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Thom S. Rainer,  
President. © 2017 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or  
write LifeWay Resources Customer Service, One  
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For bulk  
shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email  
orderentry@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5933, or write  
to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author;  
salvation for its end; and truth, without any  
mixture of error, for its matter and that all  
Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To  
review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit  
www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are  
taken from the English Standard Version<sup>®</sup> (The Holy  
Bible, English Standard Version<sup>®</sup>), copyright 2001  
by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News  
Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Unit 1:**



**Alvin L. "Doc" Reid** (sessions 1,6) serves as Senior Professor of Evangelism and Student Ministry and holds the Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He also serves as Pastor to Young Professionals at Richland Creek Community Church. Alvin and his wife, Michelle, have two married children and one grandson. He is the author of many books, including *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out*.



**Katie Orr** (sessions 2-5), creator of the FOCUSed15 Bible study method, is passionate about equipping busy women to experience God daily. She is a Bible teacher, speaker, and prolific writer for blogs, magazines, and Sunday School curriculum. A former Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) staff member and mother to three young children, she and pastor-husband Chris are part of the church revitalization movement.



**Eric Mason** (special session) is the founding pastor of Epiphany Fellowship in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is married to Yvette and has three sons, Immanuel, Nehemiah, and Ephraim, and one living daughter, Amalyah. He is also the founder and president of Thriving, a resource organization committed to developing leaders for urban ministry. He earned a PhD from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and has authored three books: *Manhood Restored*, *Beat God to the Punch*, and *Unleashed*.



**Unit 2:**

**Jared C. Wilson** is the director of content strategy and managing editor of For The Church at Midwestern Seminary, as well as the director of the Pastoral Training Center at Liberty Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of thirteen books, including *Gospel Wakefulness*, *The Imperfect Disciple*, and *Supernatural Power for Everyday People*. He is married to Becky, and they have two daughters.