



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 3

As we wrapped up this dynamic series to start the year, Pastor Jacob taught on Ephesians 6.10-18 which lays out the provisions that a follower of Jesus can access to stand against the schemes of the devil. However you picture the force of evil in this world, one thing is fairly obvious—it exists. In following Jesus, we are often going against the grain. It's not easy, but it's worth the battle. This week, pay close attention to how you are fighting against the darkness, and where God is showing up to remind you of the truth.

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt. Pray this or another prayer as you move into your day.

God,
*Today I pray these words as a song of defiance against the scheme of the devil:
This is how I fight my battles
It may look like I'm surrounded
But I'm surrounded by You
Amen.*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: EPHESIANS 6.10-12

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

- Paul is strong and direct in his use of language here. There is an urgency to his words that invites the audience to take action. The action he instructs is to put on armor that is not our own in order

to stand against the devil's schemes. We'll read in tomorrow's passage that the armor of God is meant for steadiness (to withstand) in the face of evil. It is easy for us to grab weapons and defenses of our own design and go to battle against the enemy that we can see. Paul tells us that the battle is being waged on a much deeper level. **When you find yourself in times of trouble and great urgency, whose armor do you reach for? Your own or God's armor that is offered to you?**

- *God help me to see past the obvious symptoms of evil around me and to reach for your full armor to sustain me today. Amen.*

TUESDAY: EPHESIANS 6.13-17

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- Notice the emphasis Paul places on the word “stand”. While to many of us, standing in one place might seem like passive resistance, what Paul invites us to do is more like standing up to a stiff wind. You can feel the effects of the wind, you may have to brace your legs and lean in, but you do not have to be knocked over. The way that we stand is to put on the full armor of God. It anchors you and allows you to stay in the battle. **Which of the pieces of spiritual armor bring you the most comfort and resolve? Which would you like to commit to picking up today?**
- *God, you have always been my strength in the constant battle to resist the forces of darkness within and around me. May I be fully adorned by your truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: EPHESIANS 6.18

¹⁸ *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

- This line is more than a bow on the description of God's full armor, it is a continuation. When we are putting on the armor of God, we keep our focus on the bigger picture by praying to God. We give context to the battle against the devil's schemes by “always praying for all the Lord's people”. Paul knew that it can be tempting to get caught up in the battle and forget about the responsibility that one has to the larger community. We stand against the devil's schemes not just for ourselves, but for the sake of the people of God. **How is your practice of praying for others? Do you see it as part of standing up to the powers of this dark world?**
- *God, I pray for those around me today. May they find strength to persevere through their trials in the face of evil. Amen.*

THURSDAY: 1 PETER 5.8-11

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰ *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

- Peter confirms what Paul has written. Evil is real, and standing firm against it is our best resistance. Also like Paul, Peter puts this current reality in the context of the larger group of believers. When we struggle against evil we are not alone. God's people around the world can relate even if the evil they face is manifest in very different ways. A follower of Jesus on the other side of the world has the same hope we have today—Jesus himself will restore us, making us strong and steadfast. **As you think about your own suffering, what do you know of the suffering of believers in other parts of the world? How can you stay united with them in the “eternal glory” of God in Christ?**
- *Jesus, you have made the eternal glory of God visible to me. Make me strong, firm, and steadfast in my faith today. Amen.*

FRIDAY: REVELATION 12.9-12

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰ *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:*

*“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.*

*For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.*

¹¹ *They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.*

¹² *Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!
He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”*

- These colorful and descriptive words come from the Revelation given to John. He saw these images of the defeat of the devil. By the blood of the lamb (the sacrifice of Jesus) we have the final victory over evil. Yet even in this period of defeat for the devil, he lashes out angrily. That's what we experience now. Even though evil has no chance to be victorious, we live in a world not yet redeemed and made new. We are subject to darkness in this world, but it will not follow us into God's new Heaven and new earth. **Are you able to stay focused on the victory that has already been won through Jesus? What practices help you to remember?**
- *Jesus, I thank you for the victory that you have already won. Help me to live as one who faces evil with the confidence I have in you. Amen.*

SATURDAY: JAMES 4.7-10

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

- Staying close to God is our greatest resistance to the devil. The posture of one who claims the victory we have in Christ is humility and submission. We don't lift ourselves up, God will do that for us. When we boast as if we ourselves are victorious, we make room for evil to creep in. **What are some intentional ways you are submitting to God in this season?**
- *Jesus, I give you my life and long to be lifted up by you. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Spend a moment exploring the images from Ephesians 6. 10-17.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- How do you respond to the language of armor? What does it make you think of?
- Identify how each of these elements are important in your life of faith and share with your group.
 1. *Helmet: I am Saved. What are you saved from?*
 2. *Breastplate: I am Righteous. What does it mean to wear the righteousness of Christ?*
 3. *Belt: I know the Truth. How do you stay centered on the Truth?*
 4. *Shoes: Peace. How do you know when you are not wearing shoes of peace? What do they sound like in other moments?*
 5. *Shield: I have Faith. What kinds of things can your faith shield you from?*
 6. *Sword: The Word of God. How does the Word of God provide you with spiritual strength?*