

## 6 | We Stand Together in Spiritual Battle



### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

A friend of mine recently prepared his house for sale. He cleaned, painted, and staged it. Pride of ownership was gleaming in every room. Buyers flooded the home and boasted of its beauty. Everything was going great until the home inspection revealed a significant problem: an army of termites was damaging the structural integrity of the floor. No amount of paint and redecorating could erase the unseen threat hidden deep beneath the visible surface. My friends eventually did sell their house, but they learned a valuable lesson: Things aren't always what they seem on the outside.

Spiritually, things might look OK to the outside world, but below the surface a war rages. No one is immune to this conflict. It's not a physical war; it's a spiritual battle. Christians might not always think in those terms, but the battle is still there. Only by realizing we're in this fight can we stand against Satan and his wiles. Thankfully, God doesn't send His children into battle ill-equipped. He provides a spiritual armor by which we can engage the enemy and stand strong.

# GROUP TIME

**THE POINT:** We stand \_\_\_\_\_ with God's \_\_\_\_\_ and the support of others.

A lot of people, both inside and outside the church, view the Christian life as an effort to be better people, help others, and be good neighbors. But Jesus didn't save us to make us *better* people; He saved us to make us *new* people. Jesus wants to radically transform everything in our lives. The life Jesus has called us to live isn't a leisurely stroll down the religious boardwalk. The Christian life is a spiritual battle; it's open warfare for our allegiance.

**Ephesians 6:10-13** <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. <sup>13</sup> For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.

**We are in a spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ .**

Paul's description of the Christian life couldn't have been any clearer! Look at the imagery he used: armor, a stand against the devil, the struggle with spiritual forces of evil, and a call to resist and be prepared. Paul described warfare, plain and simple.

In this battle, we fight against a shrewd enemy—the devil. The “schemes of the devil” (v. 11) describe his tactics of craftiness and deception. Satan is cunning in the way he deals with God's children. He knows how to spin things to his advantage and our demise, and he does it subtly—behind the scenes—primarily by twisting God's truth. He tries to convince us that God's way isn't best. His goal is for us to conform to the ways of the world rather than submit to Christ and allow Him to conform us into the character and plan of God.

**Ephesians 6:14-17** <sup>14</sup> Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, <sup>15</sup> and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit — which is the word of God.

God \_\_\_\_\_ us and \_\_\_\_\_ us completely.

Spiritual warfare certainly warrants an appropriate level of seriousness, but Christ-followers have no reason to be afraid. God hasn't deployed us into battle wearing flip-flops and holding a broomstick.

- ▶ Since our battle with the enemy isn't a physical struggle, no physical weapon will do. Spiritual battles require spiritual resources. Not just any spiritual resource will do either. We need God's resources for the battle at hand.
- ▶ As Christians, we can know and be confident that our God abundantly supplies spiritual resources. He promises to supply everything we need to fight the wiles of the enemy. And He promises to protect us from spiritual harm until we see Him face-to-face.

ENGAGE

### READY FOR BATTLE

In the space below, draw a picture of yourself armed with God's armor as listed in Ephesians 6:14-17. Underline the areas where you feel strong in the armor of God, and circle the areas that still need growth.

**Ephesians 6:18-20** <sup>18</sup> Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. <sup>20</sup> For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.

We are to \_\_\_\_\_ for one another as we stand in battle.

Since the Christian life is a spiritual battle for our allegiance, then the gravity of that truth compels us to stand with one another through prayer. Praying for one another is our greatest weapon in spiritual warfare. Prayer is about so much more than asking God to meet tangible needs for us. In addition to praying for physical provision, Christ-followers should also pray for spiritual needs in one another's lives.

## LIVE IT OUT

What will you do to stand with the body of Christ in the face of spiritual battles? Consider the following ideas.

- ▶ **Take your stand.** Through prayer, commit yourself anew to standing firm in the strength of the Lord in spiritual battle.
- ▶ **Stand with your church.** Take spiritual ownership of your church by praying regularly for your pastor(s), teacher(s), and fellow church members. Begin a prayer journal as a guide to help you pray.
- ▶ **Stand with the nations.** Research the global church including missionary needs, unreached people groups, and persecution. Check out the following websites for information and specific prayer requests: [imb.org](http://imb.org), [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net), and [operationworld.org](http://operationworld.org).

## TALK IT OUT

**Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Ephesians 6:10-20, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.**

The world is at war, and every human being is involved in the conflict. But this isn't a war of country against country; it's a spiritual battle. As believers, we often don't think in these terms; however, only by realizing we're in this fight can we stand in Christ against Satan and his wiles. God doesn't send His children into battle ill-equipped. He provides spiritual armor by which we can engage and triumph over the enemy.

*What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "spiritual warfare"?*

*What are some practical ways we can prepare for spiritual battle?*

*How would you summarize the principles of prayer taught in verses 18-20?*

## DAY 1: Refuse to become complacent; remain alert.

### Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.

In the garden of Eden, Satan declared war on God's people by twisting His word and asking, "Did God really say ... ?" (Genesis 3:1). The enemy has been using that same devious strategy ever since. The battle is fought over our allegiance and worship. Will we believe God or believe the world? Will we live for self or live for Christ?

Christians are most assuredly involved in a war of eternal proportions, but it's an invisible fight. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens" (Ephesians 6:12). Throughout church history, Christians have mistakenly taken up arms against all sorts of people in the name of Jesus. But our fight isn't a fight against people of other religions. Neither is it a political fight against governments or political parties. And it's not a provincial fight against another country. The fight we face isn't a visible, physical war; it's an invisible, spiritual battle.

*Summarize 1 Peter 5:8-9 in the space below. Pray for an attentive spirit so that you might not fall for the enemy's schemes.*

*"Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour."*

1 PETER 5:8

## DAY 2: Allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen you.

### Read Ephesians 6:10-13.

If anyone could feel justified in fighting against people, it would be Paul; he surely had earned the right! He had faced “far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, many times near death” (2 Corinthians 11:23b)—all at the hands of people. But this battered and bruised apostle pointed away from physical attacks against other people; he called us to be vigilant in a spiritual battle. Five times in Ephesians 6 we're pushed toward vigilance:

- ▶ “Be strengthened by the Lord” (v. 10).
- ▶ “Put on the full armor of God” (v. 11).
- ▶ “Take up the full armor of God” (v. 13).
- ▶ “Resist in the evil day” (v. 13).
- ▶ “Take your stand” (v. 13).

Allegiance to God requires vigilance, but thankfully we're not alone. The power of the gospel empowers us to stand.

*Our spiritual battle isn't an individual one. Stay connected to the rest of the army, the church, by remaining involved each week in your church.*

## DAY 3: Depend on God to equip and empower you.

### Read Ephesians 6:14-17.

In addition to informing us that we're in a spiritual battle where the stakes are monumental, Paul also revealed that God equips us and protects us completely. Therefore, we can stand firm with no fear. First, God supplies His protection. Using a Roman soldier's armor as a metaphor, Paul wrote that God sufficiently clothes us for battle through the spiritual resources Jesus provides.

Ephesians 6:14-17 teaches us that God supplies His people with His power. We shouldn't expect much success in winning the spiritual battle by ourselves. We need one another—the body of Christ—standing together against the schemes of the enemy. The church is part of God's supply for fighting spiritual battles. And, we can trust God to supply us with His power. The same power that raised Jesus from the grave both saves your soul and empowers you to stand in the face of the enemy.

*What particular part of the armor of God do you feel like you need more of right now? Pray for those needs, and rely on God's promise of protection.*

## DAY 4: Make prayer a priority each day.

### Read Ephesians 6:18.

We see several truths in verse 18 about the way we should pray for one another.

- ▶ **Pray all the time.** Whether it's ten minutes or an hour, Christians should set aside a special time every day that they devote entirely to prayer. But we also should pray throughout the day. We might voice a prayer in the car, while walking, or before bed.
- ▶ **Pray in the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit of God lives inside of us enabling us to know God, worship God, and pray to God. (See also Romans 8:26.) Often when we pray, we can become stuck and don't know what else to pray. In those moments, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us know how we should pray. It's remarkable what then comes to mind.
- ▶ **Pray with engaged minds.** As we pray we're to "stay alert with all perseverance and intercession" (Ephesians 6:18). Some of the best prayer warriors I know keep a prayer journal with categories for family members, friends, the lost, missionaries, church leaders, those who are sick, and other pertinent needs. Praying through different categories on different days expands our prayer requests and better engages our minds during prayer.

*Memorize Ephesians 6:18 as a reminder of the importance of prayer as we face spiritual battles.*



## DAY 5: Pray for the advancement of the gospel.

### Read Ephesians 6:19-20.

As the body of Christ, praying with and for one another is the greatest support we have to give. It's also our greatest weapon in spiritual warfare. Here are three more things we can pray for.

- ▶ **Pray for the church.** It may be easy to pray for our families, but Paul also told us to pray with “intercession for all the saints” (v. 18). We have a responsibility to pray for the physical and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and also to pray that we would stand firm together in spiritual battle.
- ▶ **Pray for the gospel's advance.** Whether it's for our church leaders, fellow church members, or missionaries we've sent, we should pray for them as Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him: “Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. ... Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should” (vv. 19-20).
- ▶ **Pray for the persecuted.** At the moment of his writing, Paul was in prison, “an ambassador in chains” (v. 20). Believers all over the world today experience similar sufferings and imprisonment. Paul didn't solicit prayers that his persecution would end; but he did want boldness to speak regardless of his situation. Of course, we can pray for persecution to stop, but we must certainly pray that those currently under persecution would have the strength to endure and boldness to speak the gospel no matter the cost.

*Use these verses as a guide to pray for your pastor and other church leaders. Ask God to meet their spiritual and physical needs as they serve Him.*

*“The most potent force on the planet  
always was and always will be  
the blood of Jesus Christ. It sets people free!”*

CHRISTINE CAINE