PUTTING ON THE ARMOR

EQUIPPED AND DEPLOYED FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

CHUCK LAWLESS
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Dr. Lawless cowrote the popular LifeWay resource Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory. Lawless describes Putting on the Armor as an enhanced version of chapter 6 of the original book and the next step for those who have completed that study. While this second study stands alone, both are needed for the practical insights that will benefit not only the individual but also the family and church.

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INTRODUCTION

I hope you have chosen to do this study because you are interested in the topic of spiritual warfare. If so, you’re not alone. Since the late 1980s, hundreds of books about the topic have been published. Many Web sites address the topic. Perhaps you’ve even completed the previous study that John Franklin and I cowrote—*Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory* (Lifeway, 2001). Wherever your interest lies, I’m glad that you’re joining me for these seven weeks. Although I may not know you by name, I’m praying for you as you begin. My prayer is that God will deploy you into your community with the gospel, fully armed and equipped for the battle.

This resource is designed primarily for group use, although individuals will benefit from personal study as well. It focuses on the armor of God passage in Ephesians 6:10-20. For six weeks, you will study a different piece of the armor. Each day’s lesson will include activities to reinforce what you learn from God’s Word. On the first day of each new week, you will have opportunity to review all of the armor pieces previously studied. Week 7 emphasizes “The Power of Prayer” that closes Paul’s section on the armor pieces.

Week 1 teaches the basics of spiritual warfare and will help you become familiar with the outline of the overall study. Beginning with day 2 of week 1, I’ll challenge you to read through the Book of Ephesians in the optional “Daily in the Word” assignment at the end of each lesson.

I want to help you to read this book systematically because I believe so strongly that the Word of God is a powerful weapon against the Enemy. You will also find a suggested verse to memorize each week. Hiding God’s Word in your heart will equip you with ready inspiration and ammunition when the Devil pursues you.

The activities in your five-day-a-week study should be completed on your own during the week. The activities will help you apply to your life what you learn. In the margins of the lessons you will find additional information such as word studies and Bible passages.

Spiritual warfare does not need to be a mysterious unseen process; the basis for victory in spiritual warfare is a personal love relationship with Jesus Christ. If you have not yet acknowledged Him as Lord of your life, turn to page 147 and read “The ABCs of Salvation.”

Let me pray for you as you begin this study.

Father, I thank You for Your Word that shows us how to win spiritual battles, and I’m grateful for each person who has chosen to do this study. I pray that each one will see You more than they see the Enemy, love You more than anything the Enemy offers, and experience victory (God’s will for you) more than defeat. God, I ask You to equip all of us in Your armor and then deploy us as Your witnesses throughout the world. Thank You that we can march forward in victory, empowered by Your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ name I pray,

*Chuck Lawless*
Ed and Ann Miller, a Christian couple, have worked diligently to rear their three children. Jason, the oldest, has just returned home on break after his third year in college. Al, the second son, just turned 19, and daughter Reba is 16. Around the family dinner table one night, Jason surprised his parents with these questions: “How do we know that Christianity is true? And what makes us believe that theories like evolution aren’t true?”

Immediately, Jason’s parents assumed that his college professors had filled their son’s head with lies from the Enemy. They began to pray against the influence of the professors, asking God to protect Jason from their false teachings. They didn’t want the father of lies to win the battle in their son’s life. Meanwhile, Jason wondered if there are universal truths—absolutes, regardless of the situation—and how you know if they are true.

In week 1 we will explore the issue of truth. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ; a written body of Scripture, the Bible; and what we feel, say, and do in everyday life. Knowing the truth equips us for discerning the presence and purposes of Satan in our lives.

**PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE**

The background of this study is the Book of Ephesians, a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to believers around the area of Ephesus in Asia Minor. This letter neatly divides into two major sections: the theological foundation (chapters 1–3) and the practical application (chapters 4–6). In the second section, Paul warned that we are in a spiritual war and must put on the full armor of God in order to win this battle.

Read Ephesians 6:11-12 in the margin.

In this text Paul clearly indicated who our enemy is not and who our enemy is. We don’t wrestle against human beings (“flesh and blood”), even though we may...
wrongly assume that other people are the problem. Paul wrote this letter from a prison cell, where it would have been easy for him to see the guards who held him as the enemy. Instead, he saw them as people God loved and who needed salvation (see Acts 16:22-34). How different our churches would be if we remembered Paul’s teaching that our war isn’t against one another!

How would you counsel Ed and Ann Miller? For example, were the college professors the real problem?

Christians battle against a supernatural enemy (“the Devil”), whose forces would overwhelm us except for the presence of God in our lives. In fact, Paul used multiple terms (rulers, authorities, world powers, and spiritual forces) to describe the innumerable powers that stand against us.

Paul was not the only Bible writer to describe this battle. Match each scriptural passage with its corresponding story.

_____ 1. Genesis 3:15   A. Satan enticed David to take a census.
_____ 2. 1 Chronicles 21:1   B. The Devil will ultimately be bound.
_____ 4. 1 Peter 5:8   D. The snake (Satan) will be defeated by someone from the seed of the woman (Christ, from the seed of Mary).
_____ 5. Revelation 20:1-3   E. The Enemy seeks to devour believers.

A tactician who entices us to sin, this very real Enemy causes disorder in our lives and seeks to devour us. Just listen to some of his names, and you’ll get a sense of his character: accuser, adversary, the Devil, the dragon, the Evil One, the god of this age, the father of lies, the serpent, the tempter. This Enemy is not one with whom we want to tangle in our own power.
Putting on The Armor

Good news, however, prevails: God planned from the beginning to defeat the Enemy and did so through the death of Jesus (Gen. 3:15; Col. 2:15). Now we can live in victory by putting on the full armor of God. As we will see, putting on the armor requires believing and acting according to God’s Word. When we do both, we are equipped and deployed for spiritual warfare.

What We Believe Is Important in Spiritual Warfare

To see the truth of this statement, read the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

What beliefs do you think led Ananias and Sapphira to act deceitfully?

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Now read about Peter and John in Acts 4:13-22. What beliefs do you think led them to act obediently?

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira believed their additional wealth was more important than truthfulness and holiness. Maybe they believed they would have opportunity to make the situation right later on. They likely believed that they could hide their sin or that God wouldn’t judge them for their secret. Whatever the case, Ananias and Sapphira ultimately acted based on incorrect beliefs.

On the other hand, Peter and John believed that obedience to the Father was more important than anything the Enemy threatened. They chose to risk their lives on the truth of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Right beliefs led them to right actions. Paul, too, understood this truth. In the first three chapters of Ephesians he laid the theological foundation (that is, the beliefs) for our victory in spiritual warfare.

You will want to open your Bible to Ephesians and read each of these referenced verses showing us that believers are in Christ.

We are chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4) and have “redemption through His blood” (1:7). In Him we have an inheritance (1:11). Our hope is in Him (1:12), and He has sealed us (1:13). Through Him we now have “boldness, access, and confidence through faith” (3:12). If we believe these truths—that Christ has chosen us, sealed us, and given us access to the Father—we should also believe that in Christ we can win spiritual battles. Right beliefs are essential for engaging the Enemy.

How I wish somebody had taught me about my identity in Christ when I was a young believer! I knew that God had saved me, but I lived a defeated Christian life for several years while I tried in my own strength to be obedient to God. No one showed me the importance of who I am in Christ. Now, I know that right beliefs would have helped me fight the battles I faced.

Right beliefs are essential for engaging the Enemy.
Check (✔) the statements that most reflect your current viewpoint.

_____ 1. I'm grateful for who I am in Christ.
_____ 2. I haven't thought much about my position in Christ.
_____ 3. I'm not certain that I am in Christ.
_____ 4. I want to learn more about who I am in Christ.
_____ 5. I know who I am in Christ and have been experiencing daily spiritual victories.
_____ 6. My actions don't generally show that I am in Christ.
_____ 7. I'm growing in Christ, but I still struggle with obedience.

More In-Depth Study
In the first three chapters of Ephesians, highlight the phrases “in Christ,” “in Christ Jesus,” “in Him,” “through Jesus Christ,” “through Him,” “of Him,” and “with the Messiah.” Then meditate on all of the blessings Paul wrote that we receive because we are “in Him.” Thank God for these blessings.

What We Do Is Also Important in Spiritual Warfare
While right beliefs are important, they alone aren't always enough to defeat the Enemy. In fact, even the demons rightly believe in one God and shudder (Jas. 2:19)—but their actions are evil. Right beliefs must lead to right actions, and those right actions defeat the Enemy.

In the last three chapters of Ephesians, Paul described a life characterized by church unity (Eph. 4:1-16), personal holiness (4:17–5:21), and Christlike relationships in our homes (5:22–6:4) and in our workplaces (6:5-9). Paul essentially said that what we believe must affect every area of our lives. How can we say we believe something if those beliefs don't change the way we live?

Look back at those areas that Paul described in Ephesians 4–6: personal holiness, godly relationships in our home, Christian living before our coworkers, and unity in the church. Achieving any of these goals is never easy because the Enemy strikes against us and our relationships. He delights when our lifestyle reflects him more than God. He loves it when our homes are fractured and workplaces disturbed by bad attitudes and poor choices. The Devil is especially pleased when church members see other believers as the enemy and attack one another. God’s plan is for unity among believers (see John 17:22-23). When arguing and fighting occur in a church, our witness to the world is seriously weakened.

Mark any of these areas where the Enemy currently seems to be attacking you.

❑ My personal holiness—I am struggling with sin issues.
❑ My workplace—I am not getting along with someone there.
❑ My family—our relationships are strained.
❑ My church—some division is occurring in the congregation.

The way to counter the Enemy’s arrows is to live obediently in Christ—and that’s why what we do matters in spiritual warfare. We will discover in this study that putting on the whole armor of God is all about obedience. Only obedient warriors are equipped to be deployed in the spiritual battle.
**Getting Started**

As we study together, keep in mind these seven truths about the armor of God:

1. **We are to wear the full armor of God.** We will study each piece separately, but don’t forget that we must wear all of the armor.
2. **The armor we wear is God’s armor** (Eph. 6:11). We would never win these battles if we were to use our own armor.
3. **Putting on the armor is nothing magical.** Wearing the armor is more about personal spiritual disciplines than “praying on” the equipment each day.
4. **Wearing the armor can’t be separated from what we believe and how we live.** Our belief system (theology) influences our behavior. Both are important and work together as we face spiritual battles.
5. **Putting on the armor is about being equipped and deployed for spiritual battles.** Wearing the armor isn’t just preparation for the battle; it’s also part of the battle as the Enemy fights to keep us from wearing the armor.
6. **The support of other believers helps us put on the armor.** Paul wrote his letter to “the saints and believers” (Eph. 1:1), and he expected them to stand together in the battle. If you’re completing this study alone, enlist a group of prayer warriors to support you as you study. If you are meeting with a group, their encouragement will prove invaluable.
7. **Learning about the armor of God takes place only as we read God’s Word.** As you will learn throughout this study, the Word of God teaches us about each piece of the armor. That’s also why, beginning with tomorrow’s study, I’ll encourage you to read a portion of the Book of Ephesians each day.

To review these important truths, read each one again and fill in the blanks. Remember these major points.

1. We are to wear the _______________ armor of God.
2. The armor we wear is _______________ armor.
3. Putting on the armor is nothing _______________.
4. Wearing the armor can’t be separated from what we _______________ and how we _______________.
5. Putting on the armor is about being _______________ and _______________ for spiritual battles.
6. The support of other _______________ helps us put on the armor.
7. Learning about the armor of God takes place only as we read _______________.

God’s _______________.

Maybe your story mirrors Kaleisha’s. Unchurched for most of her life, she became a Christian when a teenage friend told her about Christ. During her second week in church, she heard her pastor challenge the church to read the Word daily. He spoke so strongly and so passionately that she knew this commitment must be important. She assumed that “the Word of God” meant the Bible, so Kaleisha decided to read it daily. Embarrassed by her lack of knowledge, she feared asking anyone for help in getting started.

The next morning, she awakened early and grabbed the Bible her friend had given her. Her questions quickly mounted. Where should I begin? What’s a “testament”? What’s the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament? Why are there different books and chapters in the Bible? What do I do with the words I don’t understand or can’t pronounce? Overwhelmed by this foreign book, Kaleisha laid it aside that morning. This pattern continued for several months until an older believer began to mentor her. Only then did she start to understand the importance of knowing the truths of the Word of God.

Days 3-5 focus on wearing the belt of truth as one piece of our spiritual armor. Reading and knowing God’s Word—the Bible—equips us to wear this belt. Week 6 focuses much more on the Bible (the “sword of the Spirit”), but week 1 is critical to understanding what is true and how to wear this first piece of God’s armor.

The Word of God Is Truth

Satan is a liar, and the truth isn’t in him (John 8:44). He established his pattern in the garden of Eden when he lied to Adam and Eve about the truthfulness of God’s Word (Gen. 3:1-5). That pattern has not changed. To this day, the Enemy wants us to doubt or ignore God’s Word; after all, if it’s not God’s Word in the first place, why should we read and follow it?

Let’s look at one believer for whom the truth of the Word was life-changing. Timothy was a young man who caught the attention of the Apostle Paul as he traveled through the cities of Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). Others spoke well of Timothy, and Paul wanted him as a student and partner in ministry. For the next several years, Paul mentored young Timothy and eventually challenged him to “fulfill his ministry” even as Paul faced his own death (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

What we know about Timothy’s upbringing is sketchy, but we do know that his mother and grandmother taught him the sacred writings of Scripture (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-17). Those writings changed Timothy’s life and equipped him to battle the Enemy. Such is the power and truth of God’s Word. Has anyone ever challenged you to memorize Scripture? Maybe you’re not accustomed to learning Sunday School verses or searching the Word during Bible drills. Learning Scriptures is not just for children! It’s not too late for you to begin this habit.
Read Psalm 19:7-11 and write the words that describe the Bible.

David the psalmist fully understood that the Word is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, reliable, and rewarding. That Word, he said, revives the soul, makes the inexperienced wise, makes the heart glad, enlightens the eyes, and warns God's servants. Living according to Scripture's truths enables us to keep our way pure.

The Devil's lies are simply no match for the Word of God. Jesus used the perfect, true Word of God to defeat Satan at the mount of temptation (Matt. 4:1-11). Because God's Word is truth, we must read it to wear the belt of truth. We would not know the truth of Jesus—who is the Word (John 1:1)—apart from the authors who were inspired to write the Word. Nor would we know about the reality of the Enemy we face. The Word not only warns us of the battle but shows us how to experience victory in Christ.

What is your commitment to Bible reading? Place an “x” on the spot that best indicates your current practice.

1 2 3 4 5
I am not I read I read about I read at least I read
reading at all. occasionally. once a month. once a week. daily.

We Must Read, Interpret, and Apply This Truth

In week 6 we will look at different methods of Bible study. For now, let's look at some basic principles for reading and understanding the Word. Remember, we must know the truth—God's Word—to stand against an Enemy who lies.

Study the Word systematically. God inspired the entire Bible, and He expects us to read it in its entirety. How we do so may vary, but we should have a plan that guides us through the Scriptures. I will give you some suggested plans when we look at the sword of the Spirit in week 6.

Learn to interpret the Word properly. Reading the Bible is only one step in using God's Word to defeat the Enemy. We must also understand the Word properly before applying its teachings in our lives. These basic guidelines will help you interpret the meaning of Bible chapters and verses.

1. Read the text in more than one translation, noting the differences.
2. Understand the type of writing you are reading (for example: a Gospel, an Epistle, one of the Prophets, a history, and so forth).
3. Using appropriate Bible study tools, examine the cultural and historical background of the passage. Most study Bibles have this information.
4. Read the passage in its context in the specific book of the Bible and how that book fits in to the Bible as a whole. For example, is it in the Old Testament or New Testament? Do both testaments contain these thoughts?
5. Always look for the author’s intended meaning in the passage. Every author chose words and expressions to convey a particular meaning. Good hermeneutics helps us to determine that meaning.
6. When necessary, allow more clearly and more frequently stated teachings to inform confusing passages.
7. To help you understand the text, don’t hesitate to use commentaries, Sunday School or small-group materials, and other resources such as a Bible dictionary. That’s what I’ve done as God led me to seek clarification on Ephesians 6:11-20.

Apply and live the Word daily. Reading and interpreting the Word properly are still not enough if we don’t let the Word change our lives. Wearing the belt of truth means knowing Jesus personally, reading and understanding God’s Word, and daily living out the Word’s teachings. Learning to apply the Word will be the focus of day 4.

How well do you know how to read, interpret, and apply God’s Word? Mark each statement true (T) or false (F).

_____ No one has ever taught me how to interpret the Bible.
_____ I feel confident that I know how to interpret the Bible properly.
_____ It’s usually clear to me how Bible teachings apply to me.
_____ I often don’t apply the Bible’s teachings to my life.
_____ The Bible confuses me.
_____ I really haven’t tried very hard to interpret the Bible.
_____ If I don’t understand a passage, I have resources to help me.

More In-Depth Study
1. Read Isaiah 61:1-2. Use the seven guidelines listed to interpret this passage on your own paper.
3. Compare the two passages.

“Daily in the Word” Will Help You Understand the Truth
Although this Bible study covering the entire Book of Ephesians is optional, consider this an invitation to join me in reading Ephesians during this study. Each day you’ll read one portion of Ephesians, and I’ll provide hints to help you interpret and apply it.

In your member book, highlight any truths that are especially meaningful to you. You may prefer underlining them or placing a star or asterisk by them. You may divide your reading between morning and night or read it in one sitting. Each week I’ll also challenge you to memorize a verse from that week’s readings. Memorize phrase by phrase until you can say the verse.

By the end of this study, you’ll know Ephesians well. Today’s study begins by providing background information about the book. Keep in mind that this information is important in understanding Paul’s letter to Ephesus. Only when we understand and apply God’s Word properly can we wear the belt of truth.
AUTHOR: Paul wrote the book of Ephesians (see 1:1). Paul used Ephesus as a center for evangelism for three years (Acts 19–20).

DATE OF WRITING: Many date the letter around 60 A.D. If so, Paul would have written the letter during his Rome imprisonment.

TYPE OF LITERATURE: Ephesians is an epistle (a letter), likely written not only to the believers in Ephesus but also to other believers in the same region. This type of letter, known as a circular letter, went to Ephesus, an important commercial center in the region of Asia Minor (now Turkey). The Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was most prominent in Ephesus.

PURPOSE: Unlike other letters that Paul wrote, Ephesians does not address a particular problem or heresy in the church. Paul may have written the letter simply to strengthen and encourage the believers to be faithful, especially as they battled against the powers of darkness believed to be so prominent in the area of Ephesus. Paul wanted them to understand their position in Christ and their responsibility to be faithful to Him. For that reason, he addressed both theology and practical living.

SIMPLE OUTLINE:
1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The Believer’s Position in Christ (1:3–3:21)
3. The Believer’s Practice in Christ (4:1–6:9)
4. The Believer’s Armor (6:10-20)
5. Final Greetings (6:21-23)

The week before Easter the Sunday School class seemed to be going well. The teacher talked passionately about Jesus, the Son of God, dying for the sins of the world. “Wait a minute,” interrupted Jordan, a talkative guest in the class. “Jesus wasn’t the Son of God. He was just a teacher who died because He made the religious leaders mad.” Class members sat quietly, stunned by a statement they had seldom heard in church.
How would you have responded to Jordan? Be prepared to express your ideas in your next group session.

Even though Jordan was visiting a Sunday School class, he believed a lie. The Enemy is behind false teachings about Jesus Christ. Think about some of the other lies about Jesus you may have heard (and perhaps even believed at some point):

- Jesus is only one way of many routes to God.
- Jesus couldn’t possibly have been born by a virgin.
- Jesus must have committed some sin during His lifetime.
- Jesus was a great prophet, but He was no more than that.
- Jesus died as a martyr, but He didn’t die for the sins of the world.
- Jesus’ bodily resurrection was only a myth circulated by the disciples.

The Enemy knows that if he can deceive us about Jesus and His work, he misleads us about the very cornerstone of the Christian faith. Apart from the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of the perfect Son of God, we have no hope; so the Enemy aims his arrows at our understanding of Jesus. We must know Jesus—who is truth—in order to wear the belt of truth. Be certain that you understand who Jesus is and that you know Him personally.

**Jesus Is the Truth**

When Jesus told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them, Thomas questioned Him, “Lord … we don’t know where You’re going. How can we know the way?” Jesus’ response was quick and clear: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (see John 14:1-6).

What did Jesus mean when He said, “I am the truth”? One helpful writer put it this way: “Jesus is the very embodiment of truth. He is the truth in person.”

His words, His actions, and His thoughts are always right. In Him there is no falsehood or deceit. As the one who is truth and life, He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).

Several times, Jesus referred to the religious leaders of His day as “hypocrites” (see Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 15:1-9; 23:1-39). These leaders looked good to an outsider: they gave to the poor, prayed in the synagogues, fasted according to their custom, tithed their incomes, and followed traditions of ritual cleansing. Unfortunately for them, however, Jesus knew what they were on the inside. They honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. They looked good—but only like a freshly-painted tombstone that in reality covered a dead body. In the end, they couldn’t fool the One who is Truth.

The word *hypocrite* meant “actor,” or one who is playing a role. As you think about wearing the belt of truth, are you seeking to follow Christ with absolute integrity, or are you guilty of “play acting” in your Christianity? Dave, a member of a church I pastored, “acted” his faith until the inner anguish of his hypocrisy cost him his peace and his health. “I can’t do it anymore,” he told me. “I can’t fool the One who matters, so why do I try to fool others?” We could all benefit from asking that question of ourselves.

**Jesus Knew the Truth**

You’ve probably been in a situation when two people gave you completely different accounts of the same story. He says this, and she says that—and you are caught in the middle, trying to determine where the truth really lies. Never did Jesus find Himself in such a situation, for He who is truth always knew the truth.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”—Jesus Christ

*John 14:6*
Read the following Bible texts from the Gospel of John. Write a brief description of what Jesus knew in each situation.

1. John 4:7-19 __________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2. John 6:14-15 __________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

3. John 6:60-64 __________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Jesus knew, and still knows, the truth in all situations. He knew past sins (John 4:7-19), current thoughts (6:14-15), and future actions (6:64). The Enemy lures us into sin, and he then wants us to hide our sin just as Adam and Eve attempted to do in the garden (Gen. 3:8). We somehow become convinced that hidden sin is acceptable sin. But no thought we think, no word we speak, and no action we take is hidden from the One who knows all truth.

Take a few minutes now to confess to Him, who knows all things, any hidden sin in your life. If you feel comfortable doing so, find another Christian who might hold you accountable in this area. I'll cover the concept of an accountability partner in day 5.

Jesus Spoke the Truth
The Old Testament was clear about the means to evaluate the validity of a prophet’s words: if they did not come true, the prophet was no prophet after all (Deut. 18:21-22). Death was the penalty for being a false prophet (Deut. 18:20).

Apply that same standard to Jesus, and we learn that Jesus not only knew all truth, but He spoke it as well. He told the fishermen He would make them fishers of men (Matt. 4:19) and they would later become leaders in the early church.

Jesus promised His disciples that they would have authority over demons and disease, and they used that authority as they preached the gospel (Luke 9:1-6). He challenged a grieving father to believe that his daughter would live again, and the girl later “got up and began to walk” (see Mark 5:35-43). He also predicted His disciples’ betrayals (Luke 22:31-34; John 13:21), warned of Jerusalem’s destruction (Matt. 24:1-2), spoke of His impending death (John 12:27-33), and foretold His own resurrection (Matt. 20:17-19).

Jesus is the truth who knows the truth and speaks the truth. Indeed, He is the true Word of God (John 1:1). His Word promises He will forgive us (1 John 1:9), never leave us (Heb. 13:5), and return for us someday (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and we can trust those truths!

Read the words of Jesus in Revelation 22:12-13,20. Check (✔) each statement that describes your reaction to these verses.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1
1. ____ I know Jesus speaks truth when I read His Word or pray.
2. ____ I’m not certain that I believe Jesus’ words.
3. ____ I know Jesus speaks truth, and these verses make me anxious.
4. ____ I feel I must change some areas of my life in preparation for His coming.
5. ____ I pray that Jesus will find me living as a faithful Christian when He returns.

**Jesus Lived the Truth**

Read Hebrews 4:15 in the margin. Meditate on the verse. Underline the words that most catch your attention.

If you think like me, you’re probably most struck by the words “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” When most of us think of our temptations, it’s difficult to imagine that Jesus faced the full range of our temptations. But in fact, we give in to temptations so quickly that we usually don’t fully experience their power. Only Jesus—who faced the full brunt of temptation without ever sinning—can really understand its force. Still, He never failed.

As one who was fully God and fully human, Jesus lived the truth perfectly. Today, we can come to Him with confidence in times of need, knowing that He has walked where we walk and didn’t fail.

**Jesus and the Belt of Truth**

The point of this lesson is simple: Jesus—who knew the truth, spoke the truth, and lived the truth—is still the Truth today. While the belt of truth entails more than simply knowing Him, we can’t wear this piece of the armor without having a personal relationship with Jesus.

If you are not a believer, I encourage you to turn your life over to Christ, who paid for your sin and lives now to enable you to live a life of truth. Turn to “The ABCs of Salvation” on page 147. Pray, asking God to guide you to examine your life.

If you are a believer, thank God and seek to live a life of integrity through His awesome and amazing power.

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**Daily in the Word**

**Ephesians 1:1-2**

First-century authors typically placed greetings at the beginning so that the information was readily available as the scroll was first unrolled. The Book of Ephesians begins with a traditional first-century greeting which included the author’s name, recipient’s name, and a statement of blessing.

Beginning in verse 1, the author identified himself as Paul. He was no doubt a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this letter. The letter identifies the recipients as “the saints and believers in Christ Jesus at Ephesus” (v. 1).
Most likely, the letter was a circular letter that was distributed to believers in and around the city of Ephesus. Paul concluded his greeting by extending “grace” and “peace” to the reader. Paul used this greeting several times in his letters (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2).

APPLICATION

- Thank God for the Book of Ephesians, and ask Him to guide you as you read it.
- Thank God that we are saints and believers in Christ Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

LIVING THE TRUTH

Put yourself in the middle of this story. You have been a Christian for 20 years. Several years ago, you were in your church’s worship services when Jackie responded to Christ’s call and was later baptized. Jackie has since studied God’s Word, and she knows more about the Bible than you do.

Here’s a question to begin this lesson: is it possible that Jackie is still not wearing the belt of truth?

- yes
- no
- uncertain

A follower of Jesus who knows His Word may not be faithfully living that Word—in which case Jackie isn’t wearing the belt of truth. The answer is yes. Even a true believer can be disobedient to the Word that he or she knows.

In day 2 we learned that we must know God’s Word to wear the belt of truth. Day 3 reminded us that knowing Jesus personally is essential to wearing the belt of truth. Day 4 will help you apply and live God’s Word as faithful, committed followers of Christ. Through knowing Christ and His Word and living His Word, you will be wearing the belt of truth.

Jesus Is Our Model

Jesus grew up going to the synagogue where the words of the Old Testament scroll were read. Jesus responded to temptation by using the Word.

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and answer the following questions.
1. How many temptations did Jesus face? ____

2. How many times did the Devil quote Scripture? ____

3. What did the Devil offer to Jesus in the third temptation? ______________________________________________________________

4. How many times did Jesus quote Scripture? ____

5. Was Jesus victorious over the temptations?  
   ❑ yes  ❑ no

In these verses, we learn that the Devil tempted Jesus face-to-face. Matthew records three specific temptations, though it's possible that these three occurred at the end of many temptations (see Luke 4:1-13). Once the Devil even quoted Scripture in his attempt to lead Jesus astray.

Ultimately, he offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world” in return for His worship (Matt. 4:8). With each temptation, Jesus responded with the Word of God. Thus, the One who is the Word of God used the Word to make the right choices. Consequently, Jesus always made the right choices.

What do we learn from Jesus’ temptation experience? **First, He made the right choices because His desire to please the Father was more important than anything the Enemy offered.** Jesus lived His life to do the Father’s will (John 8:28-29), and nothing else mattered more to Him. He would even choose death over His own life, knowing the Father desired that choice (Luke 22:39-42). Can you see why the Enemy’s offers to Jesus could not lure Him into sin? The Father meant more to Him than all the kingdoms of the world. How much do you want to please the Father? Does that desire help you say no to temptation?

**Second, Jesus knew the Word sufficiently to respond to the Devil’s attacks.** Jesus quoted the Book of Deuteronomy three times! How many Christians know Deuteronomy that well? How many know the Scriptures in general that well?

Jesus treasured the Word in His heart (Ps. 119:11), and He used it immediately when He needed to refute the Enemy's offers. He didn't need a quick Scripture memorization course, nor did He need to find a scroll of Scriptures to quote the right verses. He simply knew the Word; He was ready for the attack.

I have a student who has a strong interest in Scripture memorization. Every day he carries his current memory verses in his pocket, and he studies them whenever possible. I've been with him at times when he faced trials, and he quoted the Word. I have seen him worried, and he turned to the Scriptures stored in his heart. I have no doubt that he quotes the Word when he faces personal temptation.

Do you know the Word that well? Do you have a strategic plan for Scripture memorization? If not, I hope you’ve started by learning the first phrase of this week’s verse in “Daily in the Word.” In the margin you will find steps to help you memorize God’s Word. Follow these steps this week.

**Third, Jesus experienced the Father’s blessing when He overcame temptation.** In fact, angels came and ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11). The best understanding suggests that they stayed with Him for a while. Perhaps He was exhausted from the fasting and the tempting. Maybe He was wrung out from the battle. Whatever Jesus’ needs were, the Father sent angels to take care of Him.

Imagine the scene. One moment Jesus was face-to-face with the Devil, engaged in a grueling battle. But the next moment, the Devil disappeared and angels
Putting on The Armor appeared to comfort Him. The Father replaced His Son’s pain of temptation with His divine comfort. Now, think about temptations in your life. Use the following activity to reflect on the feelings temptations produce.

Check (✔) the emotions you feel when you experience victory in temptation. Mark with an “x” each of the emotions you feel when you fail in temptation. Take a minute to compare the two.

- _____ fear
- _____ joy
- _____ excitement
- _____ peace
- _____ anger
- _____ pain
- _____ conviction
- _____ relief
- _____ love
- _____ shame
- _____ thankfulness
- _____ grief

Aren’t the feelings of victory much better than those associated with defeat? When we know Jesus, know His Word, and live faithfully—that is, when we are truly wearing the belt of truth—we experience the genuine joy of Christian living. When you overcome temptation, look forward to God’s blessing.

**What We Do Is As Important As What We Don’t Do**

Paul’s command to “put on the full armor of God” is a positive command; that is, he told us what to do rather than what not to do. That’s the point of this entire study—if we do what God tells us to do by putting on the armor, we can stand against the Enemy.

Many view the Christian life as keeping a list of things to avoid. Christian living is indeed about fleeing temptation (1 Cor. 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:22), but it’s also about doing good in order to avoid the sin that is “crouching at the door” (Gen. 4:7). James reminds us that if we know to do good and don’t do it, that, too, is sin (Jas. 4:17).

Peter, preaching the gospel to Gentiles, summarized Jesus’ ministry, saying, “He went about doing good and curing all who were under the tyranny of the Devil, because God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus stood against the Enemy not only by rejecting temptation but also by doing good that dislodged the Enemy’s hold in people’s lives. Perhaps if we focused more on doing good than on avoiding wrong, we would make more difference in our world.

Katherine Langford is a heroine of mine. Many years ago, she challenged me to read the book *In His Steps* by Charles M. Sheldon. It’s the story of church members who decided to guide their lives by always asking, “What would Jesus do?” The book was the inspiration for the popular WWJD bracelets that Christian youth wore. These bracelets reminded the wearers that following Jesus means modeling the way He lived. As you continue this study, your commitment to know Jesus, know His Word, and live His Word will help you win the spiritual battles you face.

Circle each area in which your life needs to reflect the model Jesus left us. Ask God to help you with each area as you continue this study.

- Bible reading
- praying
- giving
- rejecting sin
- serving
- loving others
- trusting God
- fasting
- witnessing

Perhaps if we focused more on doing good than on avoiding wrong, we would make more difference in our world.
As we’ve learned before, the Book of Ephesians is divided into two major sections. Paul wrote the first three chapters of the book to help us understand what God has done for us and who we are in Christ. The last three chapters help us make application of this doctrinal reality.

Paul began the doctrinal section of the book by explaining the rich blessings God has poured out on those of us who are in Christ. First, Paul informed the Ephesians that God chose us to be “holy and blameless in His sight.” Even though our lives are corrupted by sin, God amazingly sees us as clothed in the righteousness of His Son Jesus. Second, Paul showed that we have been “adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself” (v. 5). In spite of our rebellion, God chooses to lovingly call us His children. The spiritual blessings God bestows on us naturally lead to “the praise of His glorious grace” (v. 6).

APPLICATION
• Choose to be holy (set apart for His service).
• Praise God for His grace given to you. An acronym for grace is “God’s Righteousness At Christ’s Expense.”

MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS WEEK
“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

HOW WE LIVE TRUTH

I first heard the word accountability through a Promise Keepers group who wanted to help one another live holy lives. At the time, I thought that accountability would be a passing fad. Who would really want to talk to others about issues they face in their Christian lives?

Time has proven me wrong. In fact, I have since learned that the Bible expects believers to be accountable to others. In this lesson, our goal is to help you think about accountability as one way to make certain you’re wearing the belt of truth.

What Is Accountability?
We define Christian accountability as “a willingness to be honest about, and to accept responsibility for, my actions as one means to strive for Christlike holiness.” Notice these points about our definition:
Putting on The Armor

• A person must desire to be held accountable. It is voluntary.
• Accountability requires honesty (hence, honest accountability connects to the belt of truth in this study).
• Accountability demands that we accept responsibility for our actions.
• Accountability isn’t a shortcut allowing us to avoid spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and prayer.
• The goal of accountability is growth in Christlikeness; personal holiness should be the result.

Why Should We Be Accountable to Someone?
Read Ephesians 6:10-14 and watch for the words “stand” or “stand firm.” Paul strongly reminded his readers that they were in a spiritual battle against mighty powers—but they were to stand in this battle. Depending on the Bible translation that you use, you probably found the word “stand” three or four times in these verses. In fact, “stand” is the primary admonition in this passage. It pictures a soldier who stands in combat, doggedly opposing the Enemy.

The Lord who calls us to stand is the same One who strengthens us (Josh. 1:6-7,9; Eph. 6:10) so that we can stand. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah Himself would wear righteousness and truth around His waist (Isa. 11:5). God now gives us His armor for the battle—and the Enemy isn’t strong enough to counter a believer who opposes him in God’s armor.

At the same time, Paul assumed believers would fight together in the battle described in Ephesians 6. Indeed, much of Ephesians is about developing healthy relationships in the church, in the home, and in the workplace (2:11-22; 4:1–6:9). The church stands strongest against the Enemy when it stands united.

Believers encouraging one another in righteousness through intentional accountability is one way for the church to stand together (Heb. 10:24). When we have accountability partners, we know that we don’t fight alone.

Where Is Accountability in the Bible?
Both the Old and New Testaments provide examples of one-on-one accountability relationships. In the Old Testament, we see the friendship of David and Jonathan; in the New Testament, great accountability among believers. Jesus sent out His messengers, expected a report from them, and corrected them when they missed the point of their ministry (Luke 10:1-20). He also taught church discipline that assumed accountability (Matt. 18:15-20). Paul demanded that the Corinthian church deal with sin in their midst rather than overlook it in arrogance (1 Cor. 5:1-5). The Thessalonians were to “admonish as a brother” those who did not obey Paul’s instructions (2 Thess. 3:14-15, NASB). James instructed believers to confess their sins to one another (see Jas. 5:16 in margin).

The early church understood that they were a family, a body of believers knit together by their common bond in Christ. They met together and encouraged one another to love and do good works, knowing that a day of judgment would come (Heb. 10:23-27). Accountability in the early Church was a push toward righteousness. Most of us need that kind of push.

Check the statements below that best indicate your feelings about accountability.

❑ I am not willing to be accountable to anyone.
❑ I understand the need for accountability, but I am nervous about being held accountable.
I have an accountability partner, but this process is not helping me to be more faithful to Christ.
I am willing to give accountability a try, but with great hesitation.
I am ready to have an accountability partner.
I have an accountability partner. Our relationship helps me grow as a Christian.

How Does Accountability Relate to the Belt of Truth?
The answer to this question is simple: good accountability keeps us honest. I am a professor of evangelism, but that doesn’t mean I’m naturally an evangelist. Rather, I’m introverted enough that sometimes I struggle to witness to others. I wish that lost persons would just come to me and say, “I hear you’re a professor. Would you please tell me how to follow Jesus?” Needless to say, that has never happened! I realize that I must initiate most evangelistic encounters, and I’ve learned that I do that best when I’m held accountable to that important task.

Twice each month, my accountability partner asks me about my evangelism. He keeps me honest and pushes me toward obedience—both essential to wearing the belt of truth. I do more evangelism because I want to be a person of integrity before God, my accountability partner, my family, and my students. I want to be wearing the belt of truth.

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all and 5 being completely, rate your level of obedience in your Christian walk before each of these groups:

____ coworkers or classmates
____ church members
____ neighbors
____ family

If you are less than honest in some areas of your life, accountability may strengthen your Christian walk. Take time to ask God about His direction regarding your accountability.

What Are Some Guidelines for Accountability?
These simple guidelines for accountability may help you. Be sure to ask God for His direction.

1. For this study, seek a partner (or partners) who will hold you accountable primarily to the spiritual disciplines of the armor of God.
2. In many cases, the best accountability partner for spiritual disciplines is a Christian spouse.
3. Other than your spouse, never have an accountability partner of the opposite sex.
4. Determine a time to meet. I suggest no less than every other week.
5. Determine a set series of questions to ask one another. At this point in this study, questions such as these are appropriate:
   • Have you read the Bible daily?
   • What have you learned from God’s Word this week?
   • What have you learned about knowing Jesus this week?
   • Is there an area of life where you aren’t obedient?
   • How may I specifically pray for you?
6. Be honest in all responses. Accountability should foster integrity, not lying.
7. Don’t gossip about information shared in an accountability session.
8. Commit yourself to strive for growth and holiness. Set goals to help you grow in Christ.
9. Don’t allow each other to give up. Push one another to do well (Heb. 10:24).
10. Commit to pray for one another every day.

Perhaps someone in your study group would be willing to be your accountability partner during this study. Seek God’s direction and take the steps necessary to seek encouragement as you wear the belt of truth.

A Review: Wearing the Full Armor of God
Wearing the belt of truth means knowing Jesus, knowing His Word, and living that Word. As we will see in the following weeks, this piece of the armor is directly related to the rest of the armor—as all of the pieces are interconnected. To help you see that truth, the first page of each new week includes a fill-in-the-blank review of all of the armor of God. I hope that these sections will help you to remember the armor. More importantly, I pray that you’ll wear that armor!

Key Definition
Redemption—a payment used to set someone free.

Daily in the Word
Ephesians 1:7-10

Paul continued to speak about the abundance of spiritual blessings that God pours out on those who are in Christ. The primary blessing is redemption made possible “through His blood” (v. 7). The term redemption was commonly used to speak of a payment made to set a slave or prisoner free.

Through the blood of Christ, we are forgiven for our trespasses and freed from the penalty and bondage of sin. This Scripture teaches us that our spiritual freedom did not come cheaply; rather, the death of Christ made our redemption. God now lavishes His grace on us, and He will fulfill His eternal plan in Christ. All creatures, both in heaven and on earth, will ultimately bow before Him.

APPLICATION
• Thank God that He has redeemed you.
• Because your spiritual freedom didn’t come cheaply, stay close to Jesus and live His Word to win over temptation.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS WEEK
“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

The following activity will be completed in your group session.

**Who Do You Say I Am?**
For each false statement 1) choose which of Satan’s schemes leads to this statement, 2) find Scriptures that prove this statement isn’t biblical, and 3) name which of Christ’s identities shows that it’s false.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALSE STATEMENT</th>
<th>SATAN’S SCHEME</th>
<th>SCRIPTURE(S)</th>
<th>CHRIST’S IDENTITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jesus is only one of the many routes to God.</td>
<td>If Satan can keep us on some other path, he keeps us from the only way to salvation.</td>
<td>John 14:6, Acts 4:12</td>
<td>The Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jesus couldn’t have possibly been born of a virgin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Jesus must have committed some sin during His lifetime.</td>
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<td>4. Jesus was a great prophet, but He was no more than that.</td>
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<td>5. Jesus died as a martyr, but He didn’t die for the sins of the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Jesus’ bodily resurrection was only a myth propagated by the disciples.</td>
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