

MBC C3 LEADERS QUESTIONS
WEEK 3 - 10/24/21

Listen to, Learn about, and Love on one another

Share a moment you had with someone this week when you displayed empathy or compassion towards someone.

- Empathy is the ability to understand, sense, or share the feelings and emotions of another person.

“Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.”
(Rom. 12:12, NLT)

- Compassion is a feeling of wanting to help by alleviating the suffering of someone who is afflicted by misfortune.

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.”
(Luke 10:33-34, NLT)

Getting Started with a Warm-Up:

Reflecting on Pastor Randy’s sermon about Satan and demons this past Sunday 10/24/21: Read Ephesians 6:10-13.

- 1) In verses 10 and 11, how does Paul encourage us to stand against the devil? (There are 4 ways: “strong in the Lord”, in his “might”, his “power”, and “all of God’s armor”)
- 2) In verse 12, describe in your own words who are we fighting against? (There are 4 characteristics of our enemy who we cannot see and who also function in a different realm: “evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world” = their authority and their strength; “mighty powers in this dark world” = their worldwide influence; and “evil spirits” = their immoral character)
- 3) In verse 13, what is necessary for believers in Christ to put on in order to successfully fight our enemy? Why? (“every piece of God’s armor...be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil...after the battle you will still be standing firm.”)

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Provisions for triumphant living (6:10-20)

The antecedent of the word finally is not clear. Does it suggest merely a final word of exhortation, or should the reader go back to 5:1? If the latter was Paul's intention here, then one must understand the exhortation to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power as one of the appropriate consequences of being imitators [kiv "followers"] of God. In other words, while Christians must be submissive to one another, they must be strong in resisting the evil forces that surround them. Claiming the Lord's strength, they can stand against the devil's schemes (cf. 1Pe 5:1-9). After all, the real enemy of Christians is not physical torment, but spiritual treachery. Christians do not struggle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, and powers that are merely representative of the spiritual forces of evil in "the 'unseen universe,' which lies behind the world of sense . . . [where] great forces are at work" that oppose and wrestle against God's people (Robinson, 21).

These forces, of course, have already been conquered (1:19-23). The mighty strength that God exerted when he raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him above all authorities (1:19) is the same mighty power available to believers (6:10) in their struggle against evil spiritual forces. God is a great defender, a mighty fortress, "a bulwark never failing." He has provided the full armor for his followers. With this armor, when the day of evil comes, whether it be future (as in 1Th 2:1-10a) or present (as in Eph 5:16), they may be able to stand their ground. At such a time as this, human strength will not suffice.

So Paul urges, as he did in 1Th 5:8, that believers put on the full armor of God. The description can almost certainly be traced to Roman soldiers with whom Paul was all too familiar. We might imagine that as he wrote he glanced from time to time at the soldier who guarded him, giving each piece of armor a spiritual function. Only by the armor provided by God can the Christian hope to overcome "the stratagems by which the supreme enemy endeavors to gain an advantage over the people of God" (Bruce, Ephesians, 127). According to tradition, the fallen angels, unable to overcome God in heaven, turned upon God's Son in his human weakness, only to find themselves once again defeated (Col 2:15). Thus, in union with Christ, believers also are able to overcome those forces that stand between them and their eternal salvation (cf. Ro 8:35-39). (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 10/21/21, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians+6&version=NLT>)

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Getting Down to Business:

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

1) Scripture/Observation: Read Ephesians 6:14-17 describing every piece of God's armor.

- A. In verse 14, what are "belt of truth" and "breastplate of righteousness" referring to?
- B. In verse 15, what is "shoes of the Gospel of peace" referring to?
- C. In verse 16, what is the "shield of faith" referring to?
- D. In verse 17, what are the "helmet of salvation" and "sword of the Spirit" referring to?

Provisions for triumphant living (6:10-20)

The pieces of armor require minimal comment. The belt of truth represents loyalty and faithfulness. Isa 11:5 says that faithfulness (the LXX has "truth") is the sash around the waist of the Messiah. The breastplate of righteousness represents the Christian's character, which models that of God (cf. Isa 59:17). Being faithful to God and being righteous in conduct as God is, are essential elements in the believer's strategy for survival. Also, the true disciple of Jesus will have his feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. The allusion here is most likely to Isa 52:7, and the implication is that bearing good news to others helps Christians keep their own souls from spiritual lethargy and thus less vulnerable to the Devil.

The shield of faith is necessary to ward off (NIV "extinguish") the Devil's evil assaults. The word used for shield is the large whole-body shield, rather than the small shield used for deflecting sword thrusts in hand-to-hand combat. This larger shield provided comprehensive protection for the Roman soldier, so use of that image is appropriate to Paul's purpose. Jesus met the most subtle of Satan's temptations with a faith that did not depend on any special display of divine power. The helmet of salvation (cf. Isa

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59:17) had also been urged upon the Thessalonian believers (1Th 5:8) as a basis of hope. The helmet protects the head, essential to the proper functioning of all other parts. Thus, the apostle suggests that the hope of salvation is a most important weapon at the disposal of all Christians, aiding them as they struggle toward “the prize for which God has called [them] heavenward” (Php 4:14).

The sword of the spirit is the word of God that is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12; cf. also Hos 6:5; Isa 11:4). Paul may very well have intended to mean by the term word (rhema) of God the sacred Scriptures of Judaism that Jesus had used so effectively at the time of his own temptation, particularly Dt 8:3 (“Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”). The same word is used in Eph 5:26, however, to connote words spoken at the time of baptism. If the latter is the intended sense, then the word of God is any helpful word from God in the moment of need (as is suggested in Lk 12:12; 21:15; and possibly Eph 6:19). One other resource is available: prayer. It, too, is part of the equipment accessible whenever believers are tempted or on the verge of surrendering to the enemy. (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 10/21/21, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians+6&version=NLT>)

2) **Application:** Read Ephesians 6:18. What other power of God does Paul encourage us to use in our fight against the enemy? How are we to use it?

Provisions for triumphant living (6:10-20)

Having thus called their attention to the power of prayer, the author now encourages his readers in Asia to keep on praying for all the saints. By praying for one another, Christians everywhere help fellow believers overcome the evil influences bent on destroying those whom God has called. (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 10/21/21, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians+6&version=NLT>)

3) **Prayer:** “ Lord, thank you for providing us with all that we need to defeat the enemy. Thank you that we can fight from a position of victory because you have already conquered Satan on the cross. Amen.”