

Putting On the Armor

Equipped & Deployed for Spiritual Warfare

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”

Ephesians 6:11-12

By

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Outlined & Presented
in preparation for mission...

by
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THE BRIDGE

Introduction:

“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.”

- Chuck Lawless

Dr. Lawless begins his book with the following prayer (in part):

...I pray that each reader will see You Lord, more than they see the Enemy... that they will love You Lord, more than they love anything the Enemy offers them... and I pray that my readers will experience victory (defined as God’s will lived-out in one’s life), more than any aspect of defeat.

Chapter One: *The Belt of Truth*

Ephesians 6:11-12

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Opening Thoughts:

In week/chapter one, we will explore the issue of truth. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, & a written body of Scripture – the Bible.

Knowing truth equips us for discerning the presence & purposes of Satan in our lives.

Day 1: Preparation for the Battle

Ephesians 6:11-12 clearly indicate who our enemy is NOT, and who our enemy IS...

We may (often) wrongly assume that other people are the problem...

Paul is writing from a prison cell, yet note his heart for his captors (Acts 16:22-34)

Christians battle against a supernatural enemy ("the Devil") whose forces would overwhelm us except for the presence of God in our lives.

Paul used multiple terms (rulers, authorities, world powers, and spiritual forces) to describe the innumerable powers that stand against us.

See other biblical passages that tell this same truth...

Genesis 3:15

1 Chronicles 21:1

Job 1:1-22

1 Peter 5:8

Revelation 20:1-3

A tactician who entices us to sin, this very real Enemy seeks to devour us.

Listen to some of Satan's names and you'll get a sense of his character:

Accuser

Adversary

Devil

Dragon

Evil One

Father-of-lies

Serpent

Tempter

The Enemy is not one with whom we want to tangle in our own power.

Good news prevails! God planned from the beginning to defeat the Enemy and did so through the death of Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15; Colossians 2:15).

Now we can live in victory by putting on the full armor of God!

Putting on the armor requires believing & acting according to God's Word.

When we do both, we are equipped & deployed for spiritual warfare.

WHAT WE BELIEVE IS IMPORTANT IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- Read about Ananias & Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11
- vs.
- Read about Peter & John in Acts 4:13-22
- Ephesians tells us that biblical believers are "in-Christ"
 - 1:4 = chosen in Him
 - 1:7 = redeemed thru His blood
 - 1:11 = our inheritance is in Him
 - 1:12 = our hope is in Him
 - 1:13 = we are sealed in Him

If we believe these truths... 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." - Dr. Chuck Lawless

Deeper Study Opportunity: find and highlight ALL the "in Christ," "in Him," "through Jesus," "through Him," "of Him," and "with the Messiah" passages in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians... Then, write down and meditate on all the blessings Paul describes that we receive because we are "in Him." Thank God for these blessings!

WHAT WE DO IS ALSO IMPORTANT IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- Right beliefs alone do not always defeat the Enemy
- Even the demons “rightly believe” (see James 2:19)
- Right beliefs MUST lead to right actions... and those right actions defeat the Enemy!
- Look at the Christian life-lived that Paul describes in Ephesians 4-6 (personal holiness, godly relationships, biblical unity within the Church), and recognize that the Enemy is constantly attacking each of these areas of life... The Devil is delighted when our lives reflect him more than God.
- The way to counter the Enemy’s arrows is to live obediently in Christ – and that’s why what we do is important in spiritual warfare.
- **We will see... that’s why putting on the full armor of God is all about obedience!**
- **Only obedient warriors are equipped to be deployed in the spiritual battle!**
- 7 truths about the armor of God:
 - We are to wear the FULL armor of God
 - The armor we wear is GOD’s armor
 - Putting on the armor is practical vs. magical
 - Wearing the armor requires belief & behavior
 - Putting on the armor is an equipping & deploying part of the battle
 - Believers help other believers put on the armor
 - God’s Word best explains the armor of God

Day 2: Finding Truth in the Word of God

Reading and knowing God's Word – the Bible – equips us to wear the belt.

THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUTH

Satan is a liar and the truth is not in him (John 8:44).

Ever since the Garden of Eden, the Devil has been trying to get humanity to doubt and ignore God's Word... (“Did God *really* say...”)

Timothy (and Paul's admonishing of him) serve as great biblical examples of the importance & blessings connected with KNOWING God's Word...

Memorizing Scripture is not just for children... and it's never too late for YOU!

Read Psalm 19:7-11 and write down the word that describe the Bible.

(Perfect, Trustworthy, Right, Radiant, Pure, Reliable & Rewarding)

- The Word revives the soul
- The Word makes the inexperienced wise
- The Word makes the heart glad
- The Word enlightens the eyes
- The Word warns God's servants

Living obediently enables us to keep our way pure!

The Devil's lies are no match for the Word of God!

Jesus used the perfect, true Word of God to defeat Satan at the mount of temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)

**Because God's Word is truth,
we must read it to wear the Belt of Truth.**

The Word not only warns us of the battle (and our Enemy), but also shows us how to have victory in Christ.

WE MUST READ, INTERPRET, & APPLY THIS TRUTH

Basic Principles for Reading & Understanding God's Word:

- **Study the Word Systematically**
 - Study ALL of God's Word (not just subsets of the text)
 - Pray thru and develop a "plan"

- **Learn To Interpret the Word Properly**
 - Try to read different translations (note variations)
 - **Understand the type of writing you are reading**
 - a. Source: (Gospel, Prophets, Wisdom, History, etc.)
 - b. Genre: (Prose, Poetry, Hyperbole, Parable, etc)
 - Using appropriate Bible study tools, examine the cultural & historical background of the passage. (Most good Study-Bibles contain this information).
 - **Read & STUDY the FULL CONTEXT of the passage:**
 - a. How the "word" fits into the phrase...
 - b. How the phrase fits into the sentence...
 - c. How the sentence fits into the paragraph...
 - d. How the paragraph fits into the broader "section"
 - e. How the section fits into the chapter...
 - f. How the chapter fits into the biblical "book"
 - g. How that book of the Bible fits into the full Bible.
 - **Discover the AUTHOR's intended MEANING**
 - **Use the Bible to interpret the Bible...**
 - Use other PROVEN & TRUSTED resources:
 - a. Commentaries (beware who you read!)
 - b. Bible Dictionaries (again, beware who you read)

- **Apply & Live the Word Daily**
 - The Word could & should 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 teaching.*
 - On a scale from 1-10, how well do you "live" God's Word?

Deeper Study Opportunity:

- a. Read Isaiah 61:1-2 & use the seven guidelines included above to interpret the passage
- b. Read Luke 4:16-21 and do the same...
- c. Compare the these two passages...
- d. Now read Luke 4:22-30:
 - ~ How did the people respond to Jesus' interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2?

• **Key Definitions:**

- ***Testament*** = "covenant" – 1 of 2 major Bible divisions
- ***Gospel*** = one of the first 4 books of the New Testament that tells the "good news" of Jesus' life.
- ***Epistle*** = one of the letters in the New Testament written to a person, church , or group of believers.
- ***Prophets*** = spokesmen who challenged God's people to live according to His standards
- ***Hermeneutics*** = the process of interpreting the Bible
- ***Heresy*** = departure from accepted belief or doctrine
- ***Theology*** = the study of God & His teachings
- ***Redemption*** = a payment used to set someone free

DAILY TIME IN THE WORD HELPS YOU TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S TRUTH

- Take & maintain good PERSONAL notes... feel free to write directly in your Bible or other resources being used so as to help you...
- Develop your own system of underlining, asterisks, and highlighting
- Begin trying to memorize verses that move you personally

**Only when we understand and apply God's Word properly
can we wear the Belt of Truth.**

Day 3: Who Truth Is

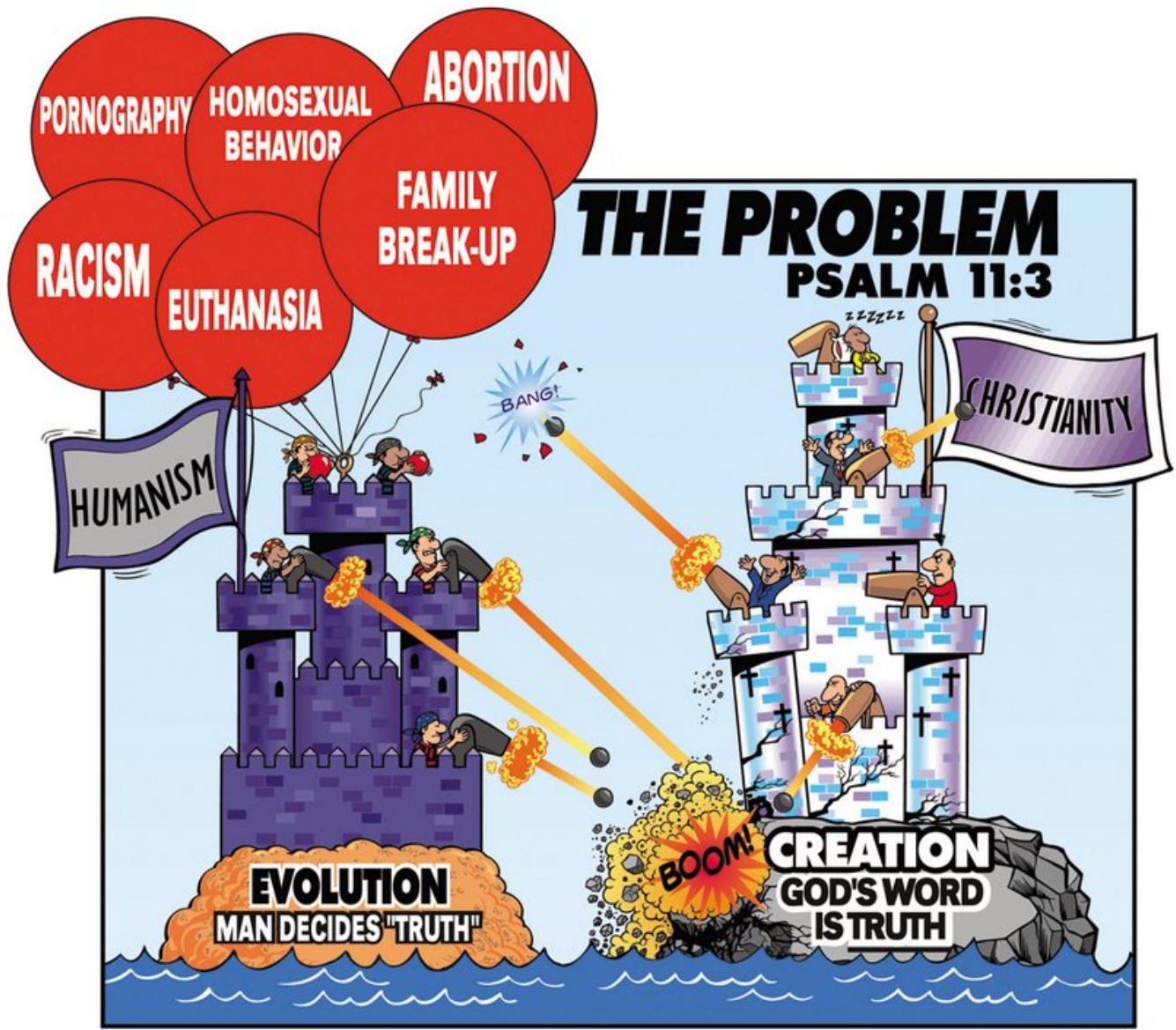
What would you say to someone who believed Jesus was just a good teacher?

The Enemy is behind ALL false teaching about Jesus.

- Jesus is only one of many routes to God
- Jesus could not have possibly been born of a virgin
- Jesus MUST have committed SOME sin in His life...
- Jesus was a great prophet, but not the God-man
- Jesus may have died a martyr... but not for the sins of the world
- Jesus' resurrection was merely a myth...

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 personally – who is truth – in order to wear
the Belt of Truth.*

JESUS IS THE TRUTH

- What did Jesus mean when He said: “I am the truth?”
- Contrast Christ’s claim with His designation of many religious leaders as hypocrites... **What’s the difference in the descriptions?**

- The word “hypocrite” meant “actor” – or one playing a role.
- **As you think about wearing the Belt of Truth, are you seeking to follow Christ with absolute integrity (or are you just play-acting with Christianity)?**

JESUS KNEW THE TRUTH

- Jesus was never “caught in the middle” of two versions of the story...
- As “truth,” Jesus ALWAYS knows & shares THE truth!
- Remember: Jesus KNOWS all... past, present, & future sins.

JESUS SPOKE THE TRUTH

- In the Old Testament... death was the penalty for being a false prophet (evidenced by the fact that what you said would happen did not come to fruition – see Deuteronomy 18:20)
- Jesus passed this test with flying colors!
- **NOTE:** *Jesus promised His disciples that they would have authority over demons & disease, and they used that authority as they preached the gospel (Luke 9:1-6).*

Jesus is the truth who knows the truth and speaks the truth!

- Jesus is the true Word of God (John 1:1)
- Jesus & His Word promise that He will forgive “us” (1 John 1:9)

- Jesus & His Word promise He will never leave “us” (Hebrews 13:5)
- Jesus & His Word promise He will return for “us” (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

We can ALWAYS trust God’s Word!

JESUS LIVED THE TRUTH

Read Hebrews 4:15... meditate on this verse & write down the words that move you the most.

“We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” - Hebrews 4:15

***Don’t ever forget...
Jesus walked in our shoes & NEVER sinned.***

We can come to Him knowing that He understands our struggles :-)

JESUS AND THE BELT OF TRUTH

***“Jesus – who knew the truth, spoke the truth & lived the truth...
is still the Truth today!”***

Read Isaiah 11:5... What did you learn about the Belt of Truth?

Day 4: Living the Truth

Question: Can someone who professed Christ as Lord & Savior 20 years ago, who has developed an extensive “resume” in religious activities, who even studies and “knows” the Bible... still NOT be wearing the Belt of Truth?

Answer: Yes!

Even a true believer can be living in disobedience to God’s Word...

NOTE: there is a point at which the “patterns” of one’s life must call into question whether or not the disobedience in question represents a “spiritual stumble” or, by contrast, does it demonstrate the true condition of a still-lost soul... see 1st John from cover to cover. -JDP

“Wearing” the Belt of Truth means “living” the truth.

JESUS IS OUR MODEL

- **Jesus responded to temptation by quoting God’s Word!**
- Read Matthew 4:1-11 and answer the following questions:
 - How many temptations did Jesus face?
 - How many times did the Devil quote Scripture?
 - What did the Devil offer Jesus in the 3rd temptation?
 - How many times did Jesus quote Scripture?
 - Was Jesus victorious over the temptations?

“The One who is the Word of God used the Word of God to make the right choices.”

- Lessons from the temptation of Christ:
First...
 - Jesus used Scripture to make right choices
 - Jesus valued obedience over worldly gain
 - Jesus lived His life to do the Father’s will (John 8:28-29)
 - Jesus would choose faithful death over sinful life.

Second...

- Jesus KNEW the Word well enough to use it!
- Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 3X...
- Jesus pulled Scripture out of His heart vs. head...
- What are you doing to deposit God's Word in your heart?

Third...

- Jesus experienced the Father's blessing in overcoming
- Angels came & ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11)
- The Father often sends divine relief in & after temptation
- List the emotions you feel in victory & defeat of temptation

***“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 “DO NOT” DO

- Paul's command is to “put on the full armor of God”

***“If we do what God tells us to do
by putting on the armor,
we can stand against the Enemy.”***

- Christianity is not a list of “don't do that” behaviors...
- * Read Acts 10:38 and meditate on it!

***“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”***

- **How are you asking the Lord to refine & grow you today?**

Day 5: How We Live Truth

The Bible expects believers to help one another live holy lives.

“Think about accountability as one way to make certain you’re wearing the Belt of Truth.”

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

Definition: “a willingness to be honest about, & to accept responsibility for, my actions as one means to strive for Christ-like holiness.”

- Accountability is voluntary!
- Accountability requires honesty.
- Accountability requires accepting responsibility.
- Accountability does NOT replace spiritual disciplines.
- Accountability aims to assist in Christ-like holiness.

WHY SHOULD WE BE ACCOUNTABLE TO SOMEONE?

- Read Ephesians 6:10-14... it is clear that the Lord intends us to “stand” and “stand firm” in our battles against the Enemy. At the same time, Paul assumed believers would fight together.
- Note the role & importance Paul places on “relationships” within the Church... clearly the closing verses of Ephesians 6 represent a battle that is undertaken in the context of our Christian relationships.
- When we have accountability partners, we know that we don’t fight alone... (see Hebrews 10:23-27)

WHERE IS ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE BIBLE?

Both the Old & New Testament provide examples of one-on-one accountability relationships

- Some examples:
 - David & Jonathan
 - Disciples sent out by Jesus “two by two”
- Don’t miss this... Christ’s instruction for us to perform “Church Discipline” demonstrates a cemented commitment to Christian accountability.
 - Read Matthew 18:15-20
 - Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15
 - James 5:16

The early Church understood that they were a family, a body of believers knit together by their common bond in Christ.

Are YOU willing to be held accountable?

When? How? To Whom?

HOW DOES ACCOUNTABILITY RELATE TO THE BELT OF TRUTH?

- ***Answer:*** Good accountability keeps us honest!
- **We are most apt to wear the Belt of Truth when we are held accountable by a loving brother/sister to do so!**

Our accountability partners keep us honest and push us toward obedience

- Honesty & obedience are (2) essentials for wearing the Belt of Truth
 - How honest & obedient to God are you, when in the company of:
 - Co-workers or Classmates
 - Church members/attendees
 - Friends
 - Neighbors
 - Family
- *** If there are any differences above, you need accountability!

WHAT ARE SOME GUIDELINES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY?

- Seek an accountability partner that will keep you honest.
- Ask your accountability partner to check on your “armor-wearing”
- A Christian spouse is often one’s best “armor-checking” partner. (Key: spouses may not always be the best/only partner to have)
- NEVER choose an accountability partner of the opposite sex
- Meet regularly & consistently with your accountability partner
- Pre-determine a series of accountability questions to ask each other:
 - Are you reading your Bible everyday?
 - What has God taught you this week?
 - What have you learned about knowing Jesus this week?
 - Is there an area of disobedience in your life?
 - How may I specifically pray for you this week?
- Be honest in ALL responses... accountability fosters intimacy!
- NEVER gossip over what is heard or shared
- Set goals for increased maturity & holiness.
- Don’t allow each other to give up... partners push partners!
- Commit to pray for each other EVERY day.
- Seek God’s will & way in all that is undertaken.

Wearing the Belt of Truth means KNOWING Jesus, knowing His Word, and living that Word.