

BATTLE READY

STANDING FIRM IN JESUS' STRENGTH

HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 1: Mar 6th-12th

THIS IS WEEK 1 OF A 4-WEEK SERIES. CHOOSE 2-4 QUESTIONS YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION.

Like it or not, we are all engaged in a battle. Many of us have never enlisted, taken an oath, or donned a uniform, yet an enemy opposes us. Even the most diplomatic and conflict-avoiding among us can't negotiate our way out. This is a fight we were born into...but it's a fight for which we can be fully equipped and victorious. This short series is aimed at helping us live battle-ready!

Main Texts: Ephesians 6:10-20

CONNECT

1. How does the idea of being in a spiritual battle sit with you? Is it something you embrace? Does it trouble you, or is it even hard to believe? Why?

Pastor Tom includes a similar question in the online sermon. See the "Going Deeper" section at the end if you'd like to drill down a bit more into this topic.

2. What did you find most significant in this week's sermon? What questions did it leave in your mind?

LEARN

3. According to Scripture, how would you describe the key characteristics or "schemes of the devil" (v. 11)?

There are numerous ways this could be answered, including how the devil is a deceiver. He is a "liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). He seeks to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). He is "our adversary," seeking to devour us like a lion (1 Peter 5:8).

4. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. Why do you think Paul emphasizes the need for being strong "*in the Lord*" and in the strength of *his* might?"

The idea of being in a battle can make us nervous because we don't like the idea of a militant religious system that violently seeks power over others. It's important to remember that we are part of a battle fought and won by the Lord. It's His power that makes us strong. It's His power that enables us to stand and resist the devil. We are missing the point if we think it's up to us to muster up the strength to fight in our own power.

5. Who are the enemies in battle against us according to these verses?

Paul mentions that the battle is “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” In other words, the ultimate enemy is not the culture, another nation, other people, etc..

6. The image of being able to *stand* is repeated in these verses. What are the major components of the “whole armor of God” that allow us to stand against, or resist, our enemy?

See verses 14-17.

APPLY

7. What are a few popular beliefs about Satan in our culture? How do these square with what the Bible says about the devil?

The little red man holding a pitchfork might be one possible answer. We could also include a belief that Satan doesn't even exist. Others might even think of Satan as more powerful than he actually is!

8. What has your experience of being in a spiritual battle been like? For example, has it been easy or difficult for you to detect that you're in a battle? How have you responded to the battle?

Some people in your group may have a vivid and current experience to share, but don't be surprised if people have had difficulty detecting a battle. If you've listened to the online sermon from Pastor Tom, remind your group of the closing illustration from a past mission trip in Haiti.

9. What are one or two strategies you've used...or that you need to begin using...to “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil”?

For example, have you committed to regular time reading and meditating on Scripture, regular time in prayer, and fellowship with others who are committed to helping you resist the devil? These are a few key strategies we might adopt.

10. Using the description in verses 14-20, how would you evaluate the condition of your “armor”? Do you have areas of vulnerability that need to be addressed? Take time to pray for each other about these areas.

GOING DEEPER (a.k.a., Extra Credit!)

C. S. Lewis made this remark in one of his (many) classics, *The Screwtape Letters*, where he focuses in on demons, or “devils”:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves (the devils) are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

With this quote in mind, talk through the following questions with your group:

1. Do you tend toward being either a “materialist” (disbelieving in the spiritual battle) or a “magician” (excessive and unhealthy interest) in the battle?

2a. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood...” What struggle in your life are you tempted to think of as a “materialist,” thinking it’s only about flesh and blood?

3a. What might be different about your outlook or attitude if you acknowledged that your struggle is part of a spiritual battle?

[OR]

2b. What struggle are you tempted to think of as a “magician,” perhaps thinking there’s nothing you can do to address it because it’s so “spiritual”?

3b. How would your response to this struggle be different if you more fully believed that the spiritual nature of your struggle doesn’t mean there’s no action you should take?

These questions may be simplistic, as many of us can sway back and forth between being both “materialists” and “magicians” in our thoughts and attitudes. Take time to pray as a group, though, that our thoughts and attitudes toward our struggles would be biblical! Pray as well that God’s Spirit would teach us, convict us, and shape us as we go through this series.