

LIFE GROUPS

The Church Stands – Ephesians 6:10-23

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What is the most epic depiction of a battle either in a movie or print that you've ever seen? How did that depiction affect you?

To close his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul addressed the need for preparation in spiritual warfare. He wrote the Letter of Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome. He was waiting for his appeal to come before the emperor. He “was permitted to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him” (Acts 28:16). In conversations with these guards, Paul shared with them the good news of Jesus (Phil. 1:13). But he likely learned about their lives in the military. Paul used battle imagery to describe the Christian life—a battle for which God Himself has provided the armor.

Because He knows we are caught in the battle between good and evil, God has given us spiritual armor so we can be victorious in Christ.

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**

2. **READ EPHESIANS 6:10-12. What does this passage say about spiritual warfare and why it is an inevitable part of the Christian life?**

Scripture does not go into a lot of detail about the dynamics of spiritual warfare, but it clearly indicates that spiritual warfare is very real and that believers need to be ready to do battle with Satan and his demons on a daily basis. Satan considers the mind of the believer to be territory he can use and control, even though it belongs to God. Thus, the battle for the mind is never over in this life. The mind is a strategic battlefield for Christians of all ages and all maturity levels.

Seldom does Satan ever attack openly. His strategies as ministered by his devils are nearly always unseen, shrewd, and perfectly tailored for the victim. What a terrible foe we face. He is immensely *powerful*, imitating God's power and presence with his demonic hosts. He is evil beyond our comprehension and without conscience or principle. He is diabolically *cunning*. And he is after us!¹

"Spiritual warfare is about God's people joining their Lord in his warfare."

-Garrett Kell

a. What does it mean that our battle is not against flesh and blood?

3. Do you think most Christians are prepared to fight spiritual battles? Why or why not?

We take the time and effort to prepare for many events. We may have learned the hard way the consequences of being unprepared. But often we fail to give much thought to our spiritual preparedness. In this study, we will talk about being prepared and equipped to handle spiritual challenges. Many people long to be physically strong, but Paul knew that even the strongest people on earth could not be strong enough on their own when it comes to our spiritual battles. Christians must rely on the incomparable strength of God.

Scripture does not go into a lot of detail about the dynamics of spiritual warfare, but it clearly indicates that spiritual warfare is very real and that believers need to be ready to do battle with Satan and his demons on a daily basis.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 217–218.

"When we follow Jesus, we follow him into a war zone."

- Garrett Kell

The fact is, a beautiful life is to be lived even while camped out on enemies' dismal territories.²

Awareness that we are involved in a cosmic battle which is *supernatural, personal, and futile if fought with natural weapons* is the beginning of conquering wisdom. We must be convinced of these things if we are to succeed. We must go beyond evangelical lip service to a deep-souled conviction which bursts our simplistic religious shackles.³

- a. **Are you engaged in the battle today or choosing to live like it doesn't exist? If you are engaged, share how.**
4. **If we are in the middle of a spiritual war, what role does the church play in the battle? Do you tend to think of the church as an army? Why or why not?**

When you become a Christian, you become a part of the family of God. You also become a member of the body of Christ. You also enlisted in an army. This army is involved in a universal and epic battle of good versus evil. The problem is that most Christians not only fail to recognize they are in an army; they fail to recognize there is a war happening at all.

Perhaps as Paul saw the armor of his Roman guards, he thought about the spiritual battle we face as Christians. When we are equipped with God's armor we will be able to stand up against whatever the Devil may hurl our way. We need to understand that our battle as believers is not against unbelievers, or against other denominations, but against hostile spiritual beings. It is a contest we cannot win in our own strength. We must rely upon the power God supplies to withstand spiritual attacks.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 212–213.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 214.

a. How is this battle different than a physical battle? How is it the same?

Satan has had multiple millennia to study and master the human disciplines, and when it comes to human subversion, he is the ultimate manipulator. One of his deadly methods is masquerading as an agent of God⁴

5. How does knowing that the battle has already been won affect the way you fight?

In light of the fact that we have such a formidable foe, we must take up the full armor of God. Attempting to defeat Satan on our own power is an exercise in futility. We are no match for him. But with God's armor, we can defeat him in our daily walk with Christ, because Christ has already defeated him for us on the cross.

But there is more — Christ is not only more powerful by virtue of his being the spirits' Creator. He is also more powerful because he defeated Satan at the cross, and as a result Satan and his minions are under Christ's feet. In fact, the apostle tells us in Colossians 2:15 that our Lord Jesus Christ has led them in a victory parade: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." He has sealed their doom, although during the present overlapping of the new age with the old, they still exercise control over those who have not found freedom in Christ.

As John Stott says: "They were defeated at the cross and are now under Christ's feet and ours. So the invisible world in which they attack us and we defend ourselves is the very world in which Christ reigns over them and we reign with him." If we are filled with the Spirit (5:18), Satan's forces cannot subdue us. But those of us who neglect our resources, and especially those who give the enemies room in our lives, place ourselves in harm's way.⁵

6. What is the difference between relying on our own human strength and ability, and trusting in the Lord's strength?

As Calvin said:

He means that our difficulties are far greater than if we had to fight against men. Where we resist human strength, sword is opposed to sword, man contends with

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 217.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 218–219.

man, force is met by force, and skill by skill; but here the case is very different, for our enemies are such as no human power can withstand.⁶

How do we receive this strength to stand? By realizing that we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies far above all of Satan's principalities and powers (1:19–23), and that the very power of God is available to us through the indwelling Spirit (3:14–21). We must sit before we can walk, and we must walk before we can stand. We must understand our spiritual position before we can have spiritual power.⁷

So in respect to these cosmic realities about Satan's vast power, but Christ's transcending power, what must we do? Paul leaves two commands which dominate his advice to the end of this section. First: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (v. 10). This is a passive imperative: *be made strong in the Lord, find your strength in him.* We cannot fight Satan ourselves. All our own doing will be in vain. Nevertheless there is something we can do, and that is to avail ourselves of the Lord's strength⁸

Note, spiritual strength and courage are very necessary for our spiritual warfare. Be strong in the Lord, either in his cause and for his sake or rather in his strength. We have no sufficient strength of our own. Our natural courage is as perfect cowardice, and our natural strength as perfect weakness; but all our sufficiency is of God. In his strength we must go forth and go on. By the actings of faith, we must fetch in grace and help from heaven to enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do, in our Christian work and warfare. We should stir up ourselves to resist temptations in a reliance upon God's all-sufficiency and the omnipotence of his might.⁹

"Jesus's strength is made perfect in our weakness."

— John Piper

a. Do we always fail when we trust our own strength?

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 214.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 553.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 219.

⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2319.

b. What happens to us when we think we have the ability to withstand temptation in our own power?

The only way to fight spiritual enemies is with spiritual weapons—the Word of God and prayer.¹⁰

Why not prayerfully do this right now? First, acknowledge the futility of fighting your spiritual battles with natural strength — exhale all self-dependence. Second, prayerfully inhale his mighty power, asking him to fill you with his fullness (3:19).¹¹

7. What kinds of factors might keep us from recognizing the war going on around us?

The prevailing materialistic, mechanistic thinking of our age leaves no room for the supernatural, or indeed anything without a physical cause. Sadly, many Christians are so influenced by this thinking that even though they give conscious voice to their belief in Satan and spiritual warfare, their lives show no evidence of this reality. They actually live in *unconscious disbelief*. For such persons, this passage provides a much-needed antidote.¹²

“The devil is in the business of causing you to do wrong things.”

— John Piper

“Spiritual warfare most often takes place in the mundane details of life.”

- Garrett Kell

8. How does being with God’s people encourage you? How does it prepare you to go back out and fight the battle?

“Don’t just pray human prayers. Use the Spirit’s inspired word.”

— John Piper

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 554.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 220.

¹² R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 212–214.

PRAYER

Pray that God would open your eyes to the reality of the spiritual war taking place all around you.

Thank God for providing us with spiritual resources that equip us to stand firm under attack from the enemy. Pray that each learner would grow in strength and conviction, depending on the Lord in prayer, and seeking to live for His glory.

FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/spiritual-warfare-and-prayer>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/spiritual-warfare/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-jesus-disarmed-devil/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/tempted-and-unarmed>