

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

SHINING A LIGHT ON AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

LIVING WITH SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (EPHESIANS 6:10-20)

APRIL 29, 2018



INFORMATION

Highway Clean-up—Saturday May 5 (Proceeds to the 2019 Youth Missions Trip)

Meet at the church at 8:30am. Youth, families, individuals and growth groups are welcome to participate! Must be at least 9 years old (children 9-12 must be accompanied by a parent). Gloves, garbage bags and safety vests will be provided. Barbecue to follow at Darrell and April Pitts' residence. cyoung@okotoksefc.ca

Scripture Focused Prayer

Seeking people interested in focused prayer for our church, pastors, and community (a great follow-up to the recent ASK Growth Group studies). Meetings will be Thursdays (1-3pm) in OEFC's Prayer room. Contact Janice Trenholm: vac-king@platinum.ca
403-646-2400

SHAPE

Do the participants in your group know how God has shaped their lives for satisfying service? Encourage your groupies to enroll at www.okotoksefc.ca/shape

COACHES' CORNER

We are very excited to introduce to you some brief online training modules. Please take 2 minutes and watch this video.

<https://trainedup.church/oefc/#/course/27/module/251>

SERMON OUTLINE

Living with Spiritual Discernment

Our Spiritual Influences Must Meet the Authenticity Test

The Content Test (v.1-3)

1John 1:3; 2:1-2:3:16; 5:1
John 1:14

The Authorship Test (v.4-6)

2Corinthians 10:5
Colossians 1:13
1John 1:1-3

What should I do with what I've heard today?

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MAIN POINT

God provides the strength we need to live spiritually discerning lives and stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Does the evil you see in the world around you scare you? Do you feel prepared to meet the evil that you encounter on a daily basis?

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

Leader: We take the time and effort to prepare for many events. We may have learned the hard way the consequences of being unprepared. But oftentimes, we fail to give much thought to our spiritual preparedness. To close his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul addressed the need for preparation in spiritual warfare. Paul used battle imagery to describe the Christian life—a battle for which God Himself has provided the armor.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 6:10-12.

3. What did Paul mean by the devil's schemes? What do these schemes target or what is their purpose?

4. Verse 10 commands us to be strong in the Lord and His mighty power. What is the difference between relying on our own human strength and ability, and trusting in the Lord's strength?

Leader: Victory in spiritual warfare demands strength that is greater than the enemy, meaning it must come from God—not ourselves. The specific reason given for needing the armor of God is so that we can stand against the tactics of the devil. In spiritual warfare, the devil and his demons are the enemies. Paul called on believers of his day to become stronger through the Lord's strength, and to recognize that God provided what they needed to stand against the devil. Today, many believers act as if they have within

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themselves the strength needed to resist evil. Furthermore, many believers act as if the devil and other evil beings are only a vague threat, rather than personal and vicious, aiming to steal, kill, and destroy.

5. What have you experienced that affirms Paul's teaching that our battle is not against flesh and blood? How should that awareness influence how we fight?

Leader: 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 in 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.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 6:13-17.

6. For each of the six items Paul counted as our spiritual armor, discuss: How does God provide this weapon for us? How do we receive it or take it up? How does this piece of our armor help us to face the assaults of the enemy?

Leader: See "Spotlight on the Passage" for further details and help in answering question 6.

7. How does this armor prepare us for the spiritual battle?

8. Where have you seen the scheming of Satan to bring you down in your own life or in the world around you lately? Explain.

Leader: Direct discussion toward current cultural examples (Secular vs. state issues; Defunding of Christian camps; Challenges to freedom of speech) as well as personal examples in the group.

9. Which piece of spiritual armor is most helpful for defending against the kind of attacks you face? Why?

Leader: Our ability to identify and overcome the schemes of Satan are not about who will win since Christ has already won; our battles determine how effectively we will serve

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the conquering King. Armor is useless unless we actually put it on. The emphasis in the illustration of the full armor of God is on being prepared. We must first be aware of the battle that is going on around us. Then we must avail ourselves of the resources God has provided as we stand firm against the schemes of the enemy.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 6:18-20.

10. Why did Paul bring prayer into his letter at this point and how does it help us stand firm?

11. Look at Paul's repeated use of the word "all" in verse 18. What does this indicate about the diligence we should have in preparing for spiritual battle and seeking to live discerning lives?

Leader: Prayer is essential for Christians to resist evil. Paul called on the Ephesians to pray on a persistent basis and to pray for others, including himself. Surely we can see the urgency of such praying today. If we are to resist the evil we face, we need to make prayer a consistent priority, and that includes praying for one another.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

12. How do the weapons God has given for spiritual battle help us to be more discerning spiritually?

13. What practices do we need to take up in order to better be prepared to stand against the schemes of the devil? How can we support one another as a group in this pursuit?

Leader: When answering question 13, be sure to reference back to the importance of prayer, as discussed in question 10.

PRAYER

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

MEMORIZE

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.
- Ephesians 6:11

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

6:10. Paul introduces his final subject by urging the Ephesian believers to be strong in the Lord. When it comes to spiritual warfare, we cannot be sufficiently strong by ourselves. If we are going to have adequate strength for the spiritual battles of life, it must be the Lord's strength. Only he has the mighty power sufficient to win spiritual battles against the demonic enemy.

6:11. The way we are strong in the Lord is to put on the full armor of God. When we have this armor on, we are able to stand against the wiles and schemes of the devil. Satan is a deceiver and a destroyer (Rev. 12:9). He deceives in order to destroy. Putting on the armor, of course, is a metaphor for following certain instructions from Scripture.

6:12. The reason this spiritual armor is needed is that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. The picture of warfare here implies that we do not face a physical army. We face a spiritual army. Therefore our weapons must be spiritual. Against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms seems to suggest a hierarchy of evil spirit-beings who do the bidding of Satan in opposing the will of God on earth.

6:13. When we have obeyed all the instructions implicit in the full armor of God, we can resist Satan's attempts to deceive and destroy us. The day of evil is anytime during this era in history until Jesus returns. All days are evil in their potential and become evil in reality when Satan or his demons decide to use that day to attack you.

The clear implication here is that, if the Christian has all his armor on, he has the ability to stand firm against Satan. At times the spiritual warfare in which we find ourselves may be frightening. However, the only thing we have to fear, if our armor is in place, is fear itself. "The one who is in you [Jesus], is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Scripture is utterly consistent. If we have our armor in place, if we are firm in our faith, we may resist the devil. If we do, he will flee from us.

6:14. After instructions to put on the full armor of God and the promise of the power of God in victory over the devil, Paul specifically describes the various pieces of armor. The belt of truth pictures the large leather belt the Roman soldier wore. It held other weapons and kept his outer garments in place. To put on the belt of truth can be understood as accepting the truth of the Bible and choosing to follow it with integrity.

The breastplate of righteousness pictures the metal armor in the shape of a human torso common to the Roman uniform. To put on the breastplate can be understood as choosing not to harbor and nurture known sin. It is striving to be like Christ and live according to his ways of righteousness.

6:15. Feet fitted with the readiness pictures the hobnailed shoes which kept the soldiers footing sure in battle. To put on these shoes could be understood as believing the promises of God in the

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gospel and counting on them to be true for you. Faith in these promises yields peace in the Christian's life.

6:16. The shield of faith pictures the small, round shield the Roman soldier used to deflect blows from the sword, arrow, or spear of the enemy. To take up this shield can be understood as rejecting temptations to doubt, sin or quit, telling yourself the truth and choosing on the basis of the truth to do the right thing.

6:17. The helmet of salvation pictures the Roman soldier's metal protective headgear. It does not refer to our salvation in Christ. First Thessalonians speaks of the helmet of the "hope of salvation," which is probably a parallel idea. That being the case, taking the helmet of salvation could be understood as resting our hope in the future and living in this world according to the value system of the next.

The sword of the Spirit pictures the soldier's weapon sheathed to his belt and used both for offensive and defensive purposes. Taking the sword of the Spirit—defined for us as the Word of God—can be understood as using Scripture specifically in life's situations to fend off attacks of the enemy and put him to flight. We see the example of Jesus using the Scripture this way in Matthew 4:1-11.

6:18. Finally, while preparing for and doing battle, we are to be on the alert and always keep on praying. We petition God for our own needs in the battle, and we pray for the spiritual victory of other saints.

6:19-20. Paul finishes by asking for prayer for himself in his own ministry, acknowledging the fact that he was a prisoner at the time of this writing. He sought courage from prayer to proclaim the gospel even to those in his prison.