

THE ARMOR OF GOD

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 6:1-20



The gospel that saves us also arms us for battle.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Children, obey your parents. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul takes time to address the children directly. He does not say, "Parents, tell your children to obey you." Paul assumes that children will be reading this letter, so he speaks directly to them. He reminds all children of God's commandment to obey their parents and that if they do, they will be rewarded with a long, prosperous life. The illustration of the armor of God, which ends Paul's book, seems to be custom-tailored for children and is an easy illustration to understand.

Notice also that Paul tells the children to obey their parents in the Lord. Apart from the saving work of Christ, children, just like adults, are hopelessly bound in their sins. The phrase "in the Lord" tells children that they should obey not merely because their parents say so, but because God says so. But now that Christ has come, "in the Lord" means much more than the law. Those three words must now include grace through Christ as well!

We need spiritual armor for a spiritual war. We are not fighting against men, we are fighting against a spiritual enemy. Our enemy is evil and powerful. But God has given us what we need to defend ourselves against the enemy's attack. We have the armor of God. A normal sword cannot save us against a spiritual enemy. We need spiritual armor! If we use the armor God gives, He promises that we will be able to withstand the attack. The first two pieces of armor are truth and righteousness. Since the enemy's attack relies often on lies, for he is the father of all lies, we must remember the truth of God. It alone can sustain us.

Our enemy also comes at us with partial truth. One of the enemy's greatest schemes is to point out weakness and suggest we are unworthy. This, of course, is true! We are weak and unworthy. But we must remember that it is not our own righteousness we wear. Christ's righteousness protects us like a breastplate. When the enemy tells us we are weak, we can say, "Yes, but my Lord is strong." When the enemy tells us we are unworthy, we reply, "Right, but Jesus is worthy." When the enemy tells us we have no righteousness, we reply that we have the perfect righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

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The shield, helmet, and sword protect us. Paul continues with the description of the defensive armor by describing our shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. The gospel is able to fully protect us from any attack. A fully equipped soldier can defend himself well. We are well defended as we stand upon the truth of God's salvation in Christ.

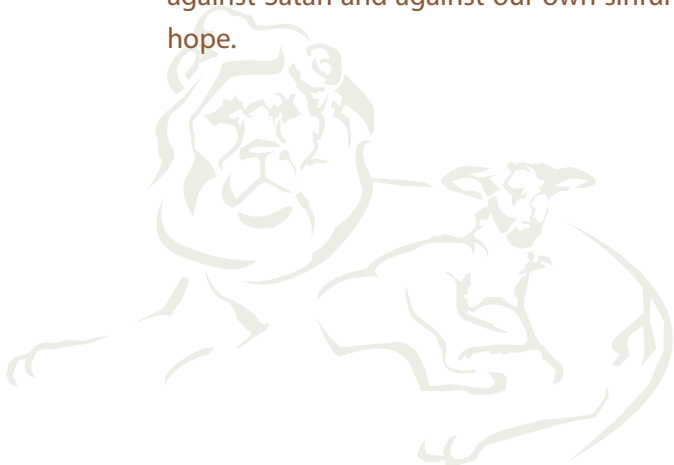
The sword is an offensive weapon with which we attack and defeat those who come against us. Our attack is not with human strength or skill. Our attack is mounted by using the Word of God, which is powerful beyond human strength. Paul concludes by encouraging the Ephesians to pray and by asking for their prayers for his own battle with sin. Sometimes we can think that the men who wrote Scripture were perfect and without sin. But Paul was tempted to give in to fear and not use his sword as he should. If Paul needed to pray, then we certainly need to pray also.

WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

All the armor, from the belt of truth to the sword of the Spirit, is connected to the gospel. Each piece takes us back to the cross. The belt of truth is our security because we know the truth of God's plan to send His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. As a result we receive His righteousness as a breastplate along with salvation in Christ as our helmet. Faith in Christ and His sacrificial death is our shield. The Spirit that God pours into us at conversion helps us to use the Word of God against the schemes of the enemy.

So why do we have the gospel of peace in the midst of the battle? Well, we are to love our enemies, and there is no greater demonstration of love than to share the gospel of peace. In the midst of our battle against Satan and against our own sinful nature, we always need to be ready to give a reason for our hope.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 69:17-29

Connecting the passage to Christ:

When Jesus was crucified, He was offered wine mixed with gall to drink. Then He was offered wine vinegar to quench his thirst. These two items are mentioned in the account of suffering from Psalm 69 (Matthew 27:34 and Matthew 27:48). Jesus was also scorned, disgraced, and shamed. Jesus found no sympathy, for even His Father in heaven forsook Him on the cross. This psalm is quoted in the New Testament as a prophetic picture of the Lord's suffering.

Questions for reflection:

- When we read Psalm 69 should we think about the suffering of David who wrote the psalm or of Christ and His suffering? (We should consider David, but then quickly turn our attention to Christ. This psalm, like all the others, is designed to point to Jesus. Apart from Christ, all the stories of the scriptures are just stories.)
- Why should the suffering of Christ increase our gratitude and thankfulness? (We can sometimes become too familiar with the cross and forget the genuine suffering that Christ endured for us. Thinking about every aspect of the suffering of Christ, even the small details like being offered vinegar when you are thirsty, can help us to appreciate what a great salvation we have.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the *SWORD Bible Memory* verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Supplies:

- baseball equipment or child's set of plastic toy armor
- belt

Use baseball equipment to help the children understand the function of the armor. The catcher's chest protector is the breastplate. The catcher's glove is like the shield of faith. The bat is the sword of the Spirit. The batter's helmet is like the helmet of salvation. Use any belt for the belt of truth. The cleated shoes help you run the bases. Talk about the function of each of the items listed and have fun drawing the analogy to baseball. If you have a child's set of plastic toy armor you can also use it.

Help the children memorize the function of each piece of armor and its connection to the gospel.

Belt of Truth – It is the truth of the gospel that surrounds us and gives us the confidence to stand against the enemy.

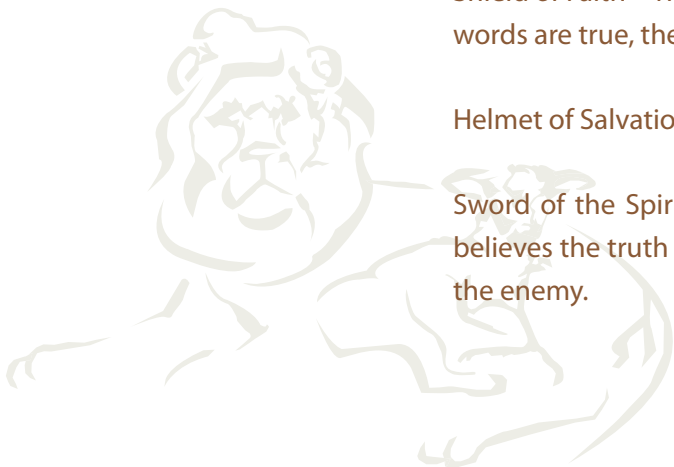
Breastplate of Righteousness – All Christians stand secure in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Shoes of Readiness – We need to be ready to share the gospel with those around us.

Shield of Faith – The shield of faith is our faith in God and His word. If we know His words are true, the lies of the enemy will be exposed and can not cause us harm.

Helmet of Salvation - It is our salvation in Christ that we depend on to keep us.

Sword of the Spirit – The sword is the only offensive weapon. Unlike faith that believes the truth of the word, the sword uses the word actively against the lies of the enemy.



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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Supplies:

a plastic sword or a sword
cut out of a piece of
thick cardboard or thin
plywood

Make an 8.5 x 11 paper with one of the following five lies printed on it (Make multiple copies so each child has a sheet of paper and all five lies are represented equally.)

1. You will never make it. You are too weak.
2. Go ahead and sin. God doesn't know.
3. It is OK to lie as long as it's just a little lie.
4. Stealing is only wrong if it hurts someone.
5. You only need to obey your parents when they are looking.

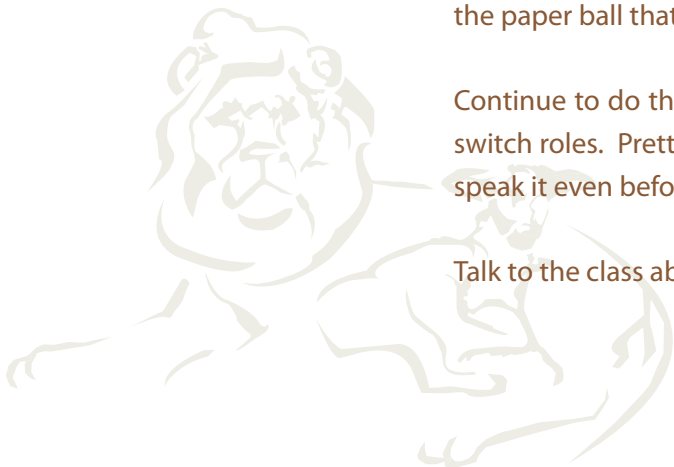
You'll also need one sheet with the answers from the Bible.

1. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:3)
2. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. (Hebrews 4:13)
3. Do not lie to each other. (Colossians 3:9)
4. Do not steal. (Romans 13:9)
5. Children obey your parents in everything. (Colossians 3:20)

Tell the class that we use the word of God as a sword to defeat the lies of the enemy. Divide the class up into two teams. Have one team play the enemy and the other team play the Christians. Place the temptations in a pile all mixed up and face down on one side of the room. Place the sword and the scripture answer key on the other side of the room with the Christians. The object of the game is for the enemy to pick up a temptation and read it aloud to the Christian who is first in line. As soon as he reads it he should wad it up into a ball to throw at the Christian. The Christian needs to look for the appropriate Bible verse and speak it back to the enemy before "the enemy" can finish wadding their paper into a ball to throw. If the Christian gets the verse correct, hand him the sword to defend himself against the paper ball that the enemy will throw.

Continue to do this again and again until you get through the whole class. Then switch roles. Pretty soon your class will memorize the word of God and be able to speak it even before the enemy finishes his temptation.

Talk to the class about how this works in real life.



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JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

Review the temptation of Jesus and how He used the word of God to defeat the enemy. See Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of your favorite piece of armor and give it its Biblical name (ie. Sword of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness, etc.).

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

CONNECT ONE OF THE PIECES OF ARMOR TO THE GOSPEL.

Supplies:

slips of paper with each of the names of the armor on them so that your whole class can get one

Place all the slips of paper with the pieces of armor written on them in a bowl and have each student pick one. Explain to them that you want them to write a paragraph about your piece of armor and how it is connected to the gospel. Give the class ample time to write a response. Then ask for volunteers to share what they came up with. Draw out others to add to the discussion on each piece of armor.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Gall – Gall is believed to be the opium poppy plant which grows in Palestine. The juice from the seed heads is the same narcotic substance we get the pain relieving narcotic drug morphine from. It was bitter and would have eased the suffering of crucified criminals. Jesus refused to take this bitter plant. He would endure the suffering of the cross without relief so that we could be relieved of our suffering.

