

ARMOR *of* GOD



the whole ARMOR *of* GOD

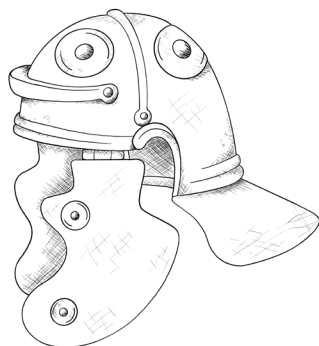
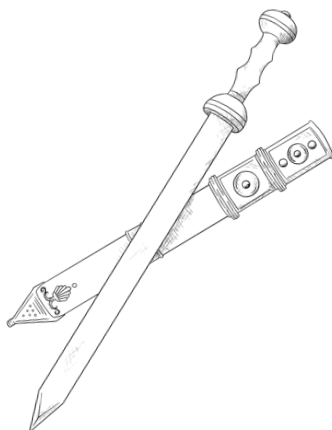
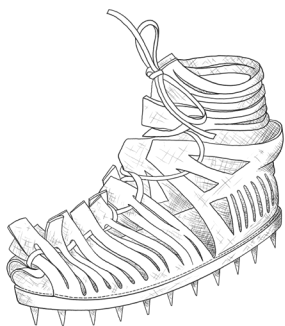
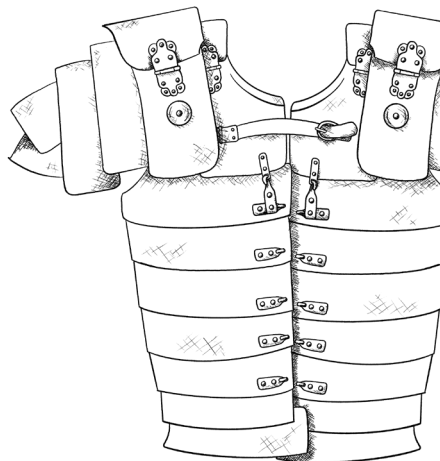
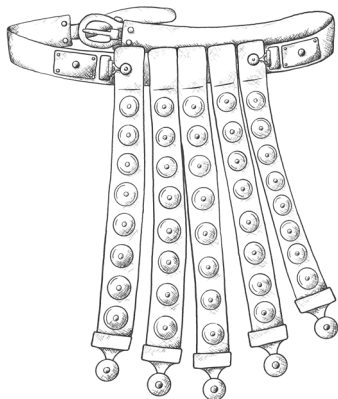
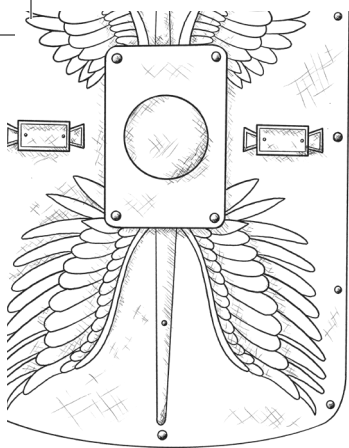
¹⁰A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹²For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

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Ephesians 6:10-20



week one

SPIRITUAL WARFARE & INTRO ARMOR OF GOD

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 6:12

Listen here:



EPHESIANS 1

Greetings from Paul

¹This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.

I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

²May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Spiritual Blessings

³All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

⁹God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. ¹¹Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

¹²God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. ¹³And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. ¹⁴The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

ISAIAH 59

Warnings against Sin

¹Listen! The Lord's arm is not too weak to save you,
nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call.

²It's your sins that have cut you off from God.

Because of your sins, he has turned away
and will not listen anymore.

³Your hands are the hands of murderers,
and your fingers are filthy with sin.

Your lips are full of lies,
and your mouth spews corruption.

⁴No one cares about being fair and honest.

The people's lawsuits are based on lies.

They conceive evil deeds
and then give birth to sin.

⁵They hatch deadly snakes
and weave spiders' webs.

Whoever eats their eggs will die;
whoever cracks them will hatch a viper.

⁶Their webs can't be made into clothing,
and nothing they do is productive.

All their activity is filled with sin,
and violence is their trademark.

⁷Their feet run to do evil,
and they rush to commit murder.

They think only about sinning.
Misery and destruction always follow them.

⁸They don't know where to find peace
or what it means to be just and good.

They have mapped out crooked roads,
and no one who follows them knows a moment's peace.

⁹So there is no justice among us,
and we know nothing about right living.

We look for light but find only darkness.

We look for bright skies but walk in gloom.

¹⁰We grope like the blind along a wall,
feeling our way like people without eyes.

Even at brightest noontime,
we stumble as though it were dark.

Among the living,
we are like the dead.

¹¹We growl like hungry bears;
we moan like mournful doves.

We look for justice, but it never comes.

We look for rescue, but it is far away from us.

¹²For our sins are piled up before God
and testify against us.

Yes, we know what sinners we are.

¹³We know we have rebelled and have denied the Lord.

We have turned our backs on our God.

We know how unfair and oppressive we have been,
carefully planning our deceitful lies.

¹⁴Our courts oppose the righteous,
and justice is nowhere to be found.

Truth stumbles in the streets,
and honesty has been outlawed.

¹⁵Yes, truth is gone,
and anyone who renounces evil is attacked.

The Lord looked and was displeased
to find there was no justice.

¹⁶He was amazed to see that no one intervened
to help the oppressed.

So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm,
and his justice sustained him.

¹⁷He put on righteousness as his body armor
and placed the helmet of salvation on his head.
He clothed himself with a robe of vengeance

and wrapped himself in a cloak of divine passion.

¹⁸He will repay his enemies for their evil deeds.

His fury will fall on his foes.

He will pay them back even to the ends of the earth.

¹⁹In the west, people will respect the name of the Lord;

in the east, they will glorify him.

For he will come like a raging flood tide

driven by the breath of the Lord.

²⁰“The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem

to buy back those in Israel

who have turned from their sins,”

says the Lord.

²¹“And this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children’s children forever. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

STUDY AND REFLECT:

Paul probably had a specific image in mind as he wrote to the Ephesian church about the armor of God. Most biblical scholars think this image is based on the divine warrior from Isaiah 59. Read Isaiah 59. At this time, the nation of Israel had turned away from worshiping God and instead engaged in idol worship and child sacrifice. In response, God puts on his own armor to bring justice and judgment on Israel. The armor of God in Isaiah may have inspired Paul, but the good news of the gospel changes the relationship God has with his people! Because of Christ, we can now have a relationship with God, which means the armor which God put on to use against his people he now gives to his people. What used to be God’s armor is now your armor! **What are the similarities between the armor of God in Isaiah and the armor that Paul describes in Ephesians 6:10-17?**

EPHESIANS 6: 10-20

The Whole Armor of God

¹⁰A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹²For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

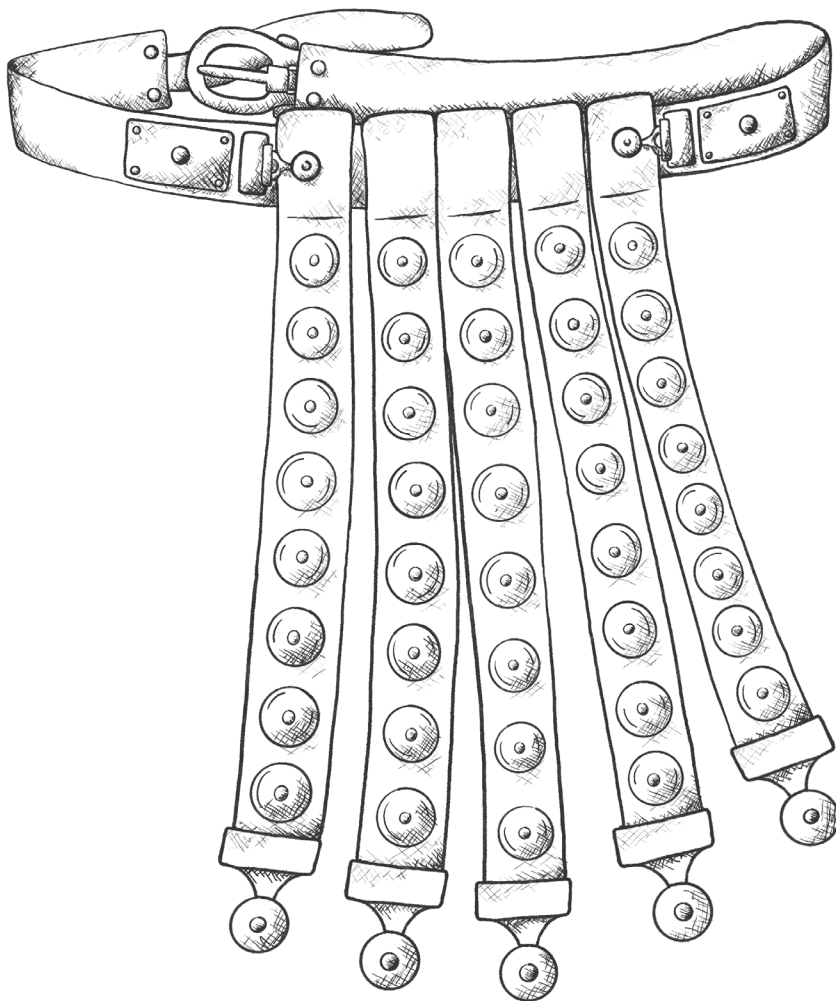
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STUDY AND REFLECT:

The book of Ephesians is a mix between God's gifts to us and our responsibilities. In Ephesians 1, Paul speaks to the identity we now have in Christ and the blessings that are ours. Ephesians 6 explains how we are to use these very gifts. Satan knows that children of God cannot be destroyed, but he has other goals. He wants to distract you, discourage you, and disable you from experiencing everything God has for you. So we must be on guard and take full advantage of the gifts God has given us! We cannot be passive in our faith—we must be active in pursuing God and standing firm against the enemy. Read Ephesians 6:10-20 and underline all of the action verbs you see. **What do these action verbs practically look like in your day-to-day life?**




week two

THE BELT OF TRUTH

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth

EPHESIANS 6:14

[illegible]

The Whole Armor of God

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STUDY AND REFLECT:

The soldier's belt represents truth, and its core function is to hold and stabilize other key pieces of armor. A soldier without the belt is like a policeman without a holster. He wouldn't have access to his sword (or other weapons) and he wouldn't have a breastplate, leaving his chest unprotected. The belt also has the capacity to help bear the weight of the other pieces of armor. Without it, the soldier must carry the full weight of everything! Now look at the other pieces of armor and the virtues associated with them.

- **Righteousness:** Right living, the process by which we apply truth to our lives and produce conduct pleasing to God
- **Peace:** deep, inner, and eternal stability a believer possesses by way of a relationship with Jesus
- **Faith:** the application of what one believes, the process of putting action to God's truth and living it out
- **Salvation:** our eternal security with Christ, as well as the full inheritance we've been given through relationship with him—blessing, status, identity, etc.
- **The Word of God:** His present and personal word to us for today. God's spirit makes the Bible fresh, new, and alive for us each day!

Just like the other pieces of armor rely on the belt, so too, does Truth impact all of the virtues connected to the armor Paul describes. **Looking at these virtues in light of the belt being the “hanger” for the other pieces of armor, how is each virtue impacted and affected by truth?**

- **Righteousness:** *The truth is that God's spirit lives in me. Because of this I can live in a way that is honoring to God*
- **Peace:**
- **Faith:**
- **Salvation:**
- **The Word of God:**

ROMANS 1:18-32

God's Anger at Sin

¹⁸But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.

²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

²¹Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²²Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. ³²They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

STUDY AND REFLECT:

Truth—God's truth, biblical truth—is our standard. Without obedience to truth, we are left weak and susceptible to things that may look right and sound right yet aren't actually right at all. The enemy is looking for weaknesses that he can take advantage of, which is why our commitment to truth must be strong. So God's truth, God's way, is our protection, allowing us to stand strong and firm! **Read Romans 1:18-32. What are the side effects of a life that is not committed to truth? How do you see yourself compromising God's truth in your own life?**

EXODUS 17:1-7

Water from the Rock

¹At the Lord's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. ²So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?"

³But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

⁴Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

⁵The Lord said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you. ⁶I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.

⁷Moses named the place Massah (which means "test") and Meribah (which means "arguing") because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord here with us or not?"

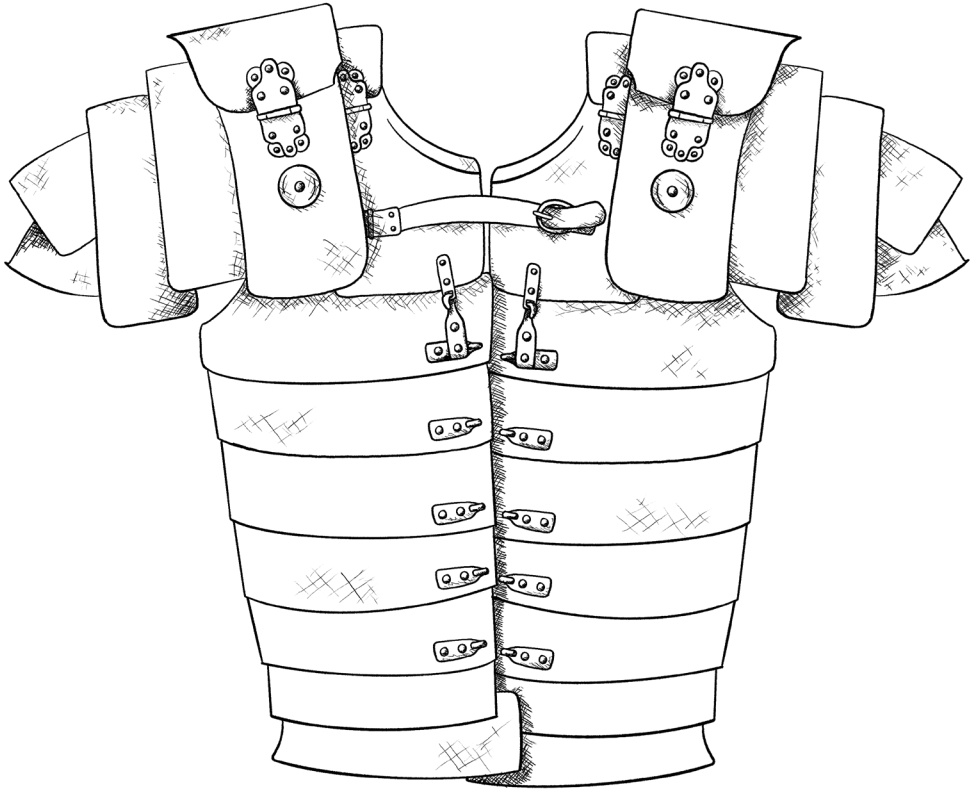
NUMBERS 20:2-13

²There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. ³The people blamed Moses and said, "If only we had died in the Lord's presence with our brothers! ⁴Why have you brought the congregation of the Lord's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? ⁵Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates, and no water to drink!"

⁶Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to them, ⁷and

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you depend on any of these factors for guidance when making a decision? How can you shift these things in order to align them with God's truth?

- **Feelings:**
- **Intelligence:**
- **Instinct:**
- **Past experiences:**



week three

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Put on your new nature, created to be
like God—truly righteous and holy.

EPHESIANS 4:24

[illegible]

The Whole Armor of God

¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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STUDY AND REFLECT:

Righteousness is described as *right living, the process by which we apply truth to our lives and produce conduct pleasing to God*. But God's standard of righteousness is perfect, so when we look at this type of righteousness, it can seem like wearing the breastplate is impossible! There is no way we can meet that standard on our own, and if we aren't careful, this pursuit of righteousness can lead to a spiral of idolatry as we pursue a perfection we will never be able to attain. But this is why we need Jesus! When we trust in him as our Savior, the penalty of sin is removed **and** God's own righteousness is placed on us. So you no longer need to exhaust yourself striving for perfection. Because of Christ's gift to you, you are already completely righteous and have full access to the breastplate of righteousness for protection! **How has Christ made you righteous in God's eyes? Do you tend to struggle with perfectionism? If so, how does it impact your life? Whom do you find yourself measuring your righteousness against? How do you think knowing that you are already made righteous in Christ protects your spiritual heart?**

[illegible]

EPHESIANS 4:17-5:9

Living as Children of Light

¹⁷With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. ¹⁹They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

²⁰But that isn't what you learned about Christ. ²¹Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, ²²throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

²⁵So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

²⁸If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. ²⁹Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

³⁰And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Living in the Light

¹Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. ²Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

³Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. ⁴Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. ⁵You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

⁶Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. ⁷Don't participate in the things these people do. ⁸For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

STUDY AND REFLECT:

In Ephesians 4:17-5:5, when Paul tells the Christians to "put off" their old clothes, he is telling them to turn away from their old behaviors. Rejecting their old lives is the next step of living righteously before God. Wearing the breastplate of righteousness also means replacing your old ways of living with new ways that align with Christ. Righteousness is already in you, but Paul is telling us we must

also make the conscious choice, moment by moment, to act in a way that is consistent with our new life in Christ. Don't get caught up in striving for perfection—instead, rely on the perfect nature of Christ in you to direct your actions every day. **What are 2-3 attributes in Paul's list in Ephesians 4:17-5:5 that you struggle to put off? How have they negatively affected your life? What are virtues that Paul commands us to put on? Which one is more difficult for you to put on? How do you think "right living" can act as a guard against the enemy's attacks in your life?**

EZEKIEL 36:22-32

²²"Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign Lord: I am bringing you back, but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name, on which you brought shame while you were scattered among the nations. ²³I will show how holy my great name is—the name on which you brought shame among the nations. And when I reveal my holiness through you before their very eyes, says the Sovereign Lord, then the nations will know that I am the Lord. ²⁴For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.

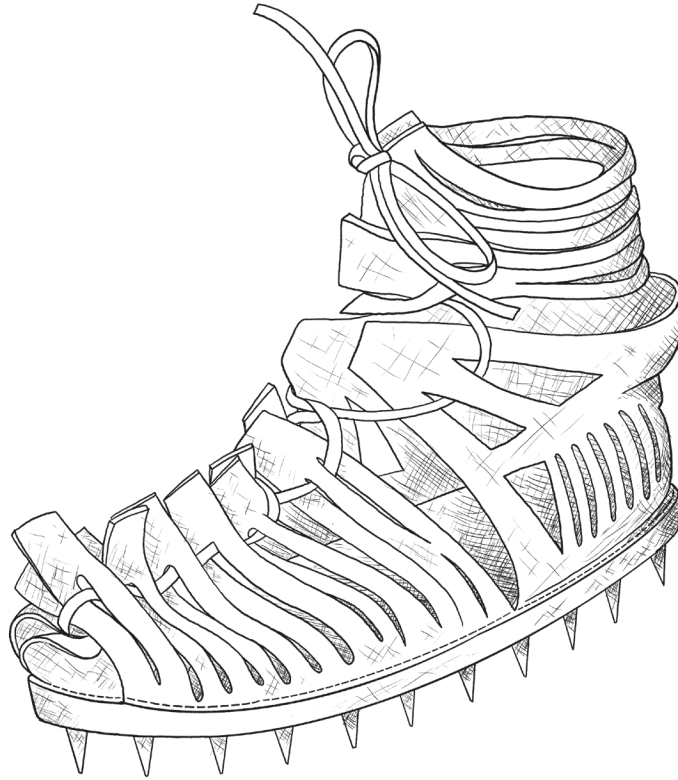
²⁵"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

²⁸"And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹I will cleanse you of your filthy behavior. I will give you good crops of grain, and I will send no more famines on the land. ³⁰I will give you great harvests from your fruit trees and fields, and never again will the surrounding nations be able to scoff at your land for its famines. ³¹Then you will remember your past sins and despise yourselves for all the detestable things you did. ³²But remember, says the Sovereign Lord, I am not doing this because you deserve it. O my people of Israel, you should be utterly ashamed of all you have done!

STUDY AND REFLECT:

Read **James 1:21-22**. Just as we are saved when we trust in Christ, it's equally true that we are being saved more and more each day from the person we used to be. This transformation is called sanctification—the process by which you are molded into the image of Christ. Yes, Christ is doing this work in us, but we still need to exert some effort by inviting God's Word to influence everything in our lives. Then, the Word works with God's Spirit to grow us and shape our actions. As this happens, you'll sense internal nudges prompting you to do things that align with Christ. This is called conviction, and it's God's way of helping you put on the breastplate and guiding you in righteousness. **Look at Ezekiel 36:26—what does it mean when God says, “I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart?”** How can we actively receive God's Word and allow it to transform us? When was the last time you sensed conviction about something very specific in your life? What was your response?

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week four

SHOES OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

EPHESIANS 6:15

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings visible.

The Whole Armor of God

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STUDY AND REFLECT:

Peace is often going to be one of the first things the enemy tries to destroy in your life. He is the lord of chaos, and he wants you filled with anxiety and worry. But we can be protected by peace! When we place our faith in Jesus—in his death and resurrection—we are declared righteous, bringing us peace with God (Romans 5:1). We no longer have to look for things in this world to give us peace. Because, through Jesus, we have peace with God, giving us the peace **OF** God. Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, does not refer to the absence of chaos, but rather a deep sense of peace in the midst of chaos. God's peace can keep your emotions, mind, and body stabilized and your relationships intact despite the chaos around you. **What is a situation or area in your life that is currently marked by disharmony, unrest, or an overarching lack of peace? How can the Good News of Jesus bring you peace during this situation? If this peace ruled your life, how would your behavior change in this situation?**

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Unity in the Body

¹Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ²Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

⁵There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶one God and Father of all,

who is over all, in all, and living through all.

⁷However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. ⁸That is why the Scriptures say,

“When he ascended to the heights,

he led a crowd of captives

and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. ¹⁰And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

¹¹Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹²Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

STUDY AND REFLECT:

When Paul outlined the armor that believers are to wear, he didn't only have individuals in mind. He was thinking of the church as a whole. If individuals are armed for battle and peace is among them, then the church will be strong as well. **Ephesians 4:1-16** goes into detail about the church and why its internal unity is so important. **Why did Paul put so much emphasis on peace within the church? How does the church benefit when individuals within it pursue peace? Is there any hurt or anger lingering between you and another person?**

to my people, and they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them.”

⁷How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who brings good news,
the good news of peace and salvation,
the news that the God of Israel reigns!

⁸The watchmen shout and sing with joy,
for before their very eyes
they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem.

⁹Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song,
for the Lord has comforted his people.
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰The Lord has demonstrated his holy power
before the eyes of all the nations.
All the ends of the earth will see
the victory of our God.

¹¹Get out! Get out and leave your captivity,
where everything you touch is unclean.
Get out of there and purify yourselves,
you who carry home the sacred objects of the Lord.

¹²You will not leave in a hurry,
running for your lives.
For the Lord will go ahead of you;
yes, the God of Israel will protect you from behind.

The Lord's Suffering Servant

¹³See, my servant will prosper;
he will be highly exalted.

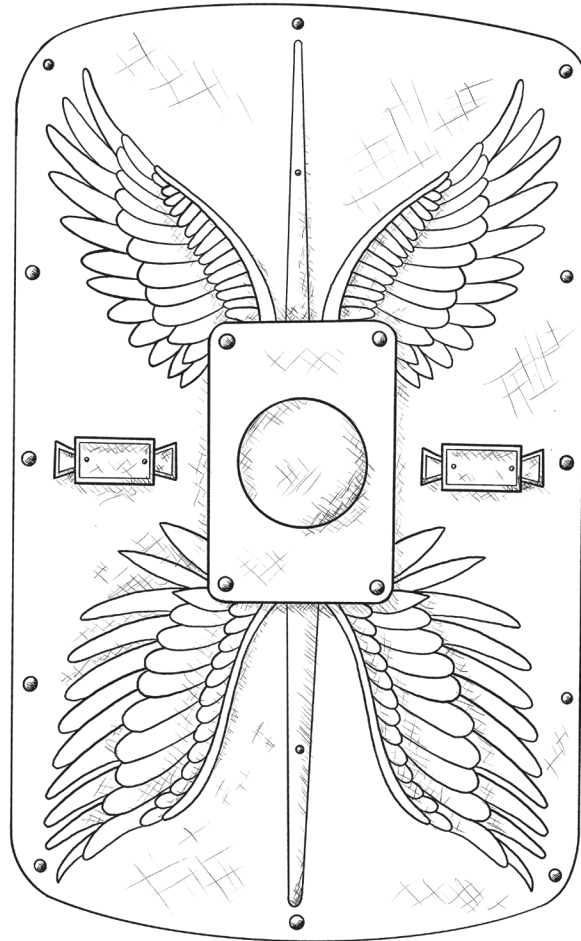
¹⁴But many were amazed when they saw him.
His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human,
and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.

¹⁵And he will startle many nations.
Kings will stand speechless in his presence.
For they will see what they had not been told;
they will understand what they had not heard about.

STUDY AND REFLECT:

The messenger described in Isaiah 52 is eager to share the good news. His feet are described as lovely and beautiful as they run to carry a message of salvation and hope to the people. Paul says that we must “put on the readiness” or be “fully prepared” with the gospel of peace. Other people need it too! And we can be confident that the Lord has prepared us with the tools we need to fight the enemy and advance the gospel. Through God’s Word, you can pronounce freedom and peace over your own circumstances and the lives of those you love. **Compare Isaiah 52:7 with Ephesians 2:17 and 6:15. Do these feet seem motionless and waiting? Or are the feet in action and on the move? What are some areas of your life where you need to be on the offensive instead of the defensive, moving forward in your walk and taking back ground from the enemy?**

[illegible]



week five

SHIELD OF FAITH

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:16

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

The Whole Armor of God

¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁹And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. ²⁰I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

JOSHUA 2

Rahab Protects the Spies

¹Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, “Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.” So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

²But someone told the king of Jericho, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” ³So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: “Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land.”

⁴Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, “Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn’t know where they were from. ⁵They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don’t know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.” ⁶(Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) ⁷So the king’s men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king’s men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

⁸Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. ⁹“I know the Lord has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. ¹⁰For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. ¹¹No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

¹²“Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that ¹³when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.”

¹⁴“We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed. “If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land.”

¹⁵Then, since Rahab’s house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. ¹⁶“Escape to the hill country,” she told them. “Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way.”

JOSHUA 6

¹Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. ²But the Lord said to Joshua, “I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. ³You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. ⁴Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram’s horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. ⁵When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams’ horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town.”

⁶So Joshua called together the priests and said, “Take up the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant, and assign seven priests to walk in front of it, each carrying a ram’s horn.” ⁷Then he gave orders to

the people: "March around the town, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the Lord."

⁸After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams' horns started marching in the presence of the Lord, blowing the horns as they marched. And the Ark of the Lord's Covenant followed behind them. ⁹Some of the armed men marched in front of the priests with the horns and some behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns. ¹⁰"Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!" ¹¹So the Ark of the Lord was carried around the town once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.

¹²Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the Lord. ¹³The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the Lord, blowing their horns. Again the armed men marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind the Ark of the Lord. All this time the priests were blowing their horns. ¹⁴On the second day they again marched around the town once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

¹⁵On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. ¹⁶The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the town! ¹⁷Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

¹⁸"Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. ¹⁹Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the Lord and must be brought into his treasury."

²⁰When the people heard the sound of the rams' horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it. ²¹They completely destroyed everything in it with their swords—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys.

²²Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family."

²³The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

²⁴Then the Israelites burned the town and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the Lord's house. ²⁵So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

²⁶At that time Joshua invoked this curse:

"May the curse of the Lord fall on anyone
who tries to rebuild the town of Jericho.
At the cost of his firstborn son,
he will lay its foundation.

At the cost of his youngest son,
he will set up its gates.”

²⁷So the Lord was with Joshua, and his reputation spread throughout the land.

STUDY & REFLECT:

Faith is not just a feeling. Faith is taking action on a command God has given you, even if it is scary or hard (James 2:14-26). It requires not looking inward, but rather looking to God and relying on him. He has given us specific direction through his Word, but he also sometimes gives us direction through his Spirit, which should be confirmed through prayer, community, and making sure it aligns with other things he has said in his Word. **In what ways do you see Rahab acting in faith in this story? What actions do you see Joshua take in faith?**

HEBREWS 11

Great Examples of Faith

¹Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. ²Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

³By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

⁴It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

⁵It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. ⁶And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

⁷It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

¹¹It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. ¹²And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

¹³All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, ¹⁸even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

²⁰It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau.

²¹It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.

²²It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

²³It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

²⁴It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

²⁵He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. ²⁷It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. ²⁸It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

²⁹It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

³⁰It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

³¹It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

³²How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. ³³By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the

mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. ³⁵Women received their loved ones back again from death.

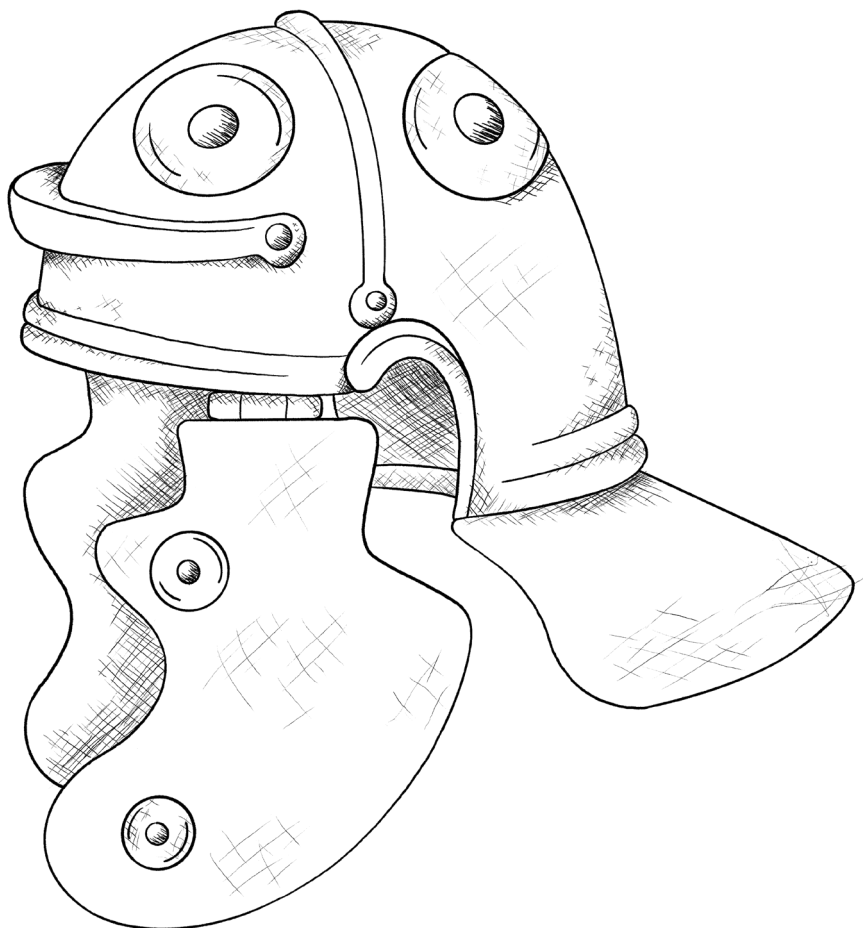
But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. ³⁶Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. ³⁷Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. ³⁸They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. ⁴⁰For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

STUDY & REFLECT:

Scripture is clear that we are fighting a spiritual battle. Satan is waging war on our souls by tempting us to be afraid, love the world, indulge in sin, and trust ourselves instead of putting our faith in God. **List out some of the action steps of faith we see people taking in Hebrews 11.** Keep reading Hebrews 12:1-3. **How can we be encouraged in our battle against temptation and sin by this passage?**

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week six

HELMET OF SALVATION

Put on salvation as your helmet

EPHESIANS 6:17

[illegible]

The Whole Armor of God

¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁹And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. ²⁰I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

ROMANS 8:1-10

Life in the Spirit

¹So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

³The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

⁴He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

⁷For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. ⁸That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) ¹⁰And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God.

STUDY & REFLECT:

Salvation is often something we think about as a one-time thing rather than a reality we live in every day. Or, as we see in Ephesians, something we *put on* every day. After reading through Romans 8:1–10, **how would you define salvation in your own words?** Two big “church” words related to salvation are justification and sanctification. Justification is the idea that God moves us from guilty to righteous because of Jesus’ payment for sin and the grace he offers us. Sanctification is the process of being made holy and more like Christ for the rest of our lives on earth. Simply put, justification is being freed from sin’s penalty, and sanctification is being freed from sin’s *power*. **How is salvation something you can both receive in a moment but also put on daily?**

1 THESSALONIANS 5:8

But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

¹Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ²Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

1 PETER 5:8-11

⁸Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

¹⁰In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. ¹¹All power to him forever! Amen.

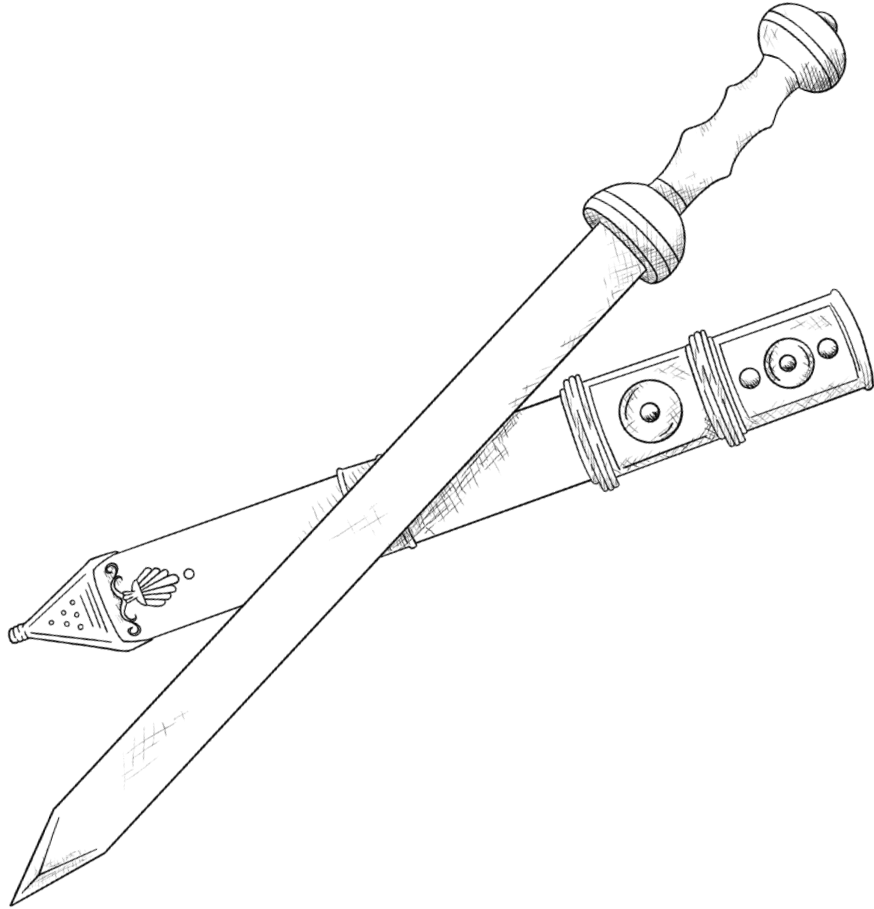
1 PETER 5:8-11 (ESV)

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

STUDY & REFLECT:

The helmet is a vital part of armor, specifically designed for defense. And it protects one of the most vital parts of the body—the head, the mind. Your brain function affects the rest of your body, emotions, and actions. This is why Satan so often attacks our minds because our minds impact our hearts, beliefs, emotions, and actions. **What do Colossians and 1 Peter say about our minds, and how we should protect them against Satan’s attacks?**

What are some ways Satan has attacked your thoughts? Maybe it’s planting lies and doubts. Maybe it’s drawing your mind toward sinful thoughts. **How would preaching the gospel to yourself daily serve as a defense against these attacks?**



week seven

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

...and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

EPHESIANS 6:17

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The Whole Armor of God

¹³Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁹And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. ²⁰I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

MATTHEW 4:1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,

‘People do not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

‘He will order his angels to protect you.

And they will hold you up with their hands

so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

⁷Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’”

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹“I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

¹⁰ “Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say,

‘You must worship the Lord your God

and serve only him.’ ”

¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

STUDY & REFLECT:

**In Matthew 4, how do we see Jesus use the Word of God to respond to specific temptations?
How does Satan try to twist God’s Word to tempt Jesus?**

HEBREWS 4:12 (ESV)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

HEBREWS 4:12 (NLT)

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

STUDY & REFLECT:

Break down Hebrews 4:12. Read it in NLT and ESV. How is God's Word described? According to this verse, how might reading God's word every day impact a believer?

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ISALAH 49:2

He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword.

He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand.

I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.

STUDY & REFLECT:

Paul wraps up this passage in Ephesians by focusing on the importance of prayer. He calls believers to pray constantly and to pray for one another. The prayer and alertness Paul describes are essential for standing firm against the enemy's attacks. He mentions praying "in the Spirit;" the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf and empowers us to stand firm in truth. Finally, Paul asks his readers to pray for him too. But notice that he doesn't ask them to pray for respite or easier circumstances, or even freedom from the chains that bind him. He asks them to pray for the right words to say and for BOLDNESS to preach the gospel! **Why is prayer essential in standing firm in our faith in Christ?**

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what you've learned through this study of Ephesians 6 and writing out a prayer to God, thanking him for his Word and asking him to help you put on his armor.

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