

**CORE Seminar**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Paul's Letter to the Ephesians**  
**Week 8: Ephesians 6:10-24**

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**ICE BREAKER**

Choose an ice breaker from the **Spring Community Group Guide** or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

**INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for being a part of this CORE Seminar this semester. We've received a lot of great feedback and we hope that you all have enjoyed them. But, today marks the end of the teaching portion of this semester. Finally we arrive at the end of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians – a letter in which Paul spends the majority of his time reminding the church to remember everything God has done for the church and the story that He has called them into. This is the story of God's redemption of His people, and that approximately covers the first 3 chapters of Ephesians.

Then we move on to the next 2+ chapters, and Paul will use this portion of the letter to explain, that since the church has been united with Christ – because we are in God's redemption story – there are implications for the church [unity] and implications for the individual [marriage, parenting and the workplace]. These implications are absolutely huge because we are not to live our faith out in a vacuum, in a bubble, or on the sidelines. There should be a natural “outflow” of the Holy Spirit that flows out of the Christian because of the work of Jesus Christ that has been formed in us.

And after all of this, Paul comes at the end of the letter – and what a way he ends it. In the last 14 verses, Paul discusses how to navigate the spiritual battlefield with courage, strength, and an unwavering trust in God. He uses this conclusion as a powerful reminder to the Church that the armor of God is available to them – equipping them to withstand the schemes of the enemy, and emphasizes the importance of unity, prayer, and perseverance.

Let's pray and then we will get started...

## PRAYER

Have someone in your group read Ephesians 6:10-12

***<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.***

In his conclusion [because Paul uses the word “finally”], Paul reminds the church to remain in the Lord and rest in His **strength** and **might**. Without saying it in **verse 10**, Paul is building up to this idea of **battle**, and spiritual warfare. Now, this was not a new concept to the church and it shouldn't be a new concept for us. In the Old Testament, the writers knew God would fight the battles for His people OR would fight the battles against the nations who declare war on His people. Because of this understanding, God's people referred to God as the “**Divine Warrior**.” Some great examples of this can be found in **Exodus 14:1-15:21; Psalm 28:7; Jeremiah 20:11; and, Isaiah 42:13**. But, His strength is not limited to the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrates that even the most formidable enemies – Satan and death – cannot prevail against God's power and authority.

So – the question should naturally be – who are we fighting **against**? Paul doesn't answer that question immediately. In fact, initially, he states WHO the fight is **NOT** against - “**flesh and blood**.” Who is flesh and blood? That is you and I – that is the members of the church. That is the unity of the church in **Ephesians 4 & 5**. That is the husband and wife in marriages in **Ephesians 5**. That is the parenting, kid's obeying and workplace environment we saw in **Ephesians 6**.

But, that's not always how it goes – is it? Unfortunately, churches are often better fighting against one another – the flesh and blood – than we are against, “**the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**.” The point is this, far too often the church has lost its focus on the real enemy – and we end up focusing our energy on one another or Tier 3 issues. Paul commands the church not to focus on flesh and blood but “**against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**.”

Hollywood has really messed this up for us. When we see battles “**against the spiritual forces**,” we tend to think of the movie the Exorcist or some other horror movies [full transparency I – David – HATE horror movies. It's not because I am pure at heart – it's because I am a coward!]. Now, Jesus and His apostles – including Paul – did cast out demons BUT this

is not the spiritual warfare that he is referring to here – this isn't the text to make that kind of argument.

We've been trained by our culture – and not by our Bibles – to look at the world around us as extremely **ordinary**. And any time we come across something in the Bible – like spiritual warfare – we tend to think of extreme examples OR we think that spiritual warfare is something that happens only on the mission field. When we think that spiritual warfare involves your head spinning around or something that happens ONLY “over there” on the mission field, we make our extraordinary, mission filled roles in God's redemption story – ordinary.

What we need to do, is look at our daily lives in the same way that Paul sees them in his letter to the Ephesians. Remember, we don't fight against the “flesh and blood,” we fight against the schemes of the Devil. Paul has already told us how to prepare against these schemes in **Ephesians [4:1-3 & 14-15]**:

***I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***

***<sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,***

So, in order for us to understand what these schemes look like or what these battles look like, we must look at our daily lives and understand that these battles exist.

- To love my wife like Christ loved the church.
- To walk in all humility
- To speak truth in a way that builds up.

These are battles that contain a very real spiritual component with eternal **consequences**. And Satan – in his schemes – does not want us to see them in this way. The consequences of these ordinary battles are every bit as scary as the things that Hollywood has cooked up for us in horror movies.

What do we see around our lives every day? What is the pain that we experience in our personal lives and at First Baptist? I can tell you that we see marriages falling apart. We have

seen “our” kids growing in bitterness towards their parents and towards the church. We see instances of **addiction, envy, pride, lust, anxiety, and depression.**

Why does it have to be that the only way we acknowledge spiritual warfare is on a “far off” mission field or a horror movie scenario? Why can’t we look at the conditions in our own home and recognize that warfare is happening every day? In 2007 a study conducted for Pediatrics journal reported that 42% of youth [in the US] between the ages of 10 and 17 reported viewing online pornography. But here’s the kicker, of these statistics, unintentional pornography uses in this same age group range from 35% to 66%.<sup>1</sup> Both intentional and unintentional use of pornography has increased in frequency with age and sexual development.<sup>2</sup> Guys, THIS is spiritual warfare – this is demonic – and this is happening in our homes. But, the church is ill-equipped – we’re not prepared with the armor of God to fight these battles BECAUSE we have the wrong view of the kind of battle we are fighting.

Paul is telling us to get our minds right... to understand – as the church and as Christians – that there is a battle going on. This battle is not an option because when we bear the blood of Christ, when we bear His name – then our involvement in the battle becomes **mandatory.** So, Paul tells the church to “suit up!”

### **QUESTIONS: From where does the church get their strength? Why is this important?**

**When it comes to the term “spiritual warfare,” why do some Christians dismiss this as a possibility?**

- **Why do some Christians only think this happens on the “mission field”?**
- **What dangers can occur when the Christian’s public life [or church life] is different from the life they live at home?**
- **Why is it so important for Christians to understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ should fill our homes, our relationships and our workplaces?**

**What kinds of misunderstandings do you think Christians have about the kind of battle – or warfare – that they are to participate in as they bear the name of Christ?**

- **What dangers happen when Christians don’t understand that our daily lives are engaged in spiritual warfare?**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 6:13-20**

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<sup>1</sup> Wolak J, Mitchell K, Finkelhor D. Unwanted and wanted exposure to online pornography in a national sample of youth Internet users. *Pediatrics* 2007;119:247–57. 10.1542/peds.2006-1891

<sup>2</sup> Owens EW, Behun RJ, Manning JC, et al.. The impact of Internet pornography on adolescents: a review of the research. *Sex Addict Compulsivity* 2012;

<sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

In this section, Paul tells us that in order to fight these battles we must put on the armor of God. He then provides a description and use of the full armor of God that the church should wear while in the midst of spiritual warfare.

Now armor is not always considered an offensive weapon. Meaning, you won't do a lot of damage to an army by the armor that you wear. Armor is primarily a defensive weapon – intended to shield the wearer from any weapon or potentially fatal wound WHILE allowing the wearer to move and fight effectively. So, knowing this, it is always good – in spiritual warfare – to not just grab some run of the mill armor BUT to put on the **whole** [complete] armor of God!

We won't spend time going over each individual characteristic of the armor – we could be here a long time! But, Paul is using metaphors – and specifically he is connecting the armor of the Roman soldier to the armor that the Christian is required to wear. In using these metaphors, Paul is communicating that the church should “put on” truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. And it should be no surprise that we get all of these from Jesus Christ. In talking about “putting on” the armor, is a direct connection to our eternal union with Jesus Christ.

In **Isaiah 59:15–17**, Isaiah writes about God wearing a similar armor to what Paul describes in **Ephesians 6**. Isaiah tells the reader that there will be a day when God will suit up for battle and will no longer withhold His mercy and His eternal judgment. He will execute His justice and His judgment on His enemies. In this, He will defeat and will conquer His enemies – and they will endure full measure of His wrath. Putting on the armor of God means that we should always be prepared – dressed for battle through God - relying on His power and strength for the purposes of His **Kingdom**.

**QUESTIONS: What do you think it means to “take up/ put on the armor of God”?**

- What steps can you take to put on the armor of God?
- How does your personal time with God equip you for battle?

In verses 19-20, what example does Paul provide on how to engage in spiritual warfare for His glory?

- What type of war are asked to fight? Does the church recognize the fight?
- Is the church prepared for this fight?

Have someone in your group read Ephesians 6:21-24

<sup>21</sup> So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

<sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

I'm always amazed at the brothers and sisters that Paul ALWAYS has around him. He was always **discipling** others. He was always **connected** with others. His **community** was far reaching and it always revolved around the **gospel**. In this example, we should see that community and gospel centered discipleship is just as important as the armor we wear in our daily lives. In fact, I would say it's difficult to wear the armor if you are not discipling or being disciplined.

**QUESTIONS:** What words does Paul leave the church with as he closes his letter?

- In verses 23-24, how does his words point the church to Jesus Christ and His gospel?

What encourages and challenges you most in Paul's closing remarks?

Was there anything that stood out to you from **Ephesians 6:10-24**?

- Was there any "aha moment" for you?

**Next Week: Final Hangout Night for the Spring**

**CLOSING PRAYER**