



2024 Season Devotional Series

*Please read the weekly devotionals in advance of Game Day.
The information below is a guideline. Please add your personal experiences if applicable.*

The Armor of God: Protected for Life! Main Scripture Theme: Ephesians 14-18

*¹⁴ Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest,
¹⁵ and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In every situation take the
shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷
Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. ¹⁸ Pray at all times
in the Spirit with every prayer, and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and
intercession for all the saints.*

Week 1: The Belt of Truth vs. the Lie – Ephesians 6:14

Additional scripture reference – Ephesians 4:27: *And give no opportunity to the devil.*

Week 2: The Breastplate of Righteousness vs. Temptation – Ephesians 6:15

Additional scripture reference – 1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.*

Week 3: The Shoes of Peace vs. Being Anxious – Ephesians 6:15

Additional scripture reference – Philippians 4:6: *And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

Week 4: The Shield of Faith vs. Doubt – Ephesians 6:16

Additional scripture reference – Psalm 51:10: *God create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

Week 5: The Helmet of Salvation vs. Feeling Like a Failure – Ephesians 6: 17

Additional scripture references - Psalm 27:1: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

2 Timothy 1:7: *For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgement.*

Week 6: The Sword of the Spirit vs. Overthinking – Ephesians 6:17

Additional scripture reference – Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Week 7: To Pray Continuously vs. Listening to Unreliable Sources – Ephesians 6:18

Additional scripture reference – Psalm 145:18: *The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*



Week 1: The Belt of Truth vs. the Lie

Ephesians 6:14: *Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist . . .*

Additional scripture reference – Ephesians 4:27: *And give no opportunity to the devil.*

Did you know as a follower of Jesus Christ, you are given a special uniform which is called the Armor of God? Just like basketball, you are provided with special clothing to identify what team you are on and help you play the game.

The Armor of God includes 7 special pieces to wear that defend you from evil (bad things) as well as give you power to overcome obstacles. This armor protects your Spirit, which is created in the image of God.

The Belt of Truth is the first piece of our armor. It is the central or middle piece which keeps the rest of the armor together. The Belt of Truth reminds us of God's Word which is at the very middle of believing in Jesus Christ. This part of the armor protects us from lies we hear every day. We may here lies from:

- Our friends
- Social Media
- Television/Gaming
- Family members
- Strangers

When you use the Belt of Truth, you remember God's Word is always the TRUTH, therefore, you can able to tell the difference between what a lie is and what is the truth. In fact, the Truth will keep us from lying as well.

Think of the Belt of Truth being like the rules of basketball. The rules are in place to train players and to avoid cheating. The rules are central to keeping the game honest and truthful.

Let's pray today that we will remember to wear the Belt of Truth every day to defend ourselves from lies and to not be found lying too.



Week 2: The Breastplate of Righteousness vs. Temptation

Ephesians 6:15 . . . *with righteousness like armor on your chest* . . .

Additional scripture reference – 1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.*

Last week we discussed the first piece of armor – the Belt of Truth. The second piece of God's Armor is the Breastplate of Righteousness. In battle, a breastplate protects vital organs in the chest area – the heart, lungs, stomach, etc. God's Breastplate primarily protects our heart.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, we are given Christ's righteousness – being in a right relationship with God, like a very good trustworthy friend. Without Jesus' dying for our sins, we could not have a relationship with God.

Although we are considered righteous and friends of God, we still live in a world that makes it hard to do the right thing all the time. This is called temptation. There are all types of temptations – cheating, gossiping, stealing, being mean to others, etc. Fortunately, with the breastplate, we are protected. Having righteousness protecting our hearts, we will know the right thing to do in every situation. God always provides a way of escape if we trust in Him AND remember the TRUTH of God (belt of truth).

Your basketball jersey is very much like your breastplate. It represents what team you are on, and you know who your teammates are. Your coach, like God, will all lead you and teach you the right way to play the game and engage with the opposing team.

Today, pray that God will always remind you that you're righteous like His son Jesus, and He will help you escape temptation.



Week 3: The Shoes of Peace vs. Being Anxious

Ephesians 6:15 - . . . *and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace.*

Additional scripture reference – Philippians 4:6: *And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

This week we will discuss the third piece of God's Armor. Shoes are the next piece, but these are Shoes (sandals back in the day) of Peace.

Shoes are important to wear every day. They protect our feet from injury and give us good support. In basketball, tennis shoes are mandatory. Tennis shoes provide the flexibility needed to run, stop quickly, jump, and keep the foot protected from injury.

The Shoes of Peace are very similar – they keep us protected, supported, and grounded in God. The story of Jesus Christ, also known as the gospel, provides us with peace, a calm secure feeling. This peace comes from being a follower of Jesus Christ and knowing that God will protect us in every situation. In other words, although there are bad things going on around us which make us worry and become anxious (like a test at school, trying out for a team, etc.), God's plan for His followers will always be used for good and guard our heart and mind.

Don't let others or situations make you feel anxious – worried or scared. God's peace is always with you through your belief in Jesus and His story, the Gospel.

Let's pray today that God will keep us calm and standing strong when things are not peaceful, and we begin to worry and become anxious.



Week 4: The Shield of Faith vs. Doubt

Ephesians 6:16 - *In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

Additional scripture reference – Psalm 51:10: *God create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

We are halfway through our discussion on the Armor of God. Have you noticed a pattern yet? Each piece of the armor works together to keep us protected from evil. Although each piece has a special part to protect, alone the pieces would not protect us properly and completely.

So, what exactly is faith? Faith is believing in something without any doubt or visible proof. You have faith in your parents to keep you safe and love you, but you can't see their actual love, can you? Sure, they do nice things and care for you, you feel loved, but you don't see love, yet you believe in it – you trust them.

The Shield of Faith is our protection from doubting that God truly exists and loves us. It also protects us from doubting that we have salvation in Jesus Christ. We cannot see Jesus, but we know he exists because of faith, we trust in His story (the Gospel), so we believe in Him and what he says.

The Shield of Faith will remove any doubt and help us stand strong in the shoes of peace, it will help to protect our heart through the breastplate and through our Belt of Truth, we know we can trust everything God has done, is doing and will do in our lives as Jesus Christ's followers.

Think of it this way, when you are playing basketball, you have faith (trust) in your coach, the referees, and scorekeepers to teach you, keep you moving forward in the game correctly and keep the right score.

Thank God today that he loves you and provides you with the shield of faith, to protect you from doubt. Ask God to continue to grow your faith so you can push back whenever you feel doubtful or scared.



Week 5: The Helmet of Salvation vs. Feeling Like a Failure

Ephesians 6: 17 - *Take the helmet of salvation . . .*

Additional scripture references - Psalm 27:1: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall, I fear?*

2 Timothy 1:7: *For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgement.*

This week we will discuss the Helmet of Salvation. Salvation or in other words, being saved from harm or ruin. Our salvation from sin (wrongdoing) comes from Jesus Christ dying on the cross for all sin. When we have faith in Jesus and trust in Him, we receive salvation from sin, which saves us from the consequence of sin – which separates us from God, and we suffer from our wrongdoing eternally (forever).

Did you know, when you receive salvation, you are a brand new YOU. Jesus Christ becomes a part of us, and we receive forgiveness from God. We also receive tremendous hope and comfort that protects our minds from feeling like we are always wrong, we can't do anything right and we are always going to do the wrong thing. Although, we will still sin, we are reminded by wearing the Helmet of Salvation that we are forgiven! We do not need to feel like a failure and feel discouraged all the time. Salvation protects our minds and hearts as we remember what Jesus did for each of us.

In basketball practice or at a game, have you ever felt discouraged you get called out by the referee? It's sometimes makes us angry and feel hurt. Just remember, we may not always get it right, BUT we have the hope in Jesus Christ to overcome feeling like a failure. Through forgiveness and what Jesus has done for us, we are encouraged to try again!

Let's thank Jesus for our salvation. Let's pray that we will never forget that Jesus lives with us and is our biggest encourager!



Week 6: The Sword of the Spirit vs. Overthinking

Ephesians 6:17: . . . *and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.*

Additional scripture reference – Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The next piece of the Armor of God is different from all the rest. Instead of defending or protecting us, this piece of armor is offensive – it directs and instructs us how to do battle!

The Sword of the Spirit is provided to us through the Spirit of Jesus Christ who is always with us as followers. The Spirit reminds us of God's word and its truth. We keep the Sword of the Spirit sharp by studying God's word, the Bible.

Too often, when we are faced with problems, we try to figure it out on our own, we overthink, get upset, let our emotions cause us to feel discouraged. Eventually we are taken over by our own weakness. With the Sword of the Spirit, we know God's word, it provides with the wisdom and knowledge we need to overcome our problems. We can use God's Word to fight off bad thoughts.

Coaches come up with a plan for each game in basketball. Players are given instructions on each play and trained in the rules of the game. This is much like God's Word. As we train ourselves by reading God's Word, we can clearly see the instructions we need to follow for every situation, so we don't just rely on our own weak thinking.

Let's pray that God would help us to make reading our Bible more important in our lives, so we know exactly what God's gameplan is for us.



Week 7: To Pray Continuously vs. Listening to Unreliable Sources

Ephesians 6:18: *Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer, and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.*

Additional scripture reference – Psalm 145:18: *The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

This is our final discussion on the Armor of God. So far we have:

1. The Belt of Truth
2. The Breastplate of Righteousness
3. The Shoes of Peace
4. The Shield of Faith
5. The Helmet of Salvation
6. The Sword of the Spirit

It would appear we are ready for battle, but there is one more item that is extremely important. We have been doing this one thing every week already – it's prayer.

Prayer is our final defensive measure. It is the way we communicate with God and ask for his help, not only for ourselves, but for others. Prayer also reminds us we are not alone; we obtain His strength to fight against sinfulness. Prayer will also keep us from relying on what others say. Advice and opinions may be helpful, but we should always seek God and His Word as our sole guide. Many times, advice and opinions can lead us in the wrong direction leaving us vulnerable to attack! Prayer creates our relationship – our friendship – with God and proves we are committed to follow Him.

In basketball, players are in constant communication with their teammates and the coach. During games, coaches will call a timeout to gather the team and go over the gameplan and encourage each player to do their part. During the game, teammates protect one another from the opponent, callout to receive the ball and so much more.

Prayer is exactly like this – continuous communication with God to keep us standing strong!

Today, let's pray that God will guide us through prayer to be a follower of His Son Jesus Christ and equip us for life in His special armor.

