

Ephesians 6.10 - 24
Good Questions Have Groups Talking
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Creative Element

I have posted a good bit of the first chapter of Jerry Rankin's book, *Spiritual Warfare* on my blog at <http://joshhunt.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/spiritual-warfare/> . I'd encourage you to email your group and ask them to read it. I think it will stimulate some really interesting conversation.

Another approach would be to have someone dress up wearing the armor listed in this passage. You could assign various people to make different parts.

Ephesians 6.10 - 24

ACCOUNTABILITY

What three fellowships do we have scheduled for the next three months? Who will invite every member? Who will help invite every prospect? Who will help plan the party?

OPEN

Let's each share your name and, have you ever been in a fight?

DIG

1. Verse 10. What exactly does it mean to be strong in the Lord?

When it comes to spiritual warfare, we cannot be sufficiently strong by ourselves. If we are going to have adequate strength for the spiritual battles of life, it must be the Lord's strength. Only he has the mighty power sufficient to win spiritual battles against the demonic enemy. — Holman New Testament Commentary – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians.

2. Why do we need to put on the armor of God?

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

3. Verse 12. Is it true today? Do believers today still struggle with power of the dark world?

We had just arrived for our missionary assignment in Indonesia and were a few months into language study. Enjoying the tropical climate, adjusting to new culinary delights, and feeling welcome among the gracious, hospitable people of our host country, we were beginning to think we

would evade the expected cultural shock in our smooth adjustment. One Monday morning our Sundanese household helper arrived for work emotionally distraught. She always went home to her village on weekends, and upon her return on this particular occasion, something was obviously troubling her.

“What’s wrong? What happened?” we asked with concern. She explained that her daughter had become demon possessed. Not fully comprehending the situation she described, we were unprepared for her appeal that we go with her to her village and pray for her daughter. We had bonded closely with her; and although she was a Muslim, she respected us as missionaries and recognized that I was kind of like a priest or some kind of spiritual leader. It didn’t matter whether we were Muslim or Christian; she just wanted someone with some spiritual authority and power to help her daughter.

We agreed to adjust our schedule to go with her to her village and pray for her daughter later in the week. I wasn’t sure what we were going to encounter, so I spent the next couple of days praying and fasting. The serenity of the village, shaded by waving palm trees and surrounded by endless fields of golden rice ready for harvest, was broken only by barking dogs and children playing noisily. Thatched bamboo houses, each with an overhanging grass roof, built closely together, reflected community neighborliness. Friendly greetings belied the serious concern and understanding of why we had come.

As we entered the house and our eyes quickly adjusted from the bright sunlight to the darkened room, we found a beautiful teenager tied to the bamboo bed where she was sitting. Her clothes were torn, her hair disheveled, and she was snarling like an animal. When we walked into the room, she glared at us and said in clear and perfect English, “Jesus Christ is not God; Mohammed is the servant of the most high god.” Well, OK; that’s an expected Muslim perspective. I didn’t think anything about it until her mother told us on the way home that her daughter had lived in this remote village all her life, was uneducated, and didn’t speak English!

We prayed for her in the name of Jesus, and there was no visible response or results. I didn’t know anything else to do. But it was an alarming experience. I began to think, Is this what we’re going to encounter here in Indonesia? Are we equipped for this? It wasn’t long until we began to learn that where the gospel has not been proclaimed and Jesus is not known, Satan has considerable dominion and power. Demon possession is not uncommon in such places; and we had, indeed, ventured into Satan’s territory. — *Spiritual Warfare: The Battle for God’s Glory* (Jerry Rankin)

4. I draw your attention to the word “struggle” in verse 12. What does this word tell you about Christian living?

That’s what his word struggle really means. It’s a hand-to-hand combat practiced in ancient Greece in which two people would fight until one could hold the other person down. It required constant exertion and concentration. When Paul uses the word in Ephesians, he makes it clear that he’s not writing about their outward circumstances or about people. The battle may have been manifesting itself in circumstances, city policies, oppression, and evil behavior, but the source was not flesh and

blood. The battle is “against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, [and] against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places” (v. 12). It’s an invisible war. — Invisible War, The: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare (Chip Ingram)

5. What is meant by rulers, authorities, etc?

This list of spiritual powers has connotations of hierarchy and organization. Just as there are generals, privates, and a lot of ranks between them in our military structures, demonic powers also seem to be arranged according to role and power. I’ve heard people get much more detailed about demonic activity than the Bible ever does, delineating specific hierarchies and describing specific domains of various demons. These are interesting speculations, but they are only speculations; Scripture doesn’t spell these things out for us. But even though the Bible doesn’t tell us how these vast structures function, it does acknowledge the existence of these evil adversaries doing battle in the spiritual realm, and it is very clear on this point: this is where our fight is. — Invisible War, The: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare (Chip Ingram)

6. Do you think we tend to make too much of spiritual warfare and the presence of demons and the like, or too little?

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. — The Screwtape Letters (C. S. Lewis)

7. Have you ever witnessed something that looked like the demonic? Anyone have a story?

I’ll never forget preaching on a Sunday night and hearing bizarre sounds coming from the back of the auditorium. Soon there were more than strange sounds. A man was walking down the aisle as he shouted and screamed. At first I continued to speak, hoping the ushers would be able to handle the situation. But as he walked toward me, our eyes met. I saw a wildness that I can’t quite describe. He not only disrupted the service and my message, but he made a scene that only those who witnessed it could believe. What shocked me was how unsurprised the people in the church were. Apparently this had happened before. Three or four ushers got to this man before he got to me, and I was informed later in a debriefing session that this individual, as far as they could tell, was demonized. Blasphemies against God, the church, and my message spewed from his mouth that night, and it took three or four men to restrain him and usher him out of the auditorium. If I didn’t believe in spiritual warfare before, I certainly did now. I got an introduction I would never forget. — Invisible War, The: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare (Chip Ingram)

8. Verse 13. What is the day of evil?

Every day since the Fall has been an evil day for mankind, and every day will continue to be evil until the usurper and his forces are thrown forever into the bottomless pit. In the meanwhile the Lord

makes us able to resist in the evil day as we take advantage of the armor He supplies. — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

9. By the way, is the world, generally speaking, getting better or worse? Who is winning, God or the devil?

Jesus said the gates of hell will not prevail against us. He said the kingdom of God would start small and get huge. This is an important thing because He also said it will be done for us according to our faith. If we believe that things are getting worse and worse and the situation is hopeless and we just need to hunker down and wait for Jesus to rescue us from this mess, we will not see much progress.

10. Verse 13 use the metaphor, “stand.” What does it mean to stand?

Our responsibility is to resist and stand firm. When Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms he was accused of heresy. After being condemned for declaring that men are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, he declared, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God.... Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.” Every believer who is faithful to God’s Word cannot do otherwise than stand firm.

Some forty years ago three men conducted evangelistic campaigns together in Ireland and saw much fruit from their labors there. Years later an Irish pastor who was converted in those meetings asked about the three men. He was told that only one was still faithful to the Lord. Of the other two, one had become apostate and the other had died an alcoholic. Some believers have done everything well in the Lord’s work, but they do not continue to stand firm. The issue is not in what a believer has done, but, when the battle is over and the smoke clears, whether he is found standing true to the Savior. — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

11. Our word strategy comes from the word translated schemes. What does that tell us about the temptations we experience?

This is not an add-on only for the deluxe-model Christian. Those schemes affect everyone. They are orchestrated in order to tempt us, deceive us, draw us away from God, fill our hearts with half-truths and untruths, and lure us into pursuing good things in the wrong way, at the wrong time, or with the wrong person. The English word strategies is derived from the Greek word Paul uses that is translated “schemes.” That means our temptations are not random. The false perspectives we encounter do not come at us haphazardly. The lies we hear, the conflicts we have with others, the cravings that consume us when we are at our weakest points—they are all part of a plan to make us casualties in the invisible war. They are organized, below-the-belt assaults designed to neutralize the very people God has filled with his awesome power. — Invisible War, The: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare (Chip Ingram)

12. In another place it says to be careful when we think we are standing firm lest we fall. Why is it important that we see ourselves as vulnerable?

How many times do I hear stories of ministers who fall. If we all thought we were vulnerable, we would take seriously the example of Andy Stanley: “I don’t get in a car with a woman; I don’t share a

meal with a woman; I don't counsel a woman. I don't talk about anything personal with a woman. I am never alone with a woman." Quote this often to your group. Make it normal in your culture.

13. Verse 14. What is the belt of truth and why is it important?

The first piece of armor Paul named is the belt of truth. "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth" (Ephesians 6:14a).

Our spiritual armor is patterned after the armor and weapons of a Roman soldier of the day. For instance, these soldiers wore a long tunic that flowed down to the ground. But when it came time to fight, the soldier would pick up his tunic and tuck it into his belt for mobility in battle.

A Roman soldier also carried his sword on his belt, and his breastplate connected to the belt too. The belt was fundamental, because everything else connected to it. It held everything together.

That's what the truth is designed to do for us spiritually. The truth is an objective standard of reality that stands outside of our experience and stands above our opinions. That standard of truth is the Word of God. It is the beginning point of authority. — Tony Evans Speaks Out on Spiritual Warfare.

14. What are some ways we can get a hold of the truth?

With podcasts and TV preachers and Kindles and so forth, it has never been easier.

15. How are you doing these days in terms of your time alone with God? What are you reading? What is it meaning to you? Have you read anything recently that really got your attention?

Ask it often. There is nothing more important than creating people who start their day with their Bible on their laps.

16. What does it mean to have the breastplate of righteousness in place?

This piece of armor, made of metal plates or chains, covered the body from the neck to the waist, both front and back. It symbolizes the believer's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) as well as his righteous life in Christ (Eph. 4:24). Satan is the accuser, but he cannot accuse the believer who is living a godly life in the power of the Spirit. The life we live either fortifies us against Satan's attacks or makes it easier for him to defeat us (2 Cor. 6:1-10). When Satan accuses the Christian, it is the righteousness of Christ that assures the believer of his salvation. But our positional righteousness in Christ, without practical righteousness in the daily life, only gives Satan opportunity to attack us. — The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

17. Verse 15. What kind of shoes are we to wear?

The Roman soldier wore sandals with hobnails in the soles to give him better footing for the battle. If we are going to "stand" and "withstand," then we need the shoes of the Gospel. Because we have the peace with God (Rom. 5:1) that comes from the Gospel, we need not fear the attack of Satan or men. We must be at peace with God and with each other if we are to defeat the devil (James 4:1-7).

But the shoes have another meaning. We must be prepared each day to share the Gospel of peace with a lost world. The most victorious Christian is a witnessing Christian. If we wear the shoes of the Gospel, then we have the “beautiful feet” mentioned in Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15. Satan has declared war, but you and I are ambassadors of peace (2 Cor. 5:18-21); and, as such, we take the Gospel of peace wherever we go. — The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

18. Verse 16. What was a Roman shield like?

The shield was large, usually about four feet by two feet, made of wood, and covered with tough leather. As the soldier held it before him, it protected him from spears, arrows, and “fiery darts.” The edges of these shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall. This suggests that we Christians are not in the battle alone. The “faith” mentioned here is not saving faith, but rather living faith, a trust in the promises and the power of God. Faith is a defensive weapon which protects us from Satan’s fiery darts. In Paul’s day, arrows, dipped in some inflammable substance and ignited, were shot at the enemy. Satan shoots “fiery darts” at our hearts and minds: lies, blasphemous thoughts, hateful thoughts about others, doubts, and burning desires for sin. If we do not by faith quench these darts, they will light a fire within and we will disobey God. We never know when Satan will shoot a dart at us, so we must always walk by faith and use the shield of faith. — The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

19. Practically speaking, what is the helmet of salvation?

Satan wants to attack the mind, the way he defeated Eve (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:1-3). The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God. It is too bad that many Christians have the idea that the intellect is not important, when in reality it plays a vital role in Christian growth, service, and victory. When God controls the mind, Satan cannot lead the believer astray. The Christian who studies his Bible and learns the meaning of Bible doctrines is not going to be led astray too easily. We need to be “taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21). We are to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Wherever Paul ministered, he taught the new converts the truths of the Word of God, and this helmet protected them from Satan’s lies.

One Sunday afternoon, I visited a man who had been a deacon in a local church, but was at that time involved in a false cult. We sat at the table with open Bibles, and I tried to show him the truth of God’s Word, but it seemed his mind was blinded by lies. “How did you happen to turn away from a Bible-preaching church and get involved in this belief?” I asked, and his reply stunned me.

“Preacher, I blame the church. I didn’t know anything about the Bible, and they didn’t teach me much more. I wanted to study the Bible, but nobody told me how. Then they made me a deacon, and I wasn’t ready for it. It was too much for me. I heard this man preaching the Bible over the radio and it sounded as if he knew something. I started reading his magazine and studying his books, and now I’m convinced he’s right.” — The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

20. Review—what are the various piece of the armor of God?

I continued to study the passage, believing there was something about it that I was missing. A unique insight emerged as I was attempting to analyze the grammar. When we are told to put on the armor of God, it is in the genitive case, which commonly is used for the possessive form of a noun. We understand it as saying we are to put on the armor that belongs to God. It is God's armor, something that He possesses but has made available to us. That is an appropriate translation and the way we have traditionally understood "the armor of God."

However, grammatically there is one other use of the genitive case; it is also used in apposition. For example, if this verse had said, "Put on the armor of steel," steel doesn't possess the armor, but steel and armor are in apposition. They are one and the same. Could the Scriptures imply that God Himself is the armor? We are encouraged to put on something that is alien to our nature; it belongs to God, and we've got to figure out how to put on each implement in order to be protected from our enemy. It seemed that being protected by the armor was back to my own effort. But God Himself is the armor. We are to put Him on as our protection. Throughout the New Testament we are told to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," "to be clothed in Christ"; time and time again the Bible refers to Christians as "being in Christ." — *Spiritual Warfare: The Battle for God's Glory* (Jerry Rankin)

21. 2 Corinthians 2.11 speaks of not being unaware of the devil's schemes. What are some of the devil's schemes?

However, it seems that Satan has another strategy to oppose the advancement of God's kingdom and His being glorified among the nations. This may be the most effective of all—convincing Christians that missions is optional. One can choose to be involved or not. My own denomination takes pride in five thousand missionaries, but that's only .03 percent of Southern Baptists who take the Great Commission seriously and personally by going in response to God's call. Our forty-three thousand churches channel only 2.5 percent of their financial resources to international missions. Satan's strategies are apparently effective in keeping those words of Jesus from being fulfilled because he is effectively keeping the good news from being proclaimed to all nations and peoples.

In our own life, when he gets us to live for self rather than in submission to the lordship of Christ, when he influences us to speak and act in ways that do not bless and edify others and to behave contrary to the character and nature of Christ, he has successfully won a victory and deprived God of His glory. — *Spiritual Warfare: The Battle for God's Glory* (Jerry Rankin)

22. What do you want to remember from today's study?

23. How can we support one another in prayer this week?