

Armor Up with Truth June 7, 2020

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Letter to the Ephesians:

This week, the scripture focus is found in the Letter to the Ephesians. This letter was written by Paul to the church and surrounding people of Ephesus sometime around 60 A.D. Paul wrote this letter from jail, and probably wrote the letter to the Colossians about this same time. Paul's ministry at Ephesus totaled about 3 years, so he was very knowledgeable about their needs and issues. Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor having a harbor that opened into the Cayster River. That river emptied into the Aegean Sea making accessible by ship very easy. Consequently, the city was an intersection of major trade routes, and a strong commercial center. It boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana, or Artemis in Greek, which served the fertility religion of its time. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2) and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NRSV)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes

for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from these passages?

What are the elements that compose the armor?

Whose armor is it?

Why the armor?

God provides the armor, what are you supposed to do?

What is your understanding of "spiritual warfare?"

So, bottom line, what do you get out of these passages?

Commentary:

Since the writing of this passage by the mind of Paul, a lot has changed in our knowledge and understanding about the universe and science. According to the advances of science, we know the mustard seed is not the smallest seed, as referred to in Matthew 17. At the time, maybe it was the smallest known seed. On the other hand, maybe it was more about the idea of faith, rather than science. The advances of science have helped us to understand our universe and the process of life much better, but it still does not explain the fullness of our spiritual dimension in which we live. Things happen that we cannot explain. Science cannot fully describe what faith is, but it can explain some visible positive results of faith; as well as, negative results of immature faith.

So, with that in mind, we explore the spiritual dimension found in Ephesians 6. You may not believe in a spiritual dimension that has evil, satan, demons, and the alike. Paul did! Jesus did! Many others do in our time! Maybe Paul is putting things in prospective for us. There is a cosmic battle between heaven and hell, good and evil, God and satan, and angels and demons. Don't be fooled, God and satan are not equals. There is no dualism here. Scripture clearly reveals that God is the ruler and most powerful, and that Jesus had power over the demons. In the end of this cosmic battle, God wins! Love wins! Faith wins! This focal passage helps us to realize that the true enemy is not the person you are having difficulty with, it is the powers of evil that works behind the scenes. Evil allows seeking to destroy and damage. God's main desire in our lives is to redeem us and build us up in faith. As we interact with God and one another, remember Jesus' words that said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27).'" Jesus also said to his disciples as he sent them out, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent

as doves (Matthew 10:16).” Why did he say that, because they were going to encounter the same things Jesus did: demons, systemic abuse and sin, evil activities, and death. So, as you interact with God and others, be wise to the forces at work against you that seek to bring you down and hinder the movement of God’s saving work. Be gentle with people, but wise to the spiritual forces that seek to destroy.

This week, the first thing that you need to take up is the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The overall picture of the armor was from the Roman military. Paul was using the Roman armor, which people were use to seeing, and using it to describe what the Christian should use for armor in the spiritual battle. The belt, of truth, that went around the waist, held everything together that was used for battle. For the Christian, the truth of God, Jesus’ words, and life experience give perspective on what life is like and how we should live it in the name of Christ Jesus. The breastplate, of righteousness, is what protects you from the perils of life’s battles. By living a life of righteousness in the ways of God, not self-righteousness, the Christian can stay strong in the face of life’s battles, and not be dragged down into destructive behavior. These are two elements that God has given us to be fortified on the pilgrimage of life.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In these passages, what is the main practical lesson you get from it?

How can we describe God’s grace in these scriptures?

What do you believe about the battle between good and evil?

How do you think God wins this battle?

What do you think the “belt of truth” is?

What do you think the “breastplate of righteousness” is?

How can you put these two elements of armor on in your life?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Matthew 10:16
“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”
3. In regards to the scripture you have been asked to ponder, what does that look like in your life, as a disciple of Christ Jesus, as you go about your daily journey?