

**GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation**

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.

**INTRO**

Invite everyone to introduce themselves and then read the Bible verses.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What part of the message and Scripture was most encouraging, and which part is most challenging?
2. What did You notice about God, and what did you notice about yourself as well as other people?

**GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPTIVE WORK)**

*Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us, giving us His peace (His completeness) in exchange.*

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? "Lord Jesus, I give you my..."

What's His gift? "Lord Jesus, I receive your..."

**ACTION QUESTIONS**

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you've discovered today? *(NOTE – Consider prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence, writing what you heard. If nothing comes clear, keep praying this week.)*
2. During the coming week, who can you share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*

**Sermon Study - Conversation Guide**

February 25, 2024

"The Armor of God"

Ephesians 6:10-13

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

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In Ephesians 5, we talked about submitting to one another a lot. Remember, the whole idea of submitting is quite simple. We put others first, loving them well, supporting and making them our priority rather than ourselves. Why? This is exactly how Jesus loves you.

In the beginning of chapter 6, the apostle Paul gives examples of how this Jesus way of loving others applies to our lives. Paul talks about marriage, children and parents, and how to love others when we have authority over them. It's all the same idea as before, love like Jesus loves. It's within this context we begin the last section of this letter...

***6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.***

Notice the first word. Finally. Paul uses it to pull together every concept he's talked about for this entire letter. Finally, we can't submit to another person and love them well on our own, so be strong in the Lord. Let His love wash over and fill you, so that you give it away. How do we do that?

***6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

We are in a spiritual battle. Imagine your inheritance from Jesus as a bank account filled with all the hope, love, faith, purpose, and power you'll ever need. The enemy wants to take away all of that, leaving you with nothing but the debt of hopelessness, anger, resentment, faithlessness, and despair, so you'll completely give up on your life in Christ. He knows this is how your purpose and impact is put to death.

This is why the moment you start to pray or read Scripture, you are distracted and fall asleep. This is why it's hard to get into worship at first, like you're distracted by something, or you find yourself criticizing some portion of it. So put on your armor. Stand against the devil's schemes. Take back what the enemy has taken!

***6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Your enemy is the devil and all his demons. Fight against the devil, not people. Destroy the enemy's plans, not people. How? We stop using the tools the devil wants us to use, like resentment, pride, bitterness, anger, hatred, entitlement, martyrdom, and we start using the tools Jesus has for us. We pray. We love. We forgive. We make the problem the problem, not the person the problem.

We don't do this alone. When Paul was writing this, he had firsthand experience seeing Roman soldiers linking shields together to create an impenetrable defense against attackers. This is why we gather together, worship together, pray together, lean on each other, and are vulnerable with each other. It's why we tell each other when we need more financial support, prayer support, love, and practical assistance. We're not alone.

***6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.***

Four times in three verses Paul says to stand, and says twice to put on the full armor of God. So, what's God's job and what's our job? Our job is to get back up when we've been knocked down, and we get knocked down all the time. These past four months, I've been knocked down a lot. But then I took it a step further. I didn't want to stand anymore.

What does this look like for me? I haven't been taking time throughout the day to give Jesus my burdens. It looks like me not taking moments to listen to Jesus about what to do next. It looks like me feeding my resentments and staying in my hurt, rather than standing in my identity in Christ. It looks like me choosing self-pity rather than gratitude.

The enemy knows if he can get me to carry all my burdens by myself, I'll drown. He knows if he can get me to pray for others but never to rest in Jesus for myself, I'll drown. So, this week I've had a lot of talks with close friends who have spoken hard truths to me. "See the devil's schemes to get you operating by yourself, stand with Jesus and let Him carry your burdens. Look around at all the people who love you. Stand with us."

This is what Paul's letter to the Ephesians is all about. It's time to stand back up my friends. Take back what the enemy has stolen. We cannot stand on our own. The armor of God is literally God Himself, and it's His job to handle the outcome of every situation. It God's job to change other people's hearts. Our job is to stand together in His Presence.

Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote "The ultimate measure of a follower of Jesus is not when they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but when they stand at times of challenge and controversy." When those around you are angry, stand and be strong in the Lord by both receiving and giving away His gentleness, compassion, and kindness. When you feel confused and lost, run to your Heavenly Father in prayer, standing in the hope that He gives wisdom to any of His children who ask for it.

Will you stand with me, for God's Kingdom to come for us and others, not in our own power, but by us being filled with the might of God's power?