

THE FULL  
ARMOR  
OF  
GOD

UPDATED EDITION

DARLENE SCHACHT

 Time-Warp Wife  
MINISTRIES

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The Full Armor of God: Updated Edition

Publisher:

Time-Warp Wife Ministries  
114 Wyndham Estate Drive  
Steinbach, Manitoba  
R5G 2K6

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Interior design by Darlene Schacht

Cover design by Darlene Schacht

ISBN 978-1-988984-25-4

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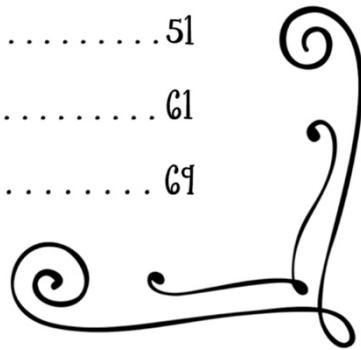
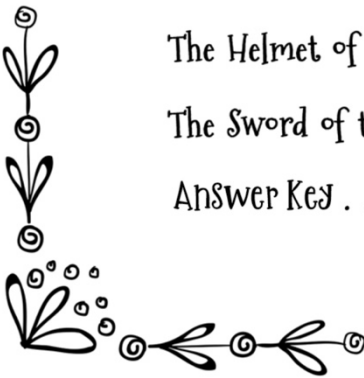
DARLENE SCHACHT





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## About the Author:



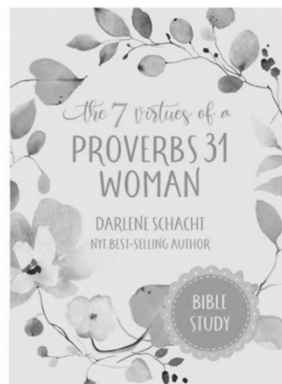
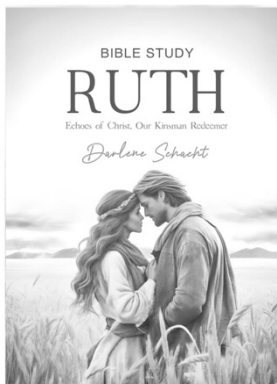
DARLENE SCHACHT is an award-winning and *NY Times* best-selling author. She is the founder of Time-Warp Wife Ministries, an online publication that encourages women to live Christ-centered lives. Her passion for scripture and hunger for truth is the driving force behind a unique ministry that offers Bible studies and daily marriage prayers.

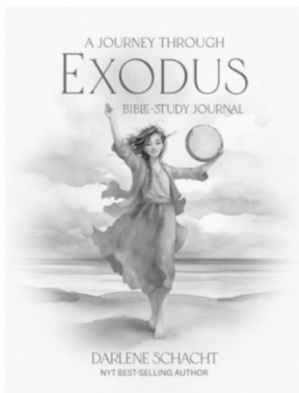
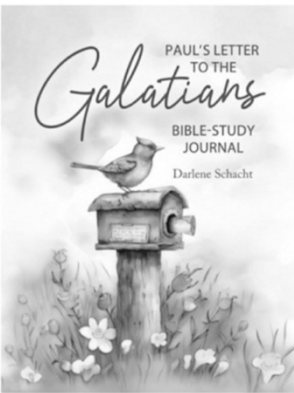
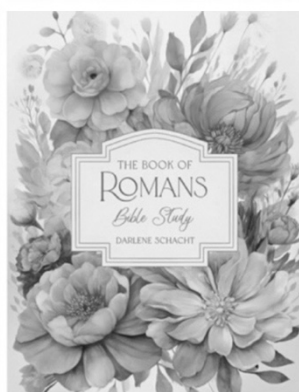
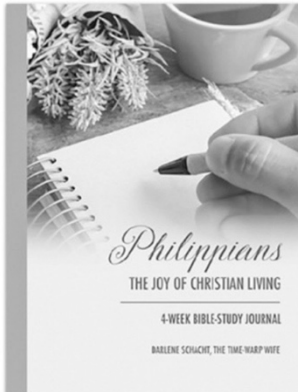
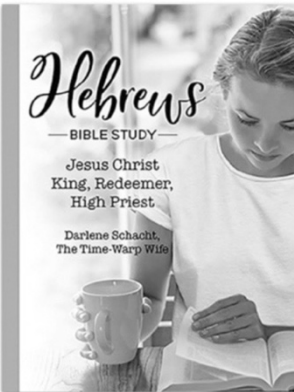
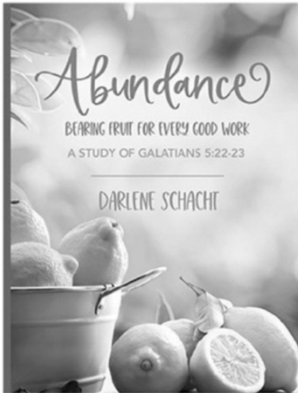
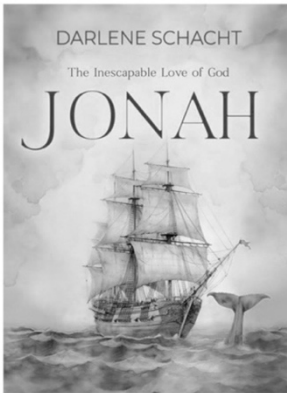
She began her publishing journey in 2011 working alongside actress/author Candace Cameron Bure to publish *Reshaping it All: Motivation for Spiritual and Physical Fitness*.

With a passion for Jesus, Darlene continues to write, sharing the gospel with countless women around the world.

Visit Darlene's blog at [TimeWarpWife.com](http://TimeWarpWife.com) to find Bible studies, devotionals, and daily marriage prayers.

## Other Bible Studies by Darlene Schacht:





We're delighted to offer supplemental videos for many of our Bible studies. To discover if this study is one of them, please visit YouTube and search for "Time-Warp Wife Bible Studies."



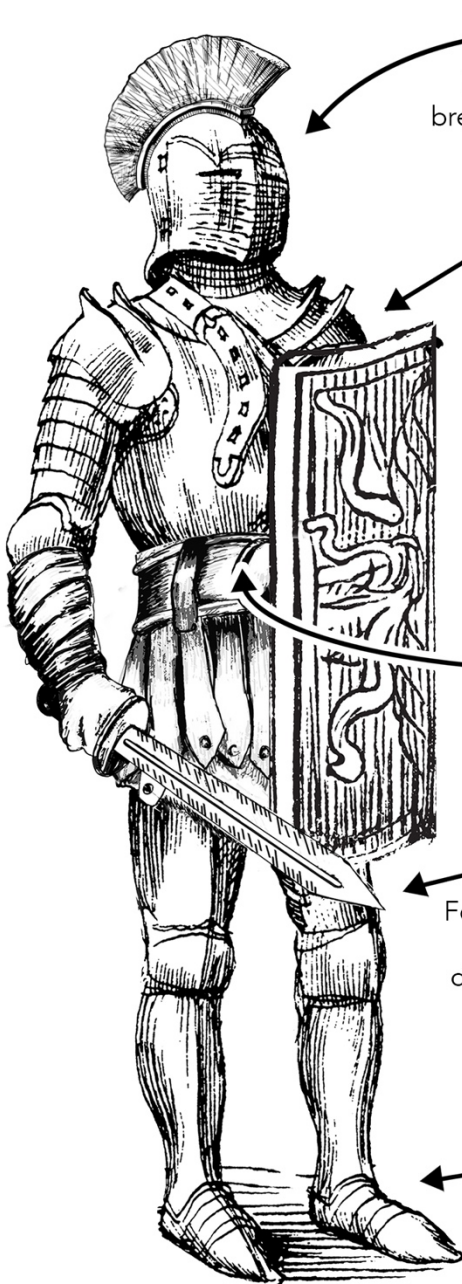
## Ephesians 6:14-17

stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

KJV

# The Full Armor Of God



## The Helmet of Salvation

Let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:8, NIV)

## The Breastplate of Righteousness

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23, NIV)

## The Shield of Faith

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5:9, NIV)

## The Belt of Truth

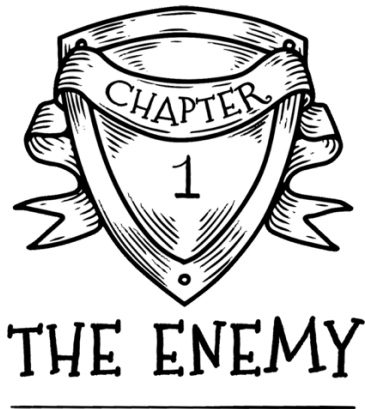
Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth. (Ephesians 6:14a, KJV)

## The Sword of the Spirit

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12, NIV)

## Feet Shod With The Preparation of the Gospel of peace

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (Ephesians 6:15)



CHAPTER  
1  
THE ENEMY

Regardless of how many times society tries to deny it, there's more to this world than what we can see, touch, and hear. There's the physical realm and a spiritual realm. There's good and evil. There's a God at work in our lives and an enemy who seeks to destroy us. The Bible warns us,

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*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

*—1 Peter 5:8, NIV*

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I wonder—how many of us are truly on guard? Are we prepared for an attack? Are we cautiously observing the way that we live, what we're listening to, and what we're allowing into our minds?

Last summer, two dangerous fugitives were on the run in Canada. Newspaper headlines warned that they were close to home. People were on the lookout, keeping their ears and eyes open, and staying vigilant. In fact, one small town in our province was instructed to stay in their homes until the impending danger passed. We warned our children to be careful, did everything we could to protect them, and were careful ourselves as well. That's how it should be when the enemy is approaching. We must be attentive, watchful, and wise.

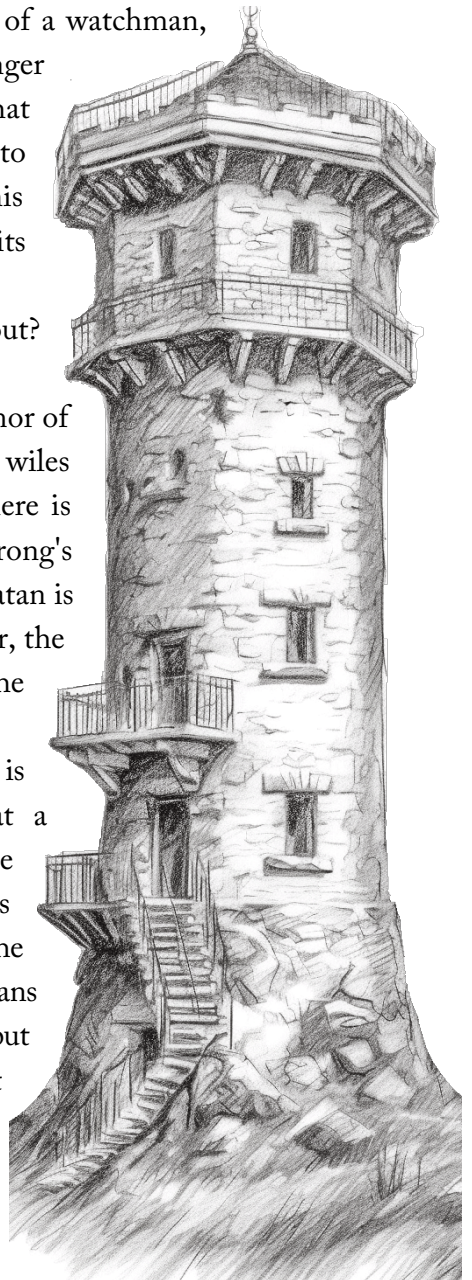
In Old Testament times, towers were built so that watchmen could stand guard over the fields or the city gates. Due to their height, they could see the enemy approaching from a distance, providing ample time to sound a warning. They observed who came and went through the city gates.

Ezekiel Chapter 33:1-6 outlines the duty of a watchman, whose job was to blow the horn as danger approached. The scripture also emphasizes that those who hear the sound have a responsibility to heed the warning. I encourage you to study this beautiful portion of scripture and meditate on its words.

So, who is this lion the Bible is talking about? Who is the enemy we should be cautious of?

Ephesians 6:11 says, 'Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' The word 'devil' that we see there is translated from the Greek word 'diabolos' (Strong's G1228), which means to slander or defame. Satan is also known as Lucifer, the accuser, the deceiver, the evil one, the wicked one, the destroyer, and the ruler of this world.

While the Bible clearly identifies who Satan is and the threat he poses, it's surprising that a significant number of Americans, including those who identify as Christians, do not believe in his existence. A nationwide survey conducted by The Barna Group revealed that 40% of Christians strongly agreed that Satan 'is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.' This statistic highlights that a substantial portion of believers may be overlooking the fact that Jesus Himself said, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (Luke 10:18, NIV).





Satan is hungry and gullible ill-prepared  
Christians are on his menu.

- Skip Heitzig -



The first step in defending ourselves against the enemy is acknowledging his existence. If we don't believe there is an enemy, it's challenging to recognize the potential danger we may face.

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*Paul writes, "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. 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."*

*-Ephesians 6:12-13, NIV*

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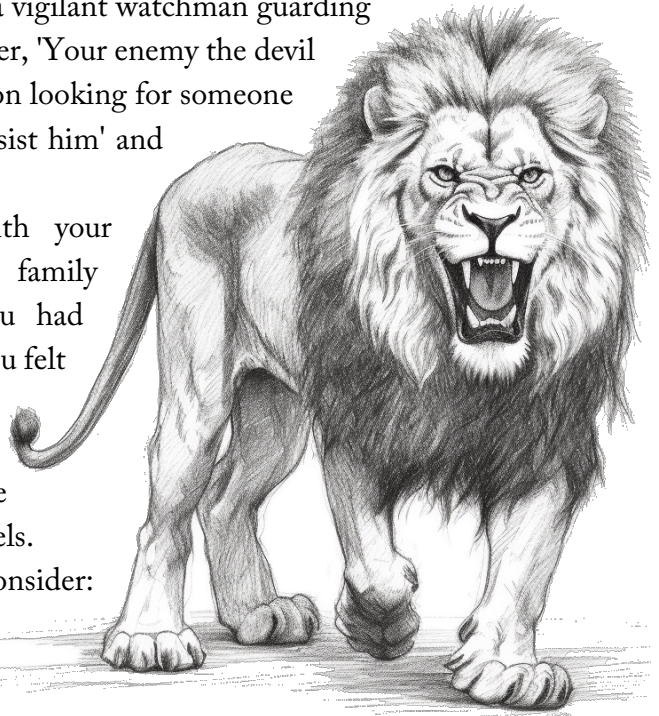
While popular culture often portrays Satan as a red-horned maniac wielding a pitchfork, the reality is more subtle. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Paul notes that 'he masquerades as an angel of light.' Satan is a wolf in sheep's clothing, a lion concealed by the shadows, patiently waiting to strike.

I've often heard the saying 'in like a lion and out like a lamb,' typically used to describe the month of March. Year after year, the first week is often marked by harsh weather, but by the 31st, we're greeted with warm temperatures and clear skies. On the flip side, Satan's character could be likened to 'in like a lamb and out like a lion.' He approaches us gently and unassumingly, employing cunning schemes and flattering words to deceive. His sole agenda is to devour us by tearing us down, seeking to see both our lives and our spirits destroyed. And until he achieves that, he'll revisit us again and again.

Peter warns us, much like a vigilant watchman guarding a city who shouts from the tower, 'Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.' He urges us to 'Resist him' and 'Stand firm in the faith.'

That fight you had with your husband... that rift between family members... those doubts you had about your faith... the anger you felt when you were betrayed... that temptation that led you astray... the real enemy there was Satan and his army of angels.

And so, we need to consider: What protection do we have against this impending attack?



Paul provides a clear and comprehensive answer, in his letter to the church in Ephesus:

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*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. —Ephesians 6:14–18, NIV*

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As we're reading that portion of scripture, let's not overlook the fact that Paul adds to that armor by saying, "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." (v.18) Paul knows that the power

of prayer strengthens our defenses and connects us to the boundless power of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit in us and through us.

God isn't expecting us to stand alone on a battlefield, any more than He expected David to when he took down a giant. You might remember that David wasn't wearing the armor that Saul offered to him, instead he had something better.

David said to Goliath, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (1 Samuel 17:45, NIV)

And what do we know about the name of the Lord? It's a name that carries immeasurable power, a name that has defeated giants, parted seas, and brought victory to the oppressed throughout history. The name of the Lord is not just a title; it's a representation of His character, His faithfulness, His sovereignty, and His unwavering love for His people. When we invoke the name of the Lord in our battles, we tap into the same divine strength that enabled David to overcome Goliath, Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and countless others to triumph in the face of adversity. It's a name that reminds us that we don't fight our battles alone, for the Lord Almighty stands with us, ensuring that even the most formidable giants in our lives will fall before His mighty name.

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*The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. —Proverbs 18:10, NIV*

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Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 32:7-8, King Hezekiah encouraged his people saying, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."

These stories serve to remind us that the enemy is no match for God's strength and power. He may try to defeat us, but the mighty hand of God will always prevail.

? What does the name of the Lord represent?

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? Which two realms are mentioned in this chapter?

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? What was Paul's concern in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, and how can we address that same concern today?

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2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as 'the god of this age' or 'the god of this world.' What do you think that means?

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What does James 4:7 teach us about handling temptation?

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Peter warns us about the dangers that Satan poses, but then reveals to us how we are to overcome him. What is Peter's advice to us? (See 1 Peter 5:9)

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Throughout Scripture, we encounter different titles and names attributed to Satan. Each name or title sheds light on the different ways Satan interacts with the world and opposes God's purposes. Let's look up these verses and list the names beside them.

Job 1:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 14:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 9:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 12:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 13:39 \_\_\_\_\_

John 14:30 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 6:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 2:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 9:11 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_

# → 6 Ways to Stay Faithful ←

## PRAY

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41, NIV)

## Be Strong

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (Ephesians 6:10-11, NIV)

## Resist

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7, NIV)

## Study

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11, NIV)

## STAY ALERT

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NIV)

## OBEY

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. (Psalm 119:9, NIV)



Stand  
firm then,  
with the belt of  
truth buckled  
around your  
waist.

*Ephesians 6:14*



## THE BELT OF TRUTH

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If we want to live life to the fullest, abounding with joy, we must be on guard to protect our hearts and minds, ready to fight for what's rightfully ours. We need to fight for our families, our faith, our marriages, and, in fact, we need to fight for our joy.

Stop and think about that for a minute. When was the last time you let Satan steal your joy? If you're married, when was the last time you allowed him to gain a foothold in your marriage? Are you raising children? If so, are you getting down on your knees to fight for their souls? Are you defeating Satan, or is he defeating you?

As we go through this study, we'll examine the weapons of spiritual warfare. Weapons that cast down strongholds, destroy arguments, and demolish anything that threatens to stand in our way of living a victorious life in Christ.

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*Paul writes, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." -2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NIV*

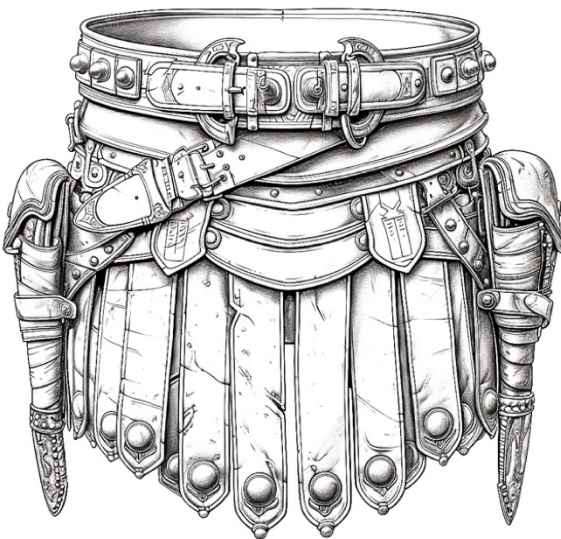
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Looking to Ephesians 6:14a, we find the belt of truth: "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist" (NIV). Some other translations use the term 'gird our loins' with the belt of truth. This is an old saying not commonly used today; in fact, most of us haven't encountered it outside of the Bible. Nevertheless, we find it frequently in Scripture. For example, in Exodus chapter 12, the Lord instructed the Israelites to eat the Passover with their loins girded, wearing shoes on their feet, and holding staves in their hands.

The concept of girding one's loins signifies preparing for battle, or in the case of the Passover, being ready to eat and depart at any moment. In ancient times, Roman soldiers wore tunics, which were essentially masculine forms of dresses. These tunics were secured in place by a belt around the waist. The skirt of the tunic was then lifted and tucked into the belt, allowing for free and swift movement. When you're on the battlefield, you don't want your tunic hindering your ability to defend yourself.

In Hebrews 12:1, the call to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" encourages believers to remove any obstacles or sinful behaviors that might hinder their spiritual journey. It reflects the idea of being unburdened and prepared to run the race of faith with perseverance.

The 'belt of truth' symbolizes the importance of truthfulness, integrity, and living in accordance with God's Word.



Just as a soldier's belt is essential for securing the armor in place, providing stability and readiness for battle, the 'belt of truth' serves a crucial role in the spiritual armor of a Christian. It wraps around the believer, holding fast the other virtues and pieces of armor, ensuring they are effectively utilized. This belt, representative of God's Word, is what empowers believers to live in the righteousness gifted to them through Christ. It's

not about striving in one's own strength to achieve righteousness; rather, it's about resting in the righteousness that is already theirs through faith. This truth takes the weight off and allows them to move freely and effectively in their spiritual walk. Without the 'belt of truth,' our spiritual armor is incomplete and our readiness for the challenges of life is compromised. Therefore, we must embrace and uphold truth at all costs, for it is the stabilizing force that aligns us with God's will and secures all other spiritual virtues in their rightful place.

Wearing the 'belt of truth' means being committed to God's truth, both in our beliefs and in our actions. It helps believers stand firm in their faith, resist deception, and maintain their spiritual integrity in the midst of spiritual battles and challenges.

As we discuss truth in this chapter, let's be careful not to confuse it with the sword of the Spirit, which we'll get to in a later chapter. While the sword of the Spirit involves actively using God's Word to combat spiritual challenges, the belt of truth represents a foundational understanding of God's truth as revealed in His Word. It's about knowing and being grounded in the truth of God's Word, which serves as a stabilizing and protective element in a believer's life.

The original Greek word for 'truth' in the context of the 'belt of truth' is 'alētheia' (Strong's G225), derived from 'alēthēs' (Strong's G227), which means 'loving the truth, speaking the truth, truthful.' However, it's important to note that in the context of the 'belt of truth,' it primarily refers to being firmly rooted in the objective truth of God's Word rather than personal truthfulness or honesty.

A powerful example of this can be found in the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. He was a tax collector known for his dishonest practices, but when he encountered Jesus, he repented and pledged to live a life aligned with truth and righteousness, demonstrating the potential for personal transformation. Zacchaeus' story underscores that while the 'belt of truth' signifies our foundation in God's Word, it also encourages us to live truthfully and embrace the life-changing power of God's truth.

I remember a few years ago, my son who was about 18 at the time, walked down to the bank to deposit his check. By the time he got there, it

was getting dark. The parking lot was empty and there wasn't a soul in sight when he happened upon 160 dollars lying on the ground. Eight crisp 20 dollar bills were lying on the pavement waiting to be scooped up and spent. My son picked up the money alright, but then he sat down on the curb, took out his phone, and called me.

"Mom," he said. "I'll be a while. I found money on the ground, and I want to hang around here a while just in case someone comes looking for it."

No one did. No one saw him pick it up, and no one came looking for it. Because he loves truth, however, he went to the bank the next day and turned in the money. That's integrity. It's found in those quiet moments when no one but God sees the work of your hands.

Authentic truthfulness is more than doing the right thing; it's a deep-rooted desire to do the right thing. It's the difference between generous hands that everyone sees and a generous heart that's hidden with God.

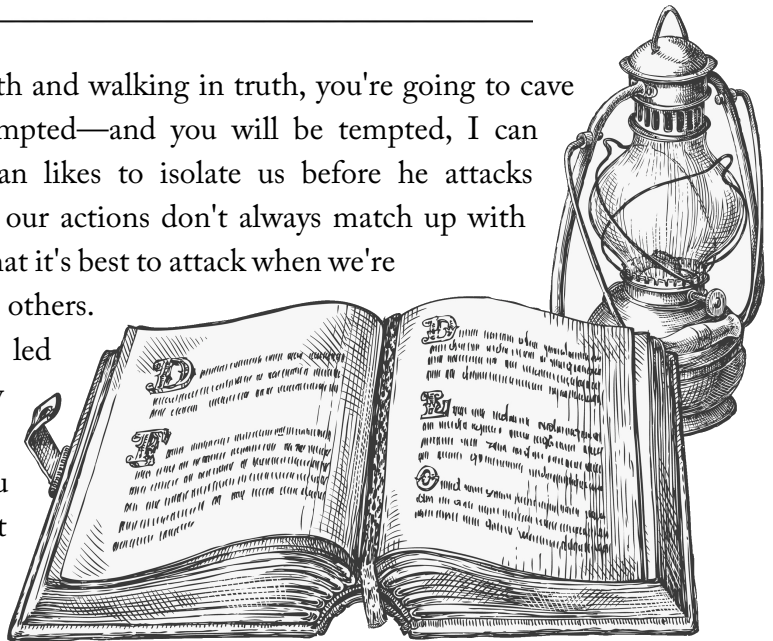
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*Hebrews 4:13 says, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (NIV)*

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If you're not loving truth and walking in truth, you're going to cave the moment you're tempted—and you will be tempted, I can promise you that. Satan likes to isolate us before he attacks because he knows that our actions don't always match up with our hearts. He knows that it's best to attack when we're not seen by others.

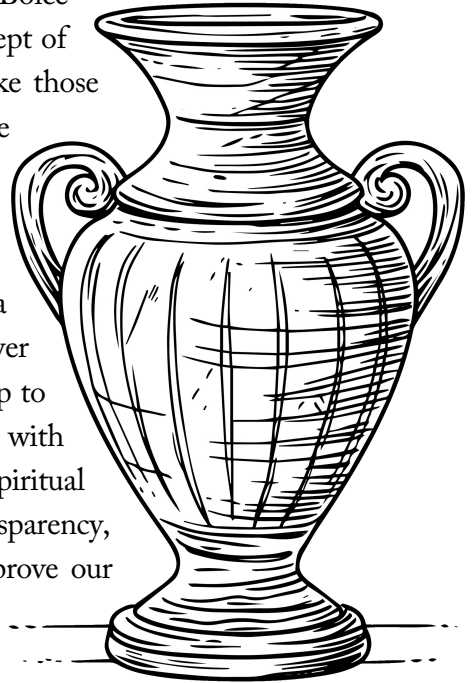
(Remember, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan). You know as well as I do that we're more likely to fall when we're not being



watched. But integrity isn't integrity at all if we don't practice in secret that which we hold dear in the light.

In Philippians 1:10, Paul writes, "so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ," emphasizing the importance of discernment and purity in our Christian walk.

Renowned theologian James Montgomery Boice uses a powerful metaphor to illustrate the concept of integrity. He explained that honest artisans, like those ancient potters, would hold their wares up to the sun to reveal the truth of their workmanship, exposing any flaws filled with wax. Just as they marked their authentic, unblemished pottery with 'sine cera'—without wax—signifying a product that could withstand the revealing power of light, so too are we called to hold our lives up to the light of God's truth. This analogy resonates with the word 'sincerity' in modern usage. In our spiritual walk, we are encouraged to embrace this transparency, allowing the light of Scripture to test and approve our conduct. By doing so, we can live genuine lives of devotion and truth before the Lord.



And so, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the belt of truth. Walk in truthfulness. Cast off anything that hinders you, turn away from any sin that entangles you, and get ready to fight.

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*Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*

*—2 Corinthians 4:2, NIV*

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❓ In Ephesians 6:14, Paul starts the description of the Armor of God with the Belt of Truth. Why do you think truth is represented as a belt in this metaphor, and what does this signify about the role of truth in the life of a believer?

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❓ What are some examples, either from Scripture or personal experience, of the consequences when truth is disregarded or compromised?

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⓪ Considering that the Belt of Truth is part of the Armor of God meant for spiritual warfare, in what ways does truth equip us to face spiritual challenges and deceptions?

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⓪ How does the Belt of Truth interact with and support the other pieces of the Armor of God, such as the Breastplate of Righteousness or the Shield of Faith?

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⓪ How does living in truth strengthen our testimony to others about the transformative power of the gospel?

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❓ Where did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus to be tempted? And in what 3 ways was Jesus tempted?

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❓ What practical steps can we take to ensure that our 'belt' is fastened securely, so that we are not easily swayed by every new teaching or trend?

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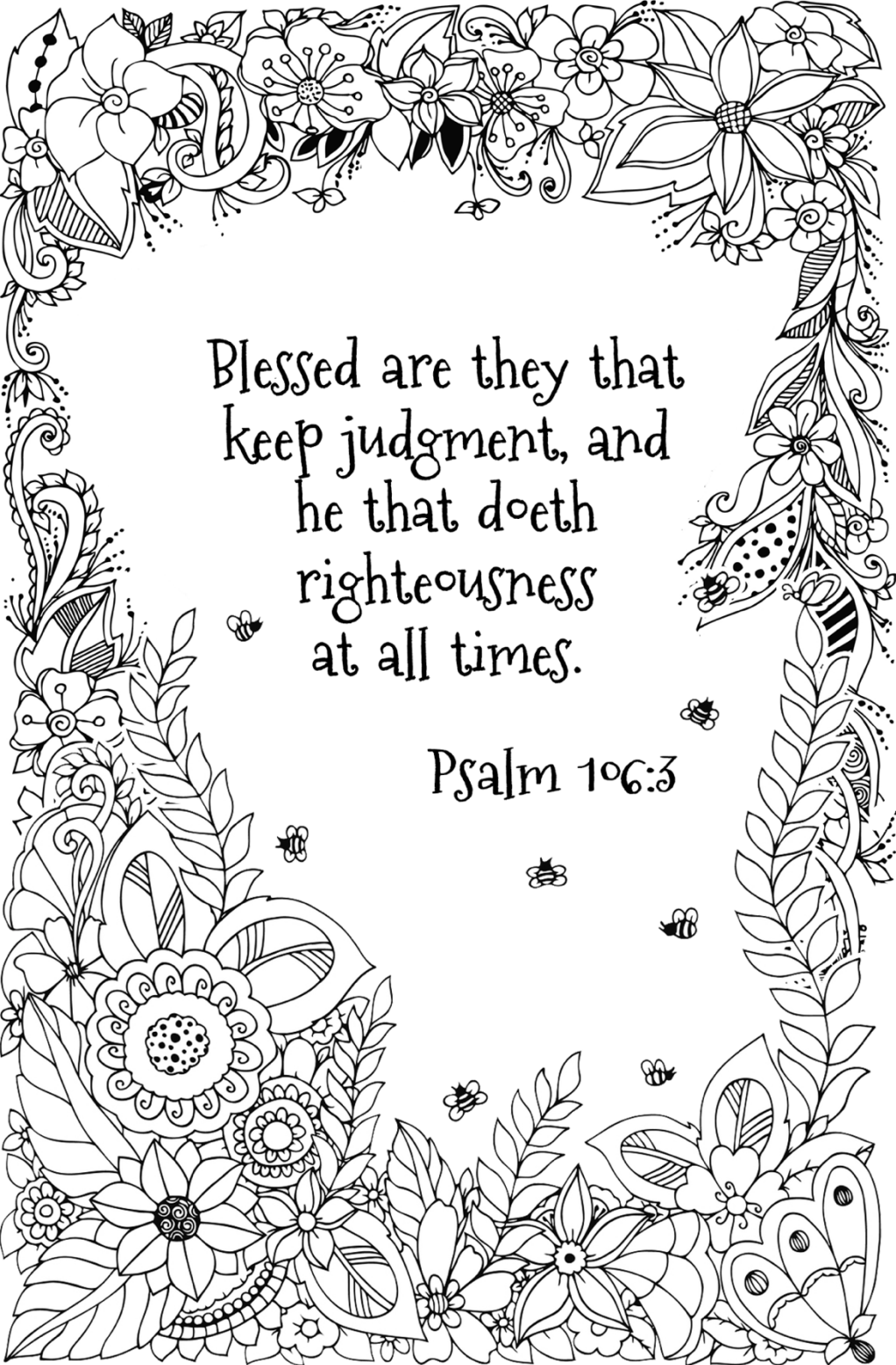


## Food for Thought

In the caring hands of the Lord, the journey of faith often takes us through valleys shaded by trials and hardships. He doesn't choose to steer us away from life's storms but leads us right through them, ultimately guiding us to the peace that awaits on the other side. Why, you might wonder, does He lead us through such challenging times? It's because the true depth of our faith is only revealed when we face adversity head-on. Our lives are like a book with chapters filled with struggles and times of scarcity, and each of these moments helps us grow stronger.

Just as a blacksmith uses fire to refine gold, our faith is shaped and purified through the trials we endure. This truth echoes throughout history, especially in the stories of remarkable individuals from the Scriptures. Take Joseph, who was betrayed and sold into slavery, yet rose to a position of leadership. Think of David, who faced relentless challenges while expressing his heart through the psalms. Remember Moses, the wanderer in the wilderness, who stood before Pharaoh. And consider Paul, who turned his chains into a platform for spreading the gospel, transforming his afflictions into songs of praise.

What ties these extraordinary lives together is their unwavering obedience to God's call. Their greatness doesn't solely lie in their monumental victories but also in their steadfast faithfulness during times of testing. These lives inspire us to walk our own paths with bravery, to live in faith and obedience, and to trust in the Lord's perfect plan. We can be confident that through every trial, His comforting presence is by our side, guiding our every step.



Blessed are they that  
keep judgment, and  
he that doeth  
righteousness  
at all times.

Psalm 106:3



## THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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I received a message from a friend a few years back. She was about to step into women's ministry, and definitely felt God nudging her in this direction. She was everything you want someone in ministry to be—excited, prepared, and ready to be used by the Lord. But here's the thing: someone told her she wasn't good enough, and she believed it. Hearing those words coming from the mouth of one of her peers was a swift kick to the gut.

She allowed Satan to steal her joy, deflate her sense of self-worth, and question her calling. He's the master manipulator of half-truths, who comes to kill, steal, and destroy. You see, on one hand it was true—she wasn't good enough. But the thing is, none of us are. Not one. She's not good enough, I'm not good enough, even the apostle Paul wasn't good enough. But here's the thing, our righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and He is more than good enough. Throughout history He's used people that were weak and small and flawed to further the gospel. He's using cracked vessels for His glory and honor, so that through our weakness His grace abounds all the more.

In Isaiah 64:6, the Bible describes the righteous acts of the unbelievers as filthy rags. Not just dirty cloths, filthy rags. Women used to wash their rags, and hang them outside on a fence to dry. Over time these unsightly stained rags would fade from the sun, and sometimes they'd simply blow away.

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*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

*—Isaiah 64:6, KJV*

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It's not pretty, but that's exactly the point the author of Isaiah was trying to make. We're deceiving ourselves if we think we are something without the righteousness of Christ.

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*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

*—2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV*

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*And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. —Philippians 3:9, NIV*

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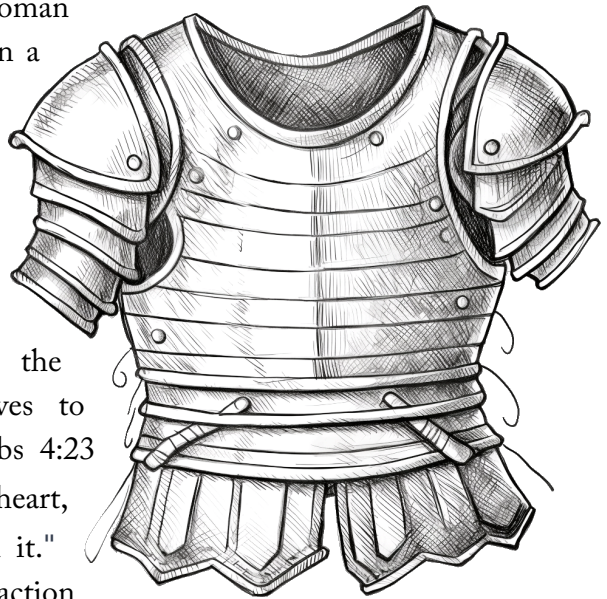
The righteousness we're talking about here is a gift that's imputed to us. It's a right standing with God through faith in Jesus Christ. It's given to us by grace, and there's nothing we can do to earn it. But there's another righteousness we're going to talk about in this chapter, and that's the righteousness we're commanded to live by. The difference here is that one is a gift and the other is our responsibility.

To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live a righteous life. It's something we put on every day. Don't get me wrong—the breastplate of righteousness is not self-righteousness—it's our response to the

righteousness imputed by Christ. As Paul writes, "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

We won't be perfect, but we can and should be progressive. Progress is development and improvement. It's movement toward a goal. Just as a baby grows within the womb, so we must develop and progress as we're growing in Christ.

If you look at images of Roman breastplates, you'll see they take on a vest-like shape, and were generally made of leather, bronze, or iron. The breastplate was worn over the tunic, and served to protect the vital organs within the upper torso.

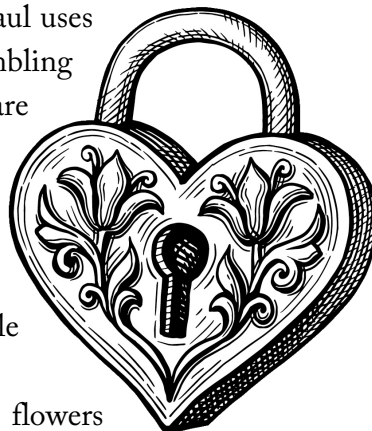


In much the same way, the breastplate of righteousness serves to protect the heart. In fact, Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Every choice we make, and every action we take stems from the heart. Our priorities, our convictions, our ideas, and our belief systems are all formed in the heart. So, how do we protect it? Here are nine practical ways we can start:

1. **Daily Heart Check:** Just as you'd check your phone for messages, take a moment each day to examine your heart. Ask yourself, "Where is my heart today? Is it filled with love, joy, and peace, or is it burdened with worries and fears?"
2. **Filter Your Thoughts:** Our thoughts are like streams flowing into our hearts. Ensure these streams are clean and pure. Replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations and Scripture verses that remind you of God's love. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul writes, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to

make it obedient to Christ." The words Paul uses here are likened to warfare. Picture the crumbling walls of a fortress as enemy soldiers are brought to their knees.

3. **Prayerful Reflection:** Dedicate time to pray and reflect. Share your thoughts, dreams, and fears with God. Pour out your heart to Him, and listen for His gentle guidance in return.
4. **Surround Yourself with Positivity:** Just as flowers need sunlight to bloom, your heart thrives in a positive environment. Surround yourself with people who uplift and encourage you on your faith journey.
5. **Disconnect from Negativity:** In this digital age, we're bombarded with negative news and social media. Consider taking regular breaks from your screen time to detox your heart and refocus.
6. **Gratitude Journal:** Start a gratitude journal. Each day, jot down things you're thankful for. Cultivating a heart of gratitude helps you focus on the goodness in your life.
7. **Healthy Boundaries:** Set healthy boundaries in your relationships. Guard your heart against toxic influences and invest in those who bring joy and love into your life. I'm not suggesting that we ignore those who need the Lord; rather, we should pray for them and show them God's love from a place of strength and wisdom. Healthy boundaries help us maintain our own spiritual well-being while still reaching out to those who may need guidance.
8. **Meditate on Scripture:** Choose a Bible verse or passage each week to meditate on. Let God's Word permeate your heart and guide your thoughts and actions.
9. **Self-Care:** Don't forget self-care. Take time to relax, rest, and do things that bring you joy. A well-cared-for heart is better equipped to guard against stress and anxiety.



Remember, guarding your heart is a daily practice, much like tending to a garden. By nurturing your heart with these practical steps, you're cultivating a heart that reflects the love and righteousness of Christ.



## The Parable of the Dervish Man

In one of his sermons, Charles Spurgeon shared a parable of a Dervish man from the East who came upon a mountain. Looking down from the mountain, he saw the sun shining brightly on a river stream. It looked beautiful from afar, but as the old man made his way down the mountain, he soon discovered that this river was muddy and unfit for drinking.

Nearby, he saw a young shepherd boy busy filtering water. With much effort and time, he sifted and filtered the muddy water each day for his flock. Little by little he purified the water, collecting it in a cistern so the animals might have clean water to drink.

Knowing that there was a better way, the Dervish man instructed the young shepherd to follow him. For miles they journeyed through rough terrain until they came to the source of the stream. Just as they arrived a flock of birds flew away while wild beasts rushed into the forest. They found an open well that was continually flowing, but the beasts that came to drink had perpetually disturbed the soil around it. Because of these animals the well was turbid and muddy.

"My son," said the wise man. "Set to work now to protect the fountain and guard the well, which is the source of this stream. If you can keep these wild beasts and fowls away, the stream will flow pure and clear."

And so, while the young man went to work guarding the stream, the old man said, "My son if thou art wrong, seek not to correct thine outward life, but first seek to get thy heart correct. For out of it are the issues of life, and thy life shall be pure once thy heart is so."

? What is the 'breastplate of righteousness' and why is it vital in the armor of God?

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? What does Paul mean by the 'fruit of righteousness' in Philippians 1:11, and how might this fruit manifest in our daily lives?

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*He put on righteousness as his breastplate,  
and the helmet of salvation on his head:*

ISAIAH 59:17, NIV



? Romans 3:22 speaks of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. How does this righteousness differ from self-generated righteousness?

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? What is the difference between righteousness that is imparted to us through faith in Christ and walking in righteousness as a response to God's grace?

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? How did the righteousness of the Pharisees differ from the 'walking in righteousness' that Jesus calls for, and what lessons can we learn from this distinction for our own spiritual journey? (See Matthew 23:23-28)

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## Fill in the Blanks:

If you know that he is \_\_\_\_\_, you know that everyone who does \_\_\_\_\_ has been born of him. (1 John 2:29, NIV)

For with the heart man believeth unto \_\_\_\_\_; and with the mouth confession is made \_\_\_\_\_. (Romans 10:10, KJV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and \_\_\_\_\_, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly \_\_\_\_\_ for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

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 What practical steps can you take to 'put on' the breastplate of righteousness daily, according to Colossians 3:12-14?

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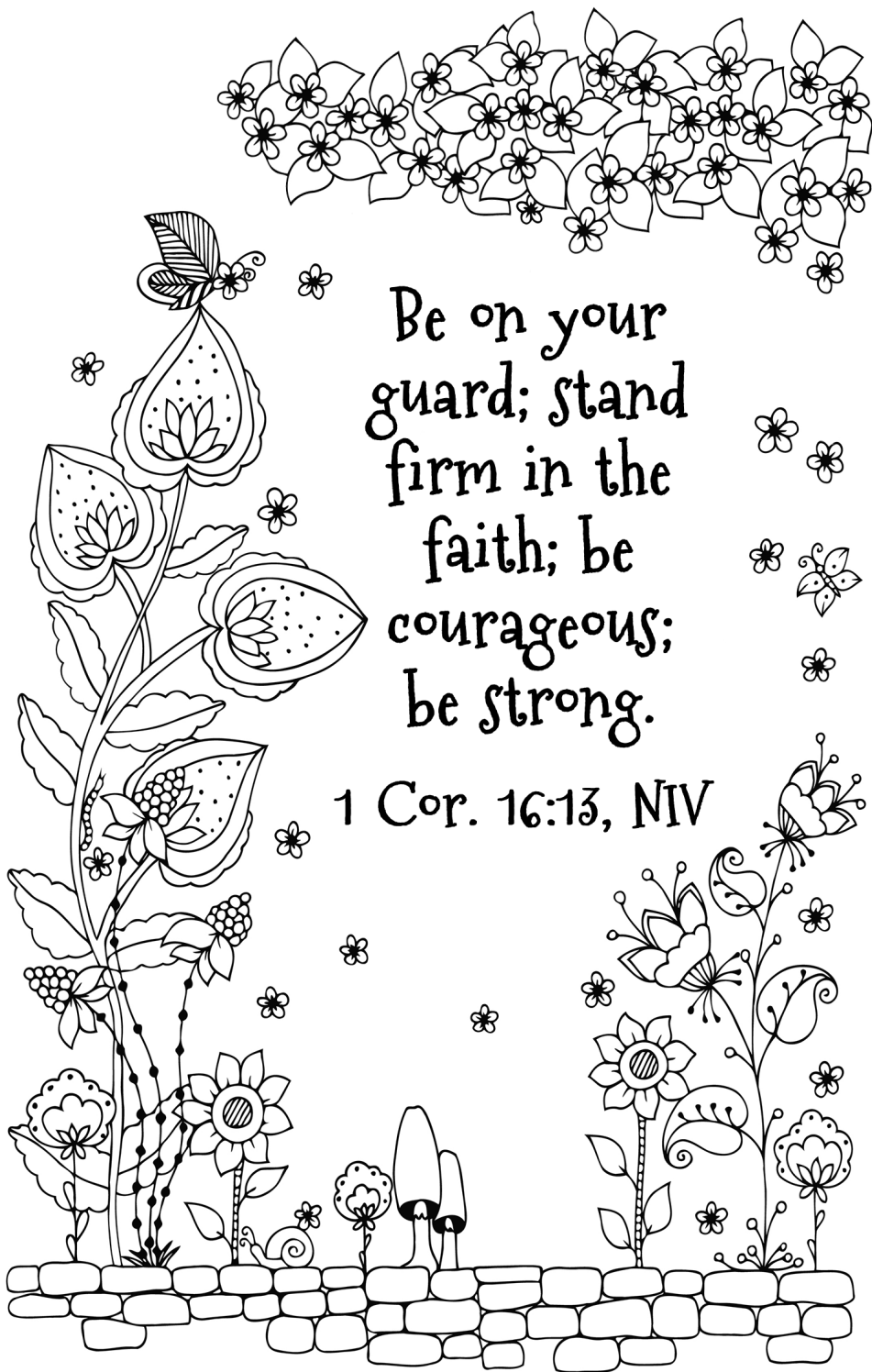
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## 4 Ways That Righteousness Protects the Heart:

The concept of the heart is considered the seat of one's spiritual and moral character. It's where our deepest desires, values, and convictions reside. The breastplate of righteousness symbolizes the power that righteousness has to protect this area of our innermost being. As we consider the significance of this spiritual armor, let's explore four vital ways the breastplate safeguards our heart and fortifies our spiritual walk:

1. **Guarding against sin:** Righteousness helps us live in alignment with God's standards, protecting our hearts from the corrupting influence of sin. When we embrace righteousness, we create a strong defense against the temptations that seek to penetrate our hearts.
2. **Shielding against accusations:** It defends us from Satan's accusations, allowing us to confidently declare our righteousness in Christ. When the enemy tries to condemn us, the breastplate reminds us of our position as forgiven and redeemed children of God.
3. **Preserving peace and joy:** Righteous living fosters inner peace and joy, shielding our hearts from doubt and discouragement. As we walk in righteousness, we experience the peace that comes from a clear conscience and the joy of living in God's truth.
4. **Safeguarding against spiritual attacks:** Like physical armor, the breastplate protects our inner selves from spiritual attacks, doubts, and temptations. It acts as a barrier, preventing the enemy from inflicting deep wounds on our hearts and minds.



Be on your  
guard; stand  
firm in the  
faith; be  
courageous;  
be strong.

1 Cor. 16:13, NIV



## FEET SHOD WITH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

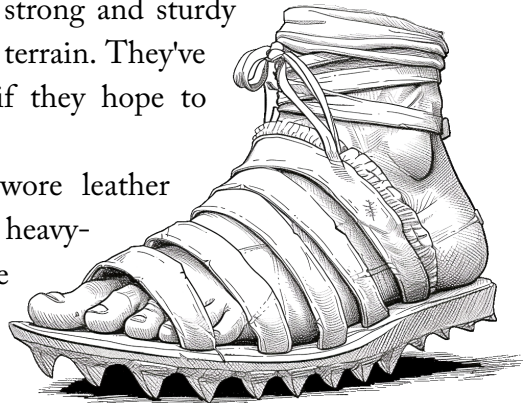
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Last year I completed the couch to 5k. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy. Not just because of my age, but mostly because I hadn't run for 10 years. I was so out of shape that the initial 30 seconds took everything I had just to push through. I didn't think I'd ever be able to do it, but somehow, I did.

A lot of persistence and a good pair of shoes go a long way when you're running a race. In fact, when I was looking for a good couch to 5k program, I couldn't help but notice that nearly every website I went to advised me to start with good shoes. I didn't listen at first, but that quickly changed when I realized the difference good footwear can make.

Footwear is designed with a purpose in mind. You don't wear snowshoes to the beach, and you wouldn't wear sandals in the snow. The same goes for a soldier preparing for battle. Combat boots are specifically designed to provide protection and stability. They're strong and sturdy and yet they're flexible enough for rugged terrain. They've got to be made of waterproof leather if they hope to withstand water and rocks.

In ancient times, Roman soldiers wore leather sandals known as 'caligae.' Caligae were heavy-duty sandals with hobnailed soles. The hobnails were hammered into the soles of the sandals to offer the soldiers extra



grip much like the modern-day cleats worn by football players. In *Wars 6.1.8* Josephus, the Jewish Historian, writes, "... as Julian had shoes all full of thick and sharp nails as had every one of the other soldiers (caligae—cleats on the soles of shoes), so when he ran on the (smooth marble) floors of the temple, he slipped and fell down upon his back with a very great noise, which was made by his armor..."

Similarly, just as soldiers equip themselves with the right pair of shoes for battle, believers in Christ must also prepare themselves with the right footwear—shoes infused with the message of peace and reconciliation, offering comfort, confidence, and a firm foundation to those who wear them. What better shoes could we ever hope to receive than those crafted by the Master Himself? Footwear that carries the beautiful message of the good news of God to sinners. It proclaims, 'Your sins are forgiven, your time of freedom has arrived, and humanity has been reconciled to God through His Son.' Isaiah 52:7 beautifully echoes this thought, saying,

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*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*  
—Isaiah 52:7 NIV

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When the Bible tells us to stand firm with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, it's telling us to stand firm in our faith. Stand firm in the face of affliction. Don't waver when you're tested and tried. Don't run when you're standing alone. Don't give up when the going is tough. Stand firm in the gospel of peace.

When you're feeling doubtful, give glory to God. When you're feeling afraid, give glory to God. When you're feeling discouraged, give glory to God. Don't let your circumstances dictate the strength of your faith.

In Acts Chapter 16, we encounter a powerful lesson in faith as we witness Paul and Silas stripped, severely beaten, and thrown into prison.

What's particularly intriguing is that, around midnight, Paul and Silas were found singing hymns and praying to God.

This scene leaves me in awe, realizing that these men possessed something extraordinary that set them apart from the other prisoners: faith in the gospel of peace. But what is the gospel of peace exactly? It's the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, proclaiming that through His sacrifice and resurrection, we can find peace with God, forgiveness of sins, and the hope of eternal life. This gospel reconciles humanity with God and offers a firm foundation of peace and assurance to those who embrace it.

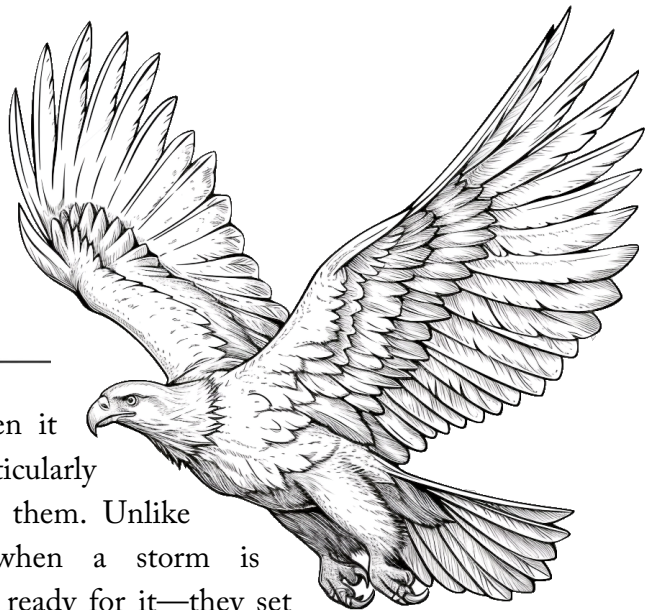
Faith in the gospel assures us that eternal glory far surpasses our momentary afflictions. It reminds us of our heavenly home beyond the scope of this world and directs our focus to the salvation offered by God. Faith encourages us to shift our gaze from today's problems and fix our eyes on the hope set before us."

Isaiah reminds us of the strength that comes to those who trust in the Lord as he writes,

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*But they that wait upon  
the Lord shall renew their  
strength; they shall mount up  
with wings as eagles; they shall  
run, and not be weary; and they  
shall walk, and not faint.*  
—Isaiah 40:31, KJV

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We can learn from eagles when it comes to our trials, or more particularly when it comes to rising above them. Unlike humans, eagles can sense when a storm is approaching. Not only are they ready for it—they set their wings in such a way that they are lifted by the wind. They soar above while the storm rages below them.

To have our feet shod with the gospel of peace is to stand firm in our faith. It's truly knowing what we know. You can't defend something if you're still wavering on it. James 1:6 says, "The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." (NIV)

Here's the thing: when we truly know what we know, we're ready to defend what we know. In the same way, when we're armed with scripture, we can draw from our faith. That's why the Bible tells us that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts through the lies that attack us and threaten to draw us away from the Lord.

We hear lies daily. Whether they're internal or external, Satan is doing his best to drag us down. His mission is to discourage us and draw us away from our faith. His tactics have a way of sucking the joy out of us until all that we're left with is a feeling of self-doubt and defeat.

In these moments, I am reminded of Jesus, who, when tempted, responded to Satan's lies with the unwavering truth of God's Word. His example inspires me to cling even tighter to Scripture. Why? Because in doing so, I am equipped to stand, just as He did. It underscores a profound truth: our strength in the fight is intrinsically linked to the depth of our faith. We are not expected to face this battle alone, for the Bible declares that we are overcomers, empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are not mere warriors but vessels of His divine power and strength.

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*"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

*-2 Corinthians 4:17-18, NIV*

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❓ Consider Colossians 1:20. How does the gospel of peace reconcile us to God?

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❓ In what ways does the message of peace and reconciliation through the gospel empower us to stand?

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And from this peace those sandals are prepared with which a man may tread on the lion and the adder, yes, and on the fierce burning coals of malice, slander and persecution! What better shoes can our souls require?  
- Charles H. Spurgeon -



## Strengthened by Adversity

Adversity has a unique way of shaping us; it can either knock us off our feet, leaving us feeling defeated, or it can forge strength and resilience within us. Below is a list of 9 remarkable individuals, each of whom, in the face of formidable challenges, stood firm in their faith.

- Joseph was thrown into a pit and sold into slavery, yet remained faithful to God.
- Moses faced Pharaoh's attempts to kill him more than once and led the Israelites to freedom through faith.
- Job lost everything, including his children, but his faith in God never wavered.
- Jacob wrestled with God and received a new name, 'Israel,' signifying his prevailing faith.
- Ruth lost her husband and left behind her home and her people, but her loyalty to Naomi and her faithfulness to God led to a remarkable journey.
- Daniel endured the lion's den for his unwavering faith in God's commands.
- Jeremiah, known as the 'weeping prophet,' faced rejection and persecution for his faithful prophetic ministry.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defied King Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship a golden image and were preserved in the fiery furnace through their faith.
- Mordecai faced persecution and danger due to his refusal to bow down to Haman, displaying unwavering faith in God's providence.



❓ What are some practical steps you can take to ensure you are always prepared to share the gospel of peace with those you encounter in your life?

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❓ How can the message of peace in the gospel serve as a source of hope and assurance during times of personal turmoil or adversity?

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### Fill in the Blanks:

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,  
\_\_\_\_\_. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not \_\_\_\_\_.  
(1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV)







WE WAIT IN HOPE  
FOR THE LORD;  
HE IS OUR HELP  
AND OUR SHIELD.

PSALM 33:20



## THE SHIELD OF FAITH

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In Ephesians 6:16, Paul urges us to take up the shield of faith. The original Greek word for 'shield' here is 'thyreos' (Strong's #2375), derived from 'thyra,' meaning a door. The thyreos, a large oblong shield with four corners, was named for its door-like appearance. Typically made of lightweight wood and covered in leather, it offered substantial protection. The Romans used a similar but distinct shield, the 'scutum,' known for its concave shape. Although these shields fell out of use around 300 AD, their historical significance endures, exemplified by preserved examples in collections like that of the Yale University Art Gallery.

These shields were distinct from the circular shields known as the aspis during that time. While the aspis offered ease of carry and maneuverability in combat, it lacked the comprehensive protection provided by the thyreos. Soldiers equipped with the thyreos could stand closely together, forming a solid wall of defense. Soldiers in the second, third, and fourth rows would raise their shields overhead, creating a protective 'roof'. This formation effectively shielded the army from incoming projectiles, such as flaming arrows, from both the front and above. To visualize this, searching 'thyreos formation' on Google Images will offer clear examples.

In verse 16 of Ephesians, that Paul writes 'above all that,' or 'in addition to all that,' take up the shield of faith. This isn't just another layer; it's a

crucial defense, enabling us to stand firm, knowing that our trust in God's promises provides a barrier far stronger than any physical armor ever could.

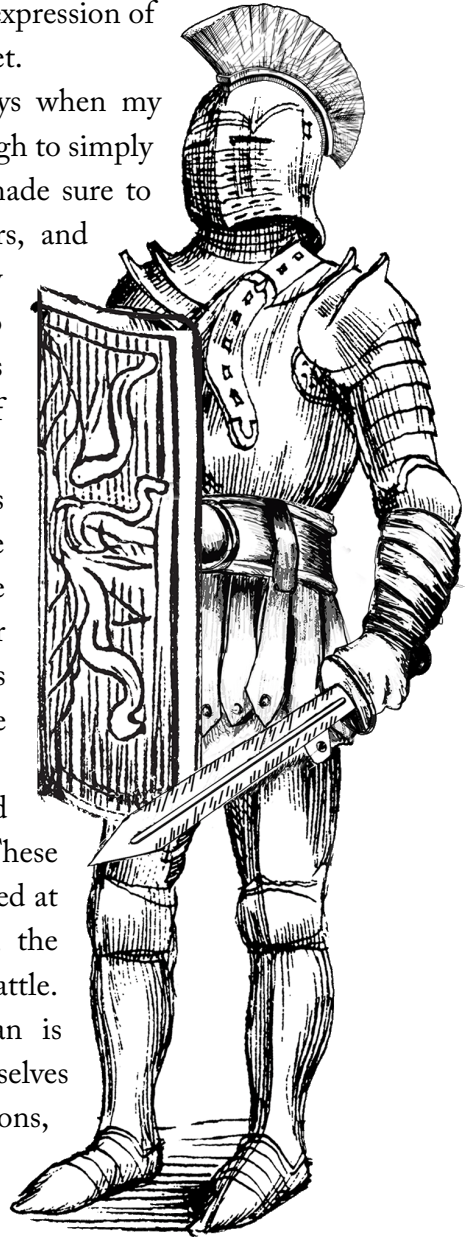
This extra layer of protection reminds me of a story I heard about twenty years ago when my brother-in-law won \$25,000 in a scratch and win lottery. Wanting desperately to protect the ticket until morning, he kept it under his pillow as he slept, adding an extra layer of security to safeguard it. This act was more than precaution; it was a tangible expression of the importance and value he placed on this ticket.

In a similar vein, I think back to the days when my children were still using car seats. It wasn't enough to simply buckle them into their seats and drive off; I made sure to tuck their little heads into their head huggers, and securely anchor the unit with a seat belt and any required bolts. When possible, I would also position the little one in the middle seat. It was my way of giving them an added layer of protection.

Now, if our relationship with Jesus Christ is our most valuable asset, shouldn't we also go the extra mile to protect it? When Paul says, 'above all that,' he's urging us to put on that extra layer of protection. He's stressing how important it is to shield ourselves from the flaming arrows of the enemy.

In ancient warfare, the Romans fastened pitch-soaked rags to their arrows with wire. These flammable rags were then lit on fire and launched at enemy lines. In order to quench those darts, the shields were saturated in water before going to battle.

So, what are these fiery darts that Satan is launching? What exactly are we shielding ourselves from? The darts symbolize the various temptations, trials, and harmful influences that Satan uses to attack our faith. These can manifest as doubts,



fears, false teachings, or anything that seeks to undermine our trust in God and His promises.

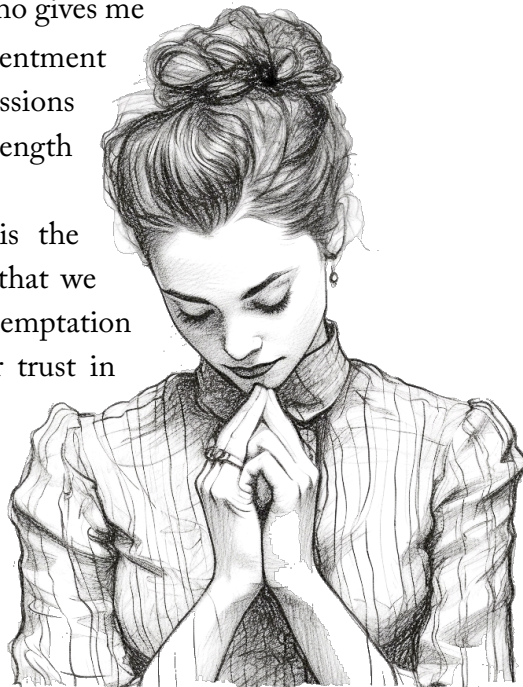
The shield of faith on the other hand, represents our trust in God and His Word, which helps us to repel these attacks. Shielding ourselves is the active practice of faith, which includes prayer, understanding and applying Scripture to our lives, and leaning on the strength and support of the Christian community. These practices help us to discern truth from deception and to remain steadfast in our walk with Christ.

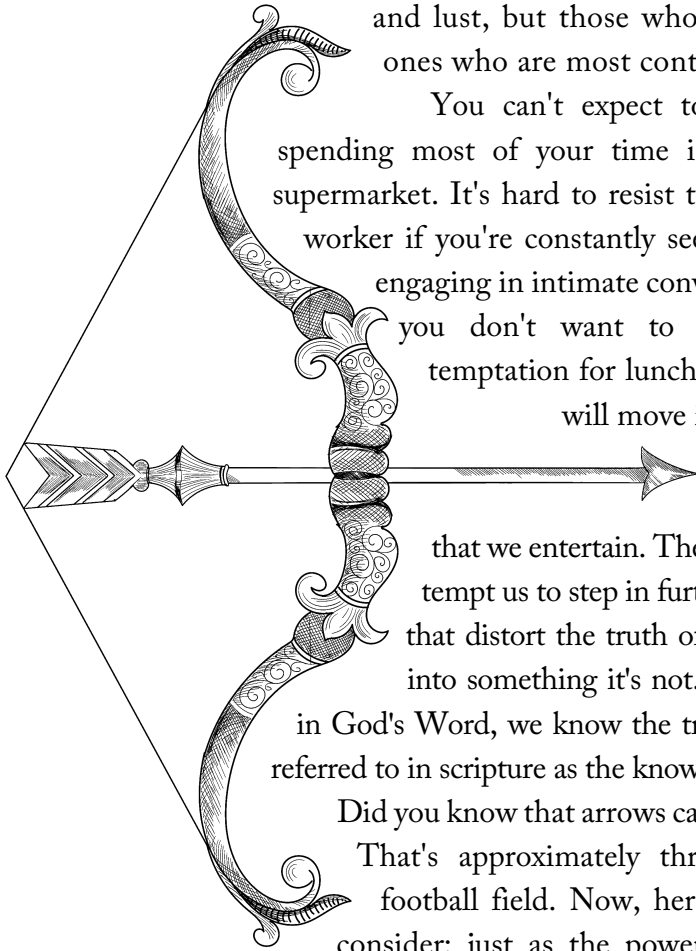
By nurturing our relationship with Jesus and arming ourselves with the knowledge of His Word, we become better equipped to recognize and resist these spiritual threats. It is an ongoing process of growth, where our faith is both our defense and our means of advancing through the challenges we face in life.

Paul teaches us in Philippians 4:11-13, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Paul is teaching us that contentment is not found in the abundance of possessions or the experiences we have, but in the strength and provision of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan knows that dissatisfaction is the Achilles' heel of mankind. He knows that we hunger for more, and so we're met with temptation day after day. But when we place our trust in Him, our satisfaction in Christ becomes our ultimate defense against the lures of dissatisfaction.

We're all born with a God-shaped hole inside of us that's waiting to be filled. Some people are filling that space with money and power





and lust, but those who fill it with Christ are the ones who are most content in this world.

You can't expect to stay on a diet if you're spending most of your time in the bakery section of a supermarket. It's hard to resist the charms of a married co-worker if you're constantly seeking out their company or engaging in intimate conversations. In other words, if you don't want to be tempted, don't invite temptation for lunch. Don't open the door, or it will move in and take over your home.

At times, the fiery darts are the arguments that we entertain. The ones that justify our sin, and tempt us to step in further yet. These are the arrows that distort the truth of God's word, and reshape it into something it's not. But if we're truly immersed in God's Word, we know the truth from a lie. This is often referred to in scripture as the knowledge of the truth.

Did you know that arrows can travel well over 1,000 feet? That's approximately three times the length of a football field. Now, here's an intriguing parallel to consider: just as the power of arrows diminishes the farther they travel, the further we distance ourselves from temptation, the less power Satan has over us.

Here's a practical example of that. During our first few years of marriage, my husband and I were clueless when it came to our credit. We were easily drawn in by the 'Don't Pay a Cent Event' slogans, and like a lot of young couples we misused our credit card any chance that we had. Thankfully our credit limit wasn't high enough to get us into any serious trouble, but it was high enough to give us a scare as we quickly reached our credit limit.

One Saturday afternoon, we came to the mutual conclusion to freeze our credit. Literally. Filling a small plastic bowl full of water, we froze the credit card into a solid block of ice. Our reasoning behind this was that if we really needed to access the credit card it would be there, but we'd have

to wait for the ice to melt. Our reason for doing that is that it wouldn't be nearly as accessible as it was before. This separation from temptation was exactly what we needed to get back on track, in fact, the card expired long before we ever melted the ice.

Fiery darts can also come in the form of discouraging lies. Satan will tell you that you're ugly, unqualified, unlovable, that you're a bad mom, that God doesn't care, that you have no friends, that you're not smart, and the list goes on. But, when these fiery arrows of doubt and despair come our way, we can raise the shield of faith, knowing that God's Word stands as an impenetrable defense. His truth declares that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, chosen and beloved, equipped for every good work, and surrounded by His unfailing love.

### ≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

*Flaming arrows could only be used at relatively close distances. Shooting an arrow over a long distance would usually extinguish the flame.*

There's joy to be found when we trust in the wisdom of God. There's incomparable peace to be found in His Word. Words that remind us, this world is not our home. A Savior who tells us that He's coming back. Love that sent our Lord to the cross so that we might be saved. Joy, peace, love, and hope—these are the faith-building blocks that we glean from God's Word. These are the things that fill the God-shaped hole that's within us.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And so, we must be immersed in His Word as we fight the good fight. Like a soldier who immerses his shield in the river before going to battle, we too must be immersed by the cleansing power of His Word.

❓ What are some examples of fiery darts that we need protection from?

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❓ In the context of Ephesians 6:10-18, why do you think Paul specifically chose a shield to represent faith? What does this choice tell us about the role of faith in the Christian life?

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❓ What are some practical ways to 'take up' and 'use' the shield of faith in daily life? How can you strengthen your faith to better protect against spiritual attacks?

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❓ In what ways does faith 'extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one'? Can you think of a personal example where your faith has protected you in this way?

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❓ Apart from Ephesians, where else in the New Testament is faith described as a form of protection or defense?

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Only a strong faith—a faith  
based on God's Word—will protect us  
from temptation and doubt.

- Billy Graham -



Can you name one or two biblical figures that exemplified the use of the 'shield of faith'? How did their faith protect them or guide them through challenges?

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### Fill in the Blanks:

No \_\_\_\_\_ that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their \_\_\_\_\_ is of me, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 54:17, KJV)

Be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deut. 31:6, NIV)

But you, Lord, are \_\_\_\_\_ around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. (Psalm 3:3, NIV)

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 What are some of the lies that Satan has been firing at you? Under each one, mark down a fire-quenching truth.

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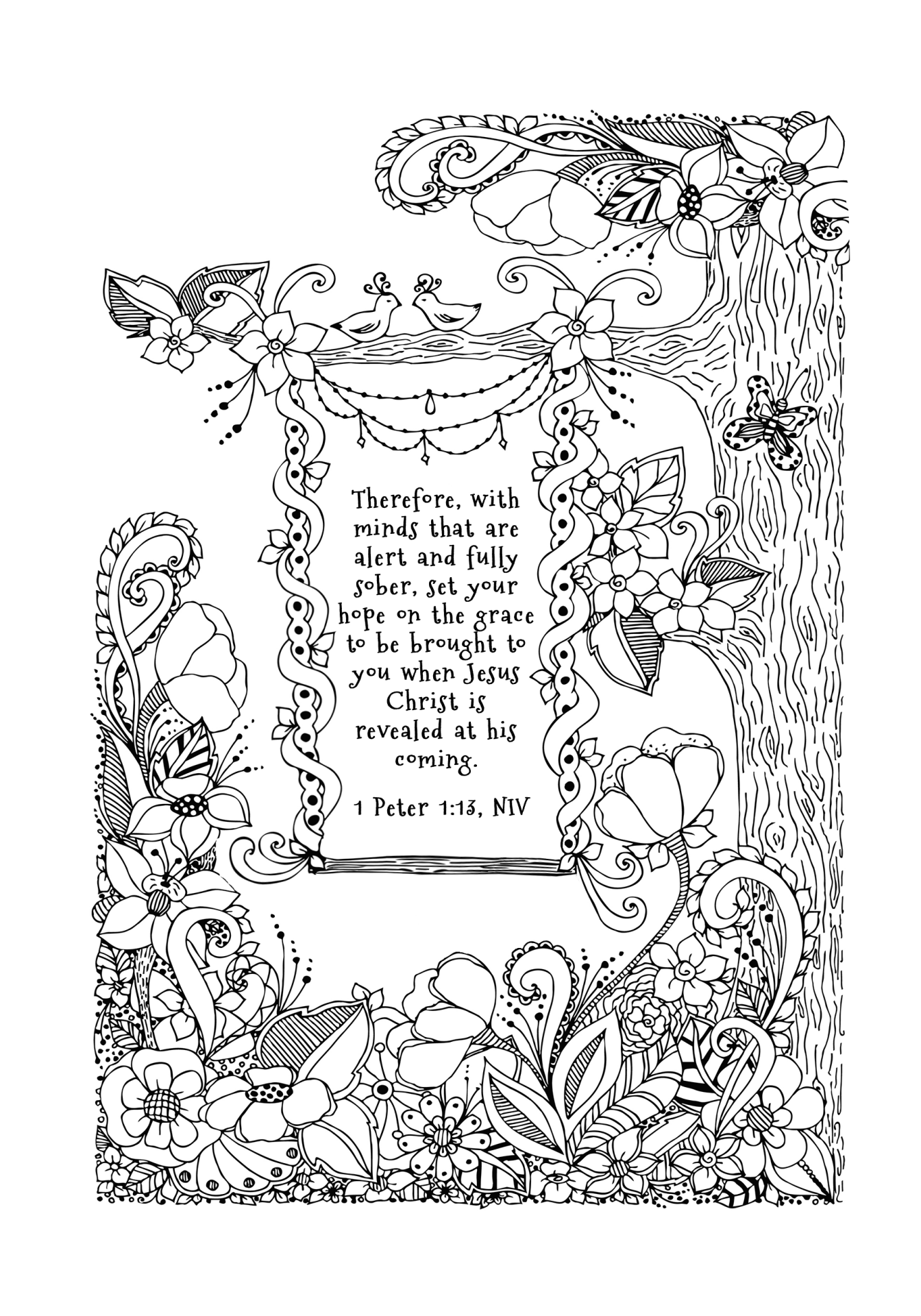
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Therefore, with  
minds that are  
alert and fully  
sober, set your  
hope on the grace  
to be brought to  
you when Jesus  
Christ is  
revealed at his  
coming.

1 Peter 1:13, NIV



## THE HELMET OF SALVATION

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In Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church, he equates the helmet of salvation with the hope of salvation.

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*But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

*—1 Thessalonians 5:8, NIV*

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I can't imagine living in this world without hope. How could we possibly get through the pain of suffering and the agony of loss without the hope of something beyond the scope of this world?

Jesus says, 'I've gone to prepare a place for you...' These are the words I hold onto, the promise that lifts me above the transience of this world. This world isn't my home; I'm merely passing through, with my eyes fixed on the eternal home Jesus is preparing for us. He assures us, 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' (John 14:3, NIV)

This promise—the hope of salvation—was profoundly deepened when Jesus laid down His life and rose again. In doing so, He blazed a trail,



becoming the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Our God doesn't just offer hope; He embodies it as the living hope for all who believe.

It is this living hope that the 'Helmet of Salvation' seeks to protect within us. This piece of spiritual armor shields our minds against doubt, despair, and deception. It affirms the security we have in our salvation and safeguards our thoughts, enabling us to remain hopeful, confident, and clear-sighted amidst spiritual warfare.

In a broader sense, the helmet symbolizes the mind fortified by the certainty of salvation—a constant

reminder to focus on the ultimate triumph in

Christ and the future He has assured us. Such knowledge helps us keep a godly perspective, repelling the disheartening and misleading thoughts that often assail us in our spiritual journey. It is this forward-looking mindset, this anticipation of what is yet to come, that draws a beautiful parallel with the ancient observance God instituted among His people.

In Leviticus 23:42-43, we find the annual Feast of Tabernacles, a time when the Israelites lived in temporary shelters for seven days. These shelters weren't just a reminder of their ancestors' 40-year journey in the desert; they symbolized something more. They were a vivid picture of life in this world—temporary, transient, a journey towards a promised, eternal home. This mirrors the message of the helmet of salvation: our current struggles and earthly dwellings are temporary, but our hope in Christ is eternal.

Now, consider the scene in Matthew 17, where Jesus, in a radiant, transfigured state, is seen with Moses and Elijah on a mountain. This event occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles, connecting it to the theme of temporary dwellings and eternal hope. Peter's instinct to build shelters

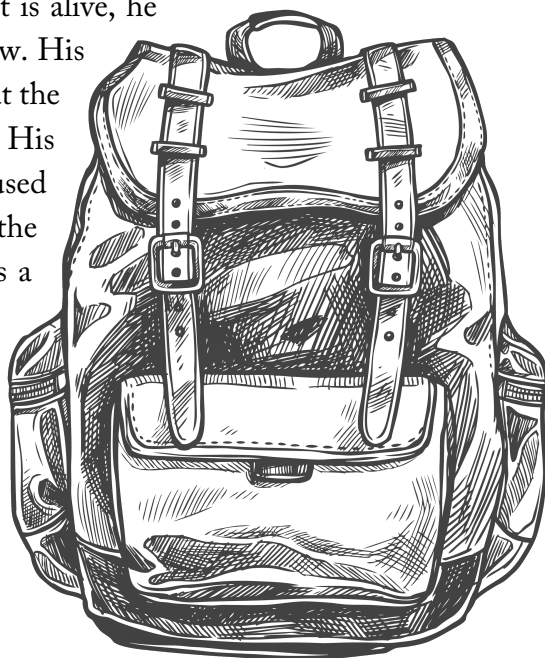
(verse 4) echoes the Feast's tradition, but here the shelters point to something greater: the hope of salvation.

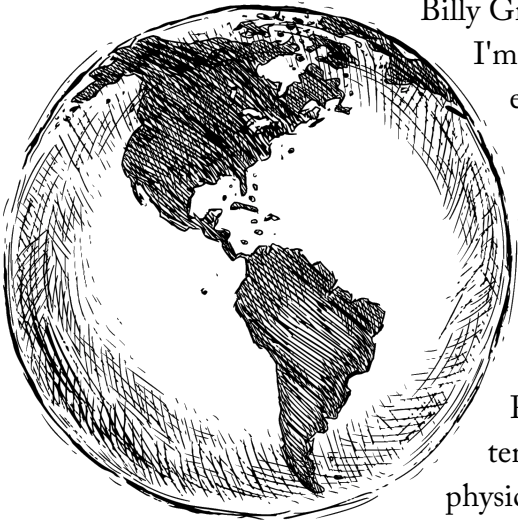
Jesus, glowing with divine glory, offers a glimpse into the future resurrection and the power of our salvation. His presence with Moses and Elijah is significant. Moses represents those who have passed away in faith, awaiting the resurrection, while Elijah, who was taken to heaven without experiencing death, represents those who will be caught up in the rapture. Together, they embody the fullness of God's salvation plan.

In this setting, the voice of God the Father is heard, affirming Jesus as His beloved Son. This divine endorsement provides the ultimate assurance of our salvation, much like the helmet of salvation offers protection and assurance to us as believers.

The placement of this account in Scripture is crucial. It follows Jesus' prediction of His death and resurrection, and His return in glory. It's a beautiful blending of the temporary and the eternal, and a powerful illustration of the hope and assurance that our helmet of salvation provides.

I remember the year my dad was diagnosed with cancer. What stands out the most is not the shadow of illness, but the light of joy and peace that radiated from him. He would walk through the house, his heart singing with the conviction that because Christ is alive, he could face the uncertainties of tomorrow. His fears were calmed by the knowledge that the future rests in the hands of the Lord. His very life, even amidst the trials, was infused with purpose and worth because of the living presence of Jesus Christ. There's a profound reason that he faced the uncertainties of life with joy, why fear didn't have a grip on him, and why his life was infused with deep value and meaning. That reason is the hope of salvation that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.





Billy Graham once said, 'My home is in Heaven.

I'm just traveling through this world.' This eloquently echoes the sentiments expressed in 2 Peter Chapter 1, where Peter affirms that our faith is grounded not in cleverly invented stories, but in the reality of witnessed truth. On the holy mountain, he witnessed Jesus' majesty and heard the Father's voice confirming His Son.

Peter describes his body as a 'temporary tent', reflecting the biblical view that our physical existence is transient, a brief sojourn

before reaching our eternal dwelling. It is this steadfast hope of salvation through Christ that infuses meaning and direction into our lives, guiding us as we navigate the journey towards our everlasting home with God.

This transformative outlook is essential, especially when considering the nature of human thought. In 2005, an article concerning human thought was published, citing research that suggests a startling pattern: 80% of our thoughts are negative, and 95% are repetitive, mirroring the thoughts we had the day before.

This negative pattern of thinking tells me that we need to be pro-active when it comes to protecting our minds. The enemy often targets our thoughts, planting seeds of discouragement, depression, and doubt. Isn't that the tactic he's used from the beginning of time? Appealing to Eve's hunger for knowledge and wisdom, the serpent succeeded in drawing her in.

Anyone familiar with the challenge of sacrifice knows the struggle of foregoing immediate gratification for the sake of a greater reward. In spiritual terms, this is akin to the times we face the temptation to indulge in short-lived pleasures at the expense of our faith. When we succumb to such desires, we're effectively choosing to hold tightly to a fading world, rather than embracing the enduring hope laid out before us.

Scripture abounds with examples of this very struggle between the temporal and the eternal. Consider Moses, who was raised in the splendor

of Pharaoh's palace. In Hebrews 11, we're told that by faith, he renounced his royal privileges and chose rather to suffer with the people of God. He resisted the transient enticements of sin and the wealth of Egypt, recognizing them as fleeting next to the lasting glory of his future reward. Moses' eyes were fixed not on the treasures that he could touch and see, but on the unseen, eternal treasures promised by God. His decision epitomizes the victory of faith—a faith that looks beyond the immediate to the immortal, beyond the perishable pleasures to the permanent joy found in Christ. In doing so, Moses becomes a beacon for all who are called to embrace the enduring hope of salvation, even when faced with the allure of immediate gratification.

It's people like Moses who remind us that our trials have a purpose. Suffering can forge resilience within us. Often, the strongest among us have weathered great storms, and it's through navigating these trials that steadfastness is cultivated. This steadfastness, in turn, acts as a crucible for our character. True servitude to God is marked by unwavering faithfulness, and as we walk in that faithfulness, we find that our hope is an anchor, held fast by the 'helmet of salvation'—the assurance that guards our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus.



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*And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. –Romans 5:2b–4, NIV*

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## 8 Virtues of Thought from Philippians


In his letter to the Philippians, Paul gives us an eightfold checklist for our thoughts in Philippians 4:8. Each item serves as a stepping stone toward a more profound spiritual mindfulness:

1. **What is True:** Reflect on the unwavering truths of God's word and His faithful promises. In a world brimming with falsehoods and shifting realities, anchoring our thoughts in divine truth provides stability and hope.
2. **What is Noble:** Consider acts of courage and righteousness that elevate human spirit and character. Nobility in thought inspires nobility in action, urging us to rise above pettiness and live with dignity.
3. **What is Right:** Meditate on the justice and righteousness of God. In doing so, we align our moral compass with His, aspiring to what is just in His eyes.
4. **What is Pure:** Focus on the pure love and holiness of Christ. Purity in thought cultivates purity in heart, steering us away from the impurities of sin.

5. **What is Lovely:** Delight in the beauty of God's creation and the loveliness of life's blessings. Lovely thoughts encourage us to appreciate and uphold the beauty in the world and in each other.
6. **What is Admirable:** Think about the qualities in others that are worthy of respect and emulation. Admiration leads to inspiration, motivating us to adopt these virtues.
7. **What is Excellent:** Meditate on the excellences of God's character and His works. Excellence in our thoughts challenges us to excel in our faith and deeds.
8. **What is Praiseworthy:** Give attention to the aspects of life and faith that merit praise. Thoughts filled with praise keep our spirits uplifted and focused on God's goodness.

Paul's words are not merely a call to positive thinking but a call to a God-centered perspective that transforms our internal landscape and, as a result, our external actions. By meditating on these things, we align our minds with Christ, leading to a life that truly honors God.

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 In your own words, explain what the hope of salvation is and why you think Paul used the metaphor of a helmet to describe it:

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- Find two Bible verses in the Old Testament that prefigure the 'helmet of salvation' that Paul speaks of in the New Testament. List them here:

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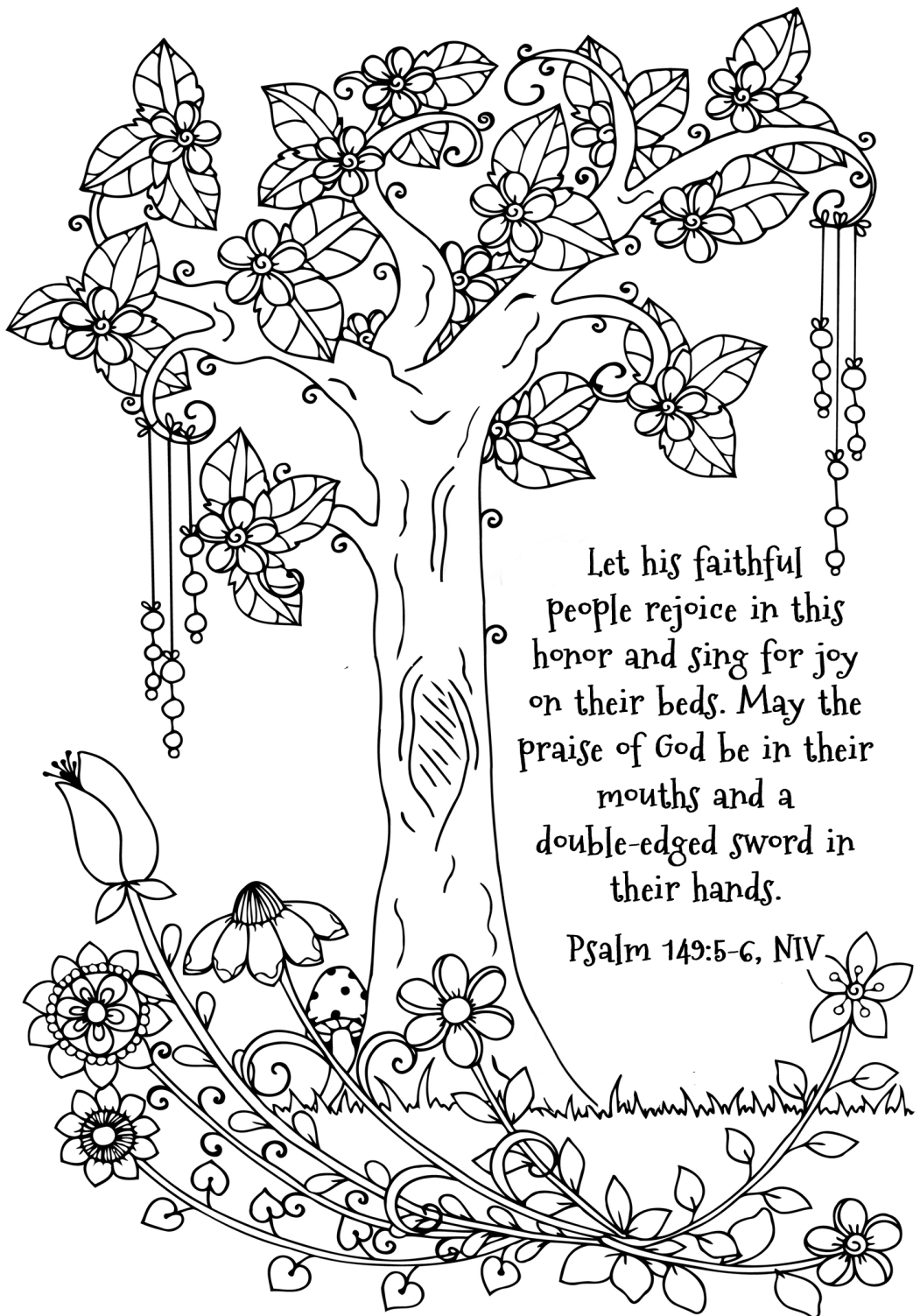
### Fill in the Blanks:

For in this hope we \_\_\_\_\_. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not \_\_\_\_\_, we wait for it \_\_\_\_\_. (Romans 8:24-25, NIV)

If only for this life we have \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ, we are of all people most to be \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor. 15:19, NIV)

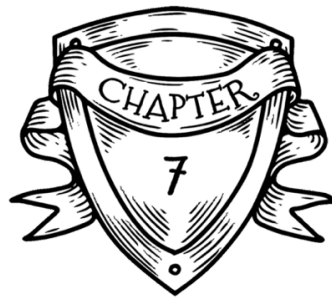
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Let his faithful  
people rejoice in this  
honor and sing for joy  
on their beds. May the  
praise of God be in their  
mouths and a  
double-edged sword in  
their hands.

Psalm 149:5-6, NIV



## THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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When we consider the 'Sword of the Spirit' in Ephesians Chapter 6, we discover that it's not the typical long sword we might imagine. Paul's reference is to a machaira—a smaller, double-edged sword that was easy to carry and always at the ready. This is the type of sword that Peter wielded on the night of Jesus' arrest, a practical tool for close combat.

Hebrews 4:12 provides a profound spiritual parallel: 'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword [machaira], it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' This passage reveals that the Word of God is not a dormant relic but a living, active force that transcends even the deepest parts of our being.

The metaphorical sword Paul describes is the Word we carry in our hearts, the truth that cuts to the core, surpassing the physical capacity of any blade. Thayer's Lexicon describes it as 'The sword with which the Spirit subdues the impulses to sin and proves its own power and efficacy.'

By telling us to take up the sword of the Spirit, Paul is urging us to equip ourselves with God's Word for battle, to stand firm against the master of deception—Satan. The devil's strategy often involves distortion—mixing lies with half-truths, leveraging shame, humiliation, and guilt to manipulate us. Without being armed with the truth of God's Word, we are vulnerable to these tactics. But when we wield the Sword of the Spirit, we possess a divine power that secures victory over sin and deception.

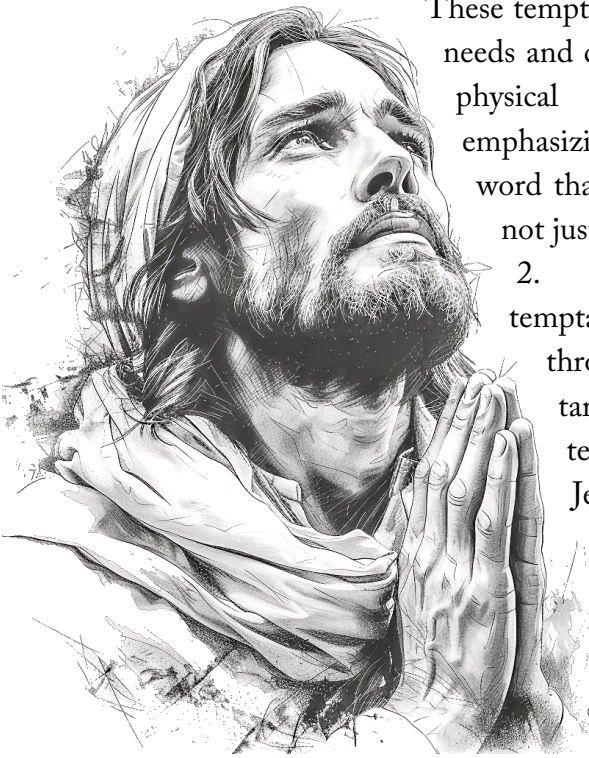
One of the most compelling biblical narratives that illustrate the use of the Sword of the Spirit is found in Matthew Chapter 4. Here, Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and nights, Jesus encounters three distinct temptations, each challenging a different aspect of His identity and mission.

1. **Physical Temptation:** The first temptation concerns turning stones into bread, which represents the physical or fleshly temptations.

These temptations are related to our basic human needs and desires, such as hunger, comfort, and physical pleasure. Jesus responds by emphasizing that true life comes from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, not just from meeting physical needs.

2. **Spiritual Temptation:** The second temptation, where Satan urges Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple, targets spiritual pride and the temptation to test God. It challenges Jesus to misuse His divine protection and to doubt the Father's care, which can be likened to spiritual manipulation or presumption. Jesus counters this by quoting Scripture that one should not put the Lord God to the test.

3. **Psychological/Societal Temptation:** The third temptation offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worshiping Satan. This represents a psychological temptation, appealing to the human desire for power, glory, and societal status. It is also a moral temptation, as it requires compromising one's values and worship for personal gain. Jesus rebukes this by affirming that only God is to be served and worshiped.



These categories — physical, spiritual, and psychological/societal — encompass the broad areas in which humans are often tested. They highlight the multifaceted nature of temptation and the need for a holistic approach to spiritual defense, as modeled by Jesus using the Word of God as His defense, which is the essence of the Sword of the Spirit.

## ≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

The sword is “of the Spirit” because it is through the Holy Spirit that the truth is revealed to us in God’s word. This is what Peter referred to as “epignosis”, or the “deep knowledge” of God in 2 Peter 1:2.

Satan attacks us by distracting our minds with the things of this world. His plan is to turn our minds away from the Lord and back onto ourselves. There isn't anything wrong with having material possessions and interests, nor is it bad to enjoy the pleasures that life has to offer. They do become sin however when we elevate the things of this world above the wisdom of God. And that's where Satan is crafty.

He knows the scriptures and will use them to tempt us. In fact, looking back at Matthew Chapter 4, we see that Satan used scripture as a tactic to tempt Jesus. Quoting Psalm 91:11 he says, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Charles Spurgeon writes, "Satan borrowed our Lord's weapon, and said, 'It is written,' but did not use the sword lawfully. It was not in the nature of the false fiend to quote correctly. He left out the necessary words, 'in all thy ways': thus, he made the promise say what in truth it never suggested."

Jesus was able to wield the sword because he knew the Word of God, and rightly divided the truth in a way only those who know the Word of God can. His ability to counter Satan's misuse of Scripture demonstrates the profound need for believers to not only read the Word but to deeply

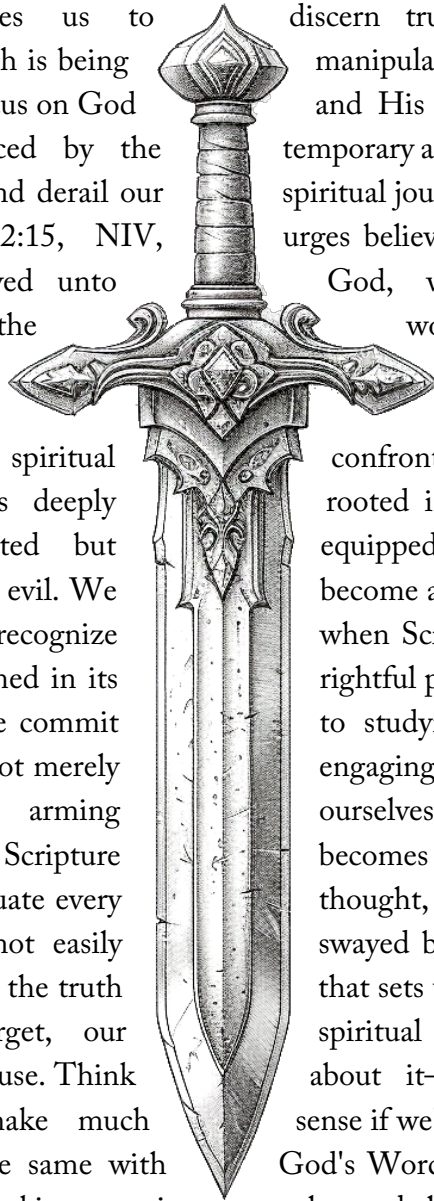
comprehend its full counsel. As Ephesians 6:17 suggests, the 'Sword of the Spirit' is our offensive weapon in spiritual battles, and to wield it effectively requires an intimate knowledge of Scripture and the wisdom of God. This knowledge enables us to discern truth from falsehood, even when the truth is being manipulated. It empowers us to maintain our focus on God and His righteousness, rather than being seduced by the temporary allure of worldly things that can distract and derail our spiritual journey.

2 Timothy 2:15, NIV, urges believers to study to show themselves approved unto God, workers unashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. This call to diligent study is about more than intellectual exercise; it's about preparing for spiritual confrontation.

When the Word of God is deeply rooted in our hearts, we are not only protected but equipped to actively discern and defend against evil. We become alert to the adversary's schemes, able to recognize when Scripture is twisted and to study and memorizing engaging in an academic pursuit; we are arming ourselves for battle. True knowledge of Scripture becomes the lens through which we can evaluate every thought, word, and doctrine, ensuring we are not easily swayed by the enemy's tactics but are steadfast in the truth that sets us free.

Thus, when we commit Scripture, we are not merely pursuing it; we are arming ourselves for battle. True knowledge of Scripture becomes the lens through which we can evaluate every thought, word, and doctrine, ensuring we are not easily swayed by the enemy's tactics but are steadfast in the truth that sets us free.

Let's not forget, our spiritual armor isn't just for show. It's for daily use. Think about it—carrying around a sword doesn't make much sense if we're not going to use it, right? And it's the same with God's Word. If we're not diving into Scripture, soaking up its truths and letting it renew our minds, we'll find ourselves at a loss when life's battles call for it. It's in those quiet moments with the Bible open on our laps that we find the strength to stand against the half-truths that often come dressed up in good intentions.



We've all seen it, haven't we? The world is full of mixed messages, some even coming from places that should be safe havens for our souls. It's those subtle twists on the truth, those modern-day 'wolves in sheep's clothing' that could lead us down the wrong path.

But here's the beautiful thing—when we're woven tightly into the fabric of God's Word, we gain the discernment to recognize what's genuine from what's not. That wisdom becomes our trusted companion, helping us navigate through confusing times. It's like having a best friend who always knows just what to say and when to say it. So, let's make a promise to keep our hearts open to Scripture, and our minds alert to its wisdom. That way, we can confidently walk our paths, knowing we have everything we need to discern right from wrong and truth from almost-truth.

Finally, remember to grip that sword with conviction. A sword cannot be effective if you're holding it tentatively. In Psalm 119, David reflects on the wisdom he gained from God's commandments, wisdom that equipped him with insights surpassing those of his enemies. His devotion to God's Word was not out of obligation, but out of love. It was this love that anchored the Word in his heart, allowing him to not just hear it, but to meditate on it, understand it, and live it out. He held God's Word—his sword—firmly in his grasp, ready for whatever he faced.

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*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. —Psalm 119:97-98, NIV*

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Throughout Scripture, we find story after story reminding us just how precious and powerful the Word of God is. Consider Joshua at Jericho, for example. Faced with towering walls, Joshua and the Israelites carried out an extraordinary plan laid out by God—not with traditional weapons, but with trumpets and a collective shout of faith. And those impenetrable walls? They crumbled to the ground. It's a powerful testament to what happens when God's people take His Word seriously and act on it.

Then we see Gideon, whose army was reduced to a mere 300 men. They were armed with the most unconventional of weapons: jars, torches, and trumpets. Yet, their victory was monumental, a clear sign that strength is found not in numbers, but in the might of God's Word and the resolve to follow His lead.

And we can't overlook Elisha, whose calm assurance in God's protection provided a stark contrast to his servant's fear. With a simple prayer, Elisha revealed the divine forces surrounding them—forces far greater than the enemy that threatened. It's a vivid illustration that our battles, though they may appear daunting, are under God's sovereign command.

These biblical events echo the essence of the 'Sword of the Spirit.' They teach us that our spiritual battles are won through reliance on divine power, not by human efforts. As we immerse ourselves in God's Word, we find the strength to face any challenge, assured that our ultimate victory lies in His hands. So let's hold onto the Word of God with confidence, knowing that it is our source of strength and victory, ready to be wielded at a moment's notice.

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❓ How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the Word of God, and in what ways does this description align with the concept of the Sword of the Spirit as found in Ephesians 6:17?

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❓ Peter initially tried to defend Jesus using a physical sword (John 18:10-11). Contrast this with how Peter later uses the Word of God as a powerful tool in his ministry after Pentecost. What does this transformation tell us about the shift in Peter's understanding of the Word?

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❓ Can you find and reflect on an instance in the Gospels (other than His temptation in the wilderness) where Jesus uses Scripture to respond to a challenge or temptation?

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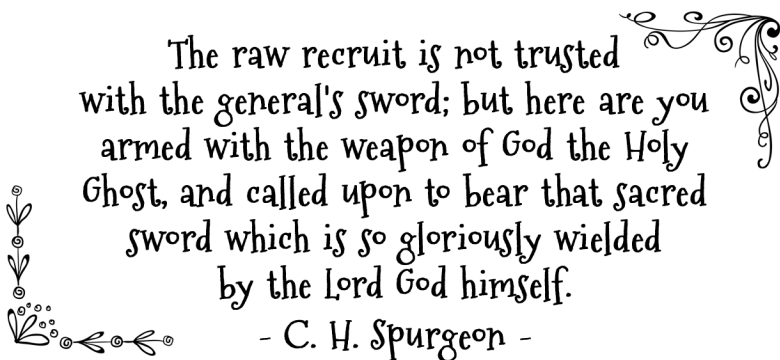
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The raw recruit is not trusted  
with the general's sword; but here are you  
armed with the weapon of God the Holy  
Ghost, and called upon to bear that sacred  
sword which is so gloriously wielded  
by the Lord God himself.  
- C. H. Spurgeon -



❓ Can you think of a situation in your life where a specific Scripture has been your 'sword' to fight off temptation, lies, or discouragement? How did it help you?

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❓ What are some practical ways you can 'sharpen' your Sword of the Spirit? Consider habits or disciplines that might help you become more adept in using Scripture.

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# Answer Key

Please note that while these answers are provided to guide you, individual interpretations and applications may vary. The beauty of Scripture is that it speaks to each of us uniquely, meeting us where we are in our spiritual journey.

## Chapter 1

**What does the name of the Lord represent?**

The name of the Lord is a representation of His character, His faithfulness, His sovereignty, and His unwavering love for His people.

**Which two realms are mentioned in this chapter?**

There's the physical realm and a spiritual realm.

**What was Paul's concern in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, and how can we address that same concern today?**

That the Corinthians might be led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ, much as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning. He was worried about them accepting different teachings about Jesus and a different spirit or gospel than the one he preached. To address this concern today, we can hold fast to the core teachings of the Gospel, be discerning of false teachings, and deepen our understanding of Scripture to recognize and reject teachings that deviate from the apostolic message.

**2 Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as 'the god of this age' or 'the god of this world.' What do you think that means?**

When Paul refers to Satan as 'the god of this age' or 'the god of this world,' he is implying that Satan has a certain level of authority or influence over worldly systems and the sinful patterns of society. This does not mean Satan has ultimate power—God is sovereign over all—but that there is a temporary allowance for Satan to operate within the world's corrupt systems, blinding the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel.

### **What does James 4:7 teach us about handling temptation?**

James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This teaches us that by aligning ourselves with God's will and actively opposing Satan's temptations, we can overcome the adversary.

**Peter warns us about the dangers that Satan poses, but then reveals to us how we are to overcome him. What is Peter's advice to us? (See 1 Peter 5:9)**

Peter's advice is to resist him and stand firm in the faith.

**Throughout Scripture, we encounter different titles and names attributed to Satan. Each name or title sheds light on the different ways Satan interacts with the world and opposes God's purposes. Let's look up these verses and list the names beside them.**

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|---------------|---|
| Job 1:6       | - "Satan" (The Accuser, the adversary)                                    |
| Isaiah 14:12  | - "Morning Star" (Lucifer, son of the dawn)                               |
| Matthew 4:1   | - "The tempter"   |
| Matthew 4:3   | - "The devil"   |
| Matthew 9:34  | - "Prince of demons"  |
| Matthew 12:24 | - "Beelzebul" (A name derived from Baal-Zebub, an ancient Philistine god) |
| Matthew 13:39 | - "The enemy"   |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| John 14:30         | - "The prince of this world"   |
| 2 Corinthians 4:4  | - "The god of this age"  |
| 2 Corinthians 6:15 | - "Belial" (Or "Beliar," meaning worthlessness or wickedness)          |
| Ephesians 2:2      | - "The ruler of the kingdom of the air"                                |
| Revelation 9:11    | - "Abaddon" (Hebrew for destruction), "Apollyon" (Greek for destroyer) |
| Revelation 12:9    | - "The great dragon," "ancient serpent"                                |
| Revelation 12:10   | - "The accuser of our brothers and sisters"                            |

## Chapter 2

**In Ephesians 6:14, Paul starts the description of the Armor of God with the Belt of Truth. Why do you think truth is represented as a belt in this metaphor, and what does this signify about the role of truth in the life of a believer?**

The belt in a Roman soldier's armor held other pieces together and provided a place to secure the sword. Representing truth as a belt signifies its foundational role in the believer's life: it holds everything together and provides readiness. Truth is central to a Christian's integrity and spiritual preparedness, ensuring that all other virtues and pieces of the Armor of God are effectively in place.

**What are some examples, either from Scripture or personal experience, of the consequences when truth is disregarded or compromised?**

Here is one example, but of course your answer may differ from mine:

In Scripture, the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Chapter 5 is an example of the consequences of lying to the Holy Spirit. Their disregard for truth resulted in their sudden deaths.

From a personal perspective, this question will be different for everyone.

**Considering that the Belt of Truth is part of the Armor of God meant for spiritual warfare, in what ways does truth equip us to face spiritual challenges and deceptions?**

Truth equips us for spiritual warfare by giving us clarity and discernment. It enables us to recognize, and reject lies, false teachings, and deceptive practices. Truth fortifies the believer against moral and ethical compromises and provides a clear standard against which all thoughts and actions can be measured. By knowing and living in truth, believers can stand firm against the enemy's schemes and maintain spiritual integrity.

**How does the Belt of Truth interact with and support the other pieces of the Armor of God, such as the Breastplate of Righteousness or the Shield of Faith?**

The Belt of Truth is foundational to the Armor of God, securing and positioning the Breastplate of Righteousness which protects the heart and vital organs — our core values and moral compass. Truth ensures that our righteousness is not self-derived but aligned with God's standards.

Similarly, the Shield of Faith, which defends against doubt and deception, is effective only when it is grounded in the truth of the gospel. Truth anchors our faith and informs our understanding of righteousness, integrating the armor into a cohesive unit.

**How does living in truth strengthen our testimony to others about the transformative power of the gospel?**

Living in truth validates our testimony to others. When we embody the principles of the gospel in our daily lives, our words and actions are congruent, offering a compelling witness to the reality of God's transforming work. Truthfulness in our behavior reflects the integrity of the

message we share, showing that the gospel is not only believed but also actively shapes how we live.

**Where did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus to be tempted? And in what 3 ways was Jesus tempted?**

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Jesus was tempted in three main ways: to turn stones into bread, challenging His trust in God's provision; to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, testing God's protection; and to worship Satan in exchange for the kingdoms of the world, compromising His allegiance to God for worldly power.

**What practical steps can we take to ensure that our 'belt' is fastened securely, so that we are not easily swayed by every new teaching or trend?**

1. Regular Bible Study: Commit to consistent study of Scripture to understand the foundational truths of the Christian faith deeply.
2. Prayer for Discernment: Regularly ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance to discern truth from error as we encounter various teachings and ideas.
3. Community Accountability: Engage in fellowship with other believers who are committed to sound doctrine and can provide support and accountability.
4. Education on Doctrine: Educate ourselves on the core doctrines of Christianity and why we believe what we believe, which can protect us against the sway of new and unfounded teachings.
5. Critical Engagement: Thoughtfully and critically engage with new teachings, measuring them against the Word of God rather than current trends or popular opinion.

## Chapter 3

**What is the 'breastplate of righteousness' and why is it vital in the armor of God?**

The 'breastplate of righteousness' is a metaphorical element of the Armor of God that represents the believer's sanctified life, characterized by integrity, virtue, and right living in accordance with God's standards. It is vital because it protects the heart — the seat of our emotions and will — from spiritual attacks and moral corruption, much like a physical breastplate would protect vital organs in battle.

**What does Paul mean by the 'fruit of righteousness' in Philippians 1:11, and how might this fruit manifest in our daily lives?**

In Philippians 1:11, the 'fruit of righteousness' refers to the virtuous qualities and ethical behaviors that result from living in accordance with God's will, through Jesus Christ. This fruit manifests in our daily lives as acts of kindness, justice, integrity, and moral excellence that not only honor God but also have a positive impact on those around us.

**Romans 3:22 speaks of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. How does this righteousness differ from self-generated righteousness?**

Righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ is a righteousness that is credited to believers by God's grace through their faith, not by their own efforts or moral accomplishments. It is a gift from God, rooted in the redemptive work of Christ, as opposed to self-generated righteousness, which is based on self-effort and adherence to the law. This divine righteousness is inclusive, available to all who believe, and transforms the believer from the inside out, leading to a genuine change in character and conduct.

**What is the difference between righteousness that is imparted to us through faith in Christ and walking in righteousness as a response to God's grace?**

Righteousness imparted through faith in Christ is a positional status; it is the righteousness of Christ credited to us, making us right before God judicially. Walking in righteousness is our practical, day-to-day living that reflects God's moral standards as a response to His grace. It's about how we conduct ourselves in light of the righteousness we've been given.

**How did the righteousness of the Pharisees differ from the 'walking in righteousness' that Jesus calls for, and what lessons can we learn from this distinction for our own spiritual journey? (See Matthew 23:23-28)**

The righteousness of the Pharisees was characterized by an outward compliance to the law, often neglecting the inner spirit of the law which requires love, mercy, and justice. In contrast, the righteousness that Jesus calls for is one that starts from the inside out, emphasizing genuine faith and heart transformation over mere external observance. From this, we learn that our spiritual journey should be rooted in internal change and authentic living that aligns with God's character.

**What practical steps can you take to 'put on' the breastplate of righteousness daily, according to Colossians 3:12-14?**

To 'put on' the breastplate of righteousness daily, one can follow the virtues listed in Colossians 3:12-14: clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Forgive as the Lord forgave you, and above all, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. This approach involves a conscious decision to exhibit Christ-like qualities and to make choices that reflect our righteous standing before God.

## Chapter 4

**Consider Colossians 1:20. How does the gospel of peace reconcile us to God?**

Colossians 1:20 speaks of Christ's work on the cross, through which He made peace by His blood, reconciling all things to Himself. The gospel of peace reconciles us to God by resolving the separation caused by sin. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we are brought back into a harmonious relationship with God, being made right with Him and finding peace that surpasses understanding.

**In what ways does the message of peace and reconciliation through the gospel empower us to stand?**

The message of peace and reconciliation through the gospel empowers us to stand firm in our faith, knowing that we are no longer separated by sin (once estranged from His presence) but are now His children. This assurance gives us confidence in the face of spiritual adversity, knowing that God is for us, and that regardless of what happens around us we are safe in His hands.

**Can you think of a biblical example where someone shared the gospel of peace with others, and it had a profound impact?**

A profound biblical example is found in Acts 8, where Philip shares the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. Through Philip's explanation of the Scriptures, the eunuch understands the message of Jesus, receives baptism, and goes on his way rejoicing, profoundly impacted by the peace and reconciliation found in the gospel. This encounter highlights the transformative power of sharing the gospel of peace.

**List some of the trials you have experienced in your life. After each one, mark down how you were strengthened or defeated by it:**

This answer will be different for everyone.

**What are some practical steps you can take to ensure you are always prepared to share the gospel of peace with those you encounter in your life?**

- Know the Gospel: Study and understand the core message of the gospel so you can articulate it clearly.
- Carry the Gospel: Keep a small Bible in your purse with some of your favorite verses highlighted, or save them in an app on your phone so you can find them when you have an opportunity to share the gospel.
- Live the Gospel: Let your actions reflect the peace and love of Christ; be a living testimony.
- Pray for Opportunities: Ask God to provide opportunities and the wisdom to recognize them.
- Stay Informed: Understand the questions and concerns people have today to relate the gospel to their context.

**How can the message of peace in the gospel serve as a source of hope and assurance during times of personal turmoil or adversity?**

The message of peace in the gospel offers profound hope and assurance during personal turmoil or adversity by affirming our eternal peace with God through Christ. It assures us that our present struggles are temporary and that we are, in essence, just passing through this world on our way to an everlasting home with the Lord. This eternal perspective helps us to see beyond our current trials, understanding that God is sovereign, cares deeply

for us, and is orchestrating all things for our ultimate good. The peace we have in Christ acts as a steadfast anchor for our souls, providing comfort that endures beyond the transient upheavals of life.

**Can you find an example of someone in the Bible who faced adversity but continued to proclaim the gospel of peace with unwavering resolve? What lessons can we learn from their experiences?**

The Apostle Paul is a prime example. Despite facing imprisonment, beatings, and shipwrecks, Paul continued to preach the gospel with unwavering resolve (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). From his experiences, we learn that adversity can actually serve to advance the gospel (Philippians 1:12-14), and that our steadfastness in the face of trials can be a powerful witness to the truth and power of the gospel message.

**When was the last time you let Satan knock you off of your feet? What happened? How could you react next time?**

This answer will be different for everyone.

## Chapter 5

**What are some examples of fiery darts that we need protection from?**

Examples of fiery darts include doubts about God's love and goodness, temptations to sin, feelings of unworthiness, fear of the future, and lies that undermine our identity in Christ. These negative thoughts and deceptions can weaken our spiritual resolve if not quenched by faith.

**In the context of Ephesians 6:10-18, why do you think Paul specifically chose a shield to represent faith? What does this choice tell us about the role of faith in the Christian life?**

Paul likely chose a shield to represent faith because, in battle, a shield is used to intercept and stop incoming attacks. This imagery tells us that faith acts as our primary defense against all forms of spiritual assault. It encompasses the believer, providing comprehensive protection, and allows us to actively engage in spiritual warfare with confidence.

**What are some practical ways to 'take up' and 'use' the shield of faith in daily life? How can you strengthen your faith to better protect against spiritual attacks?**

Practical ways to 'take up' and 'use' the shield of faith include immersing oneself in God's Word to reinforce truth, engaging in regular prayer to maintain a connection with God, participating in communal worship for encouragement, practicing obedience to strengthen trust in God, and recalling past experiences of God's faithfulness. To strengthen our faith, we can also study the lives of faithful believers, both contemporary and historical, and apply their lessons to our own life.

**In what ways does faith 'extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one'? Can you think of a personal example where your faith has protected you in this way?**

Faith extinguishes the flaming arrows of the evil one by instilling trust in God's promises and character, thus nullifying the impact of lies, temptations, accusations, and fear. Faith acts as a barrier that prevents these attacks from taking hold in our hearts and minds, allowing us to remain steadfast and confident in God's protection.

The second part of this question will be different for everyone.

**Apart from Ephesians, where else in the New Testament is faith described as a form of protection or defense?**

In 1 Peter 1:5, faith is described as a protective force, as believers are "shielded by God's power" through their faith. Also, in 1 John 5:4, faith is the victory that overcomes the world, implying a defensive quality against worldly influences and pressures.

**Can you name one or two biblical figures that exemplified the use of the 'shield of faith'? How did their faith protect them or guide them through challenges?**

Here are a couple, but of course your answers may differ from mine.

Abraham: His faith in God's promise protected him from the discouragement of his circumstances, guiding him to become the father of many nations as God had promised (Romans 4:18-21).

Daniel: Daniel's faith shielded him in the lions' den, where his trust in God kept him safe and secured his deliverance (Daniel 6).

**What are some of the lies that Satan has been firing at you? Under each one, mark down a fire-quickening truth.**

This answer will be different for everyone.

## Chapter 6

**In your own words, explain what the hope of salvation is and why you think Paul used the metaphor of a helmet to describe it:**

The hope of salvation is the confident expectation that God will fulfill His promise of eternal life and redemption through Jesus Christ. This hope is sure and steadfast, anchoring the soul. Paul used the metaphor of a helmet

to describe it because, just as a helmet protects a soldier's head in battle, the hope of salvation protects our minds from the doubts and fears that assail us. It is a crucial part of our spiritual armor that guards our thoughts and focuses us on the ultimate deliverance that is to come.

**Find two Bible verses in the Old Testament that prefigure the 'helmet of salvation' that Paul speaks of in the New Testament. List them here:**

Isaiah 59:17: "He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak."

Psalms 140:7: "Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer, you shield my head in the day of battle."

**How does the 'helmet of salvation' help us to maintain hope in difficult times? Look for 1 or 2 biblical characters who demonstrated hope amidst trials and reflect on their stories here:**

The 'helmet of salvation' maintains hope in difficult times by reminding us of God's ultimate victory over sin and death and our future inheritance in Christ. Biblical characters who demonstrated this hope include:

Joseph: Despite being sold into slavery and unjustly imprisoned, Joseph maintained his hope in God's faithfulness, which was ultimately realized when he was raised to a position of authority in Egypt (Genesis 37-41).

Job: Job held onto his integrity and hope in God even when everything was taken from him, and his hope was vindicated in the end when God restored his fortunes (Job 1-42).

**Reflect on Romans 12:2 and consider how the renewal of the mind relates to the protection offered by the 'helmet of salvation.'**

Romans 12:2, which speaks of being transformed by the renewing of the mind, relates to the 'helmet of salvation' in that both involve the thought life of a believer. The 'helmet of salvation' protects our minds by focusing us on the hope and assurance we have in Christ, while the renewal of the mind involves an active process of aligning our thoughts with God's will. Together, they enable us to think clearly and rightly in a way that honors God and fortifies us against the deceptions and discouragements of the world.

## Chapter 7

**How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the Word of God, and in what ways does this description align with the concept of the Sword of the Spirit as found in Ephesians 6:17?**

Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. This aligns with the concept of the Sword of the Spirit in that it emphasizes the Word's penetrating and discerning power, its divine nature, and its ability to impact both the spiritual and moral dimensions of a person.

**Peter initially tried to defend Jesus using a physical sword (John 18:10-11). Contrast this with how Peter later uses the Word of God as a powerful tool in his ministry after Pentecost. What does this transformation tell us about the shift in Peter's understanding of the Word?**

Peter's initial use of a physical sword to defend Jesus showed a literal and physical approach to conflict. After Pentecost, his transformation is evident as he uses the Word of God to spread the gospel and address challenges,

showing a shift to a spiritual understanding of the Word as the true means of advancing God's kingdom and confronting opposition.

**Can you find and reflect on an instance in the Gospels (other than His temptation in the wilderness) where Jesus uses Scripture to respond to a challenge or temptation?**

In Matthew 21:13, when Jesus cleanses the temple, He responds to the challenge of the corrupted practice of trade within the temple by quoting Scripture: "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." This use of Scripture emphasizes the proper use of God's house and the authority of the Word to correct wrongful behavior.

1. "My house shall be called a house of prayer" is from Isaiah 56:7.
2. "But you are making it a 'den of robbers'" is from Jeremiah 7:11.

**Can you think of a situation in your life where a specific Scripture has been your 'sword' to fight off temptation, lies, or discouragement? How did it help you?**

This answer will be different for everyone.

**What are some practical ways you can 'sharpen' your Sword of the Spirit? Consider habits or disciplines that might help you become more adept in using Scripture.**

To 'sharpen' the Sword of the Spirit, one can engage in daily Bible reading and study, memorization of key verses, meditation on Scripture, attending Bible studies or theological courses, and applying Scripture in daily decision-making. Regular practice of these disciplines improves one's ability to understand, recall, and apply God's Word effectively.