

## FIVE

## STAY CONFIDENT: THE SHIELD OF FAITH

*Ephesians 6:16; Psalm 18:6-30*

**W**hy am I so surprised when God does something that he has promised to do? Or, to use Jesus' words, "Why is it that *you* of all people have no faith?" (Mark 4:40, my paraphrase). After all, I am a pastor! I call on people all the time to trust God and his promises. When I visit someone who is discouraged or lonely, I ask them to remember the faithful character of God and his promise never to abandon us as his children. When I pray for a person in the hospital who has a terminal diagnosis and I ask God for a work of his healing power, why am I stunned to see that person walk into a worship service a few weeks later? I find myself praying an unnamed father's prayer more often than I like to admit: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

**Group Discussion.** Is there something today that is causing you to struggle to believe God's promises or to rest in God's faithfulness? What or who usually helps you through those times of doubt?

**Personal Reflection.** Can you recall a recent time when God amazed you by answering your prayer or fulfilling one of his promises in your life? Write it down. Who can you encourage with this story?

The first three elements of the armor of God—the belt, the breastplate, and the war boots—were foundational items worn at all times. The next three pieces—the shield, the helmet, and the sword—were kept near at hand and taken up when the enemy approached. *Read Ephesians 6:16.*

1. What does the shield of faith do?

2. Picture a flaming arrow from the evil one coming toward you. What images, thoughts, and feelings does this evoke?

3. How would you describe what the shield of faith is?

4. James says, "Faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20). Living faith is not just talking about what we believe God is able to do; it is also translating the promises of God into action. What is a current situation or relationship in your life you believe God will work in?

5. How can you translate what you believe about that situation or relationship into action?

6. How might you encourage a struggling friend to exercise faith in a difficult circumstance?

*Read Psalm 18:6-30.*

7. Describe God's actions when the psalmist cries for help.

8. Have you ever watched God shoot "his arrows and scatter the enemy" (v. 14) in your life or the lives of those around you? If so, describe what that was like.

9. As you read through the Psalms passage a second time, write down words or phrases that describe what we are responsible to do and what God does or is.

Our Responsibility

God's Promises

10. What do you notice about these two lists?

11. **Armor Assessment.** Some Roman shields were designed to hook on to the shield of the soldier on either side. The connected shields formed a solid defensive wall against the enemy. What does that tell you about the importance of bringing other faith-filled Christians around you when you feel attacked?

12. What keeps you from reaching out to others for assistance and help?

13. Looking back through Psalm 18, what do you most need from God that you see offered in these verses?



*In whatever you are struggling with today, express your belief in God and his promises. Ask God to help you overcome your unbelief.*

#### **NOW OR LATER**

Make a list of areas where you sense God prompting you to take a step of faith right now. It might involve a new job, sharing the gospel with a friend, being more generous in your giving, or turning away from a habit that compromises your witness or hinders your walk with the Lord.

Why have you hesitated to move forward in those areas so far? How can you respond in obedience to the Holy Spirit now? Be specific and honest.