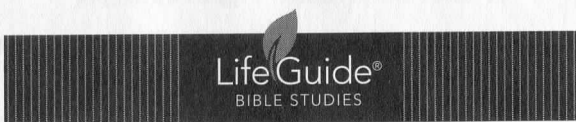


THE ARMOR OF GOD

8 STUDIES FOR INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS



DOUGLAS CONNELLY



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BE STRONG: THE BATTLE AGAINST US

Ephesians 6:10-13

One of the most powerful confrontations with evil I have ever experienced took place in the foyer of a church! As the pastor, I was greeting people as they balanced coffee cups and Bibles when I noticed the entrance of a young woman who occasionally attended the church. Behind her was a man I had never met, but I immediately sensed a strong warning in my mind and spirit. I made my way over to the couple and introduced myself. The man was a new boyfriend, and it was obvious that he was not happy to be in church. The uneasiness in my spirit only grew stronger as I talked briefly with them and then moved on.

When I went into the sanctuary for the service, I prayed silently that God would keep whatever evil power had entered our building from having any influence in our worship that morning. As I prayed, the unease in me began to disappear, and we went on with the worship service as normal. I had almost forgotten about the man as I preached that Sunday, but about ten minutes into the message, he stood up and walked out. The spirit in him could not tolerate the Spirit in our church body, and he left. Sadly, he never came back.

Group Discussion. How would you explain what the author sensed that Sunday? What do you think of his response?

Personal Reflection. Have you ever had a similar experience when you sensed the presence of evil? How did you or would you react?

The Bible makes it clear that a battle is going on in the spiritual realm between God and Satan—between spiritual powers of good and truth

and spiritual powers of darkness and evil. That battle includes those of us who are Christians, followers of Jesus. We are the target of these evil powers. They try every way they can to defeat, deceive, and discourage us. The apostle Paul issues a strong warning about the battle—and we ignore that warning to our own peril. *Read Ephesians 6:10-13.*

1. How familiar are you with the idea of a spiritual battle, and what is your reaction to what Paul says in this Scripture?

2. The spiritual forces arrayed against us as believers seem almost overwhelming at times. List all the words in verse 12 that speak of power.

3. While we may feel powerless and pinned down at times, we are not alone in the battle. We have a relationship with someone who is far greater than all our enemies—and he has committed himself to rescue us! What words or phrases in verses 10-13 speak to you of God's overcoming power?

What point do you think Paul intends to make with this list?

4. Name a difficult problem or relationship you are facing right now. Explain how you have struggled with the situation up to this point.

5. Think about the possibility that there might be a spiritual dimension to your problem. You may be wrestling with emotional, financial, or physical issues, but the true enemy is behind the scenes: the devil and the evil forces under his direction. What might be the goal of the spiritual forces of evil in your specific situation?

6. The word *schemes* in verse 11 suggests a well-thought-out strategy for victory. Satan and the powers under his control have a plan for your life—and it's not good! What would you identify as your own areas of greatest vulnerability and weakness?

7. How does awareness of spiritual conflict affect how you view your current problems and how you might respond to them?

8. Paul's command to "be strong in the Lord" (v. 10) is a passive verb in Paul's Greek language. It means that this strength is something God gives and we receive. What are some ways you can receive strength from the Lord?

9. Victory in our spiritual battles is not automatic. We too have a part to play in the conflict. What are we called to do in verses 10-13?

10. Armor Assessment. Military friends tell me that every day before going out on their assigned mission, a service member conducts an assessment of their protective body armor and weapons to make sure they are ready to face what lies ahead. As part of each study, we will conduct a spiritual armor assessment.

The command to "put on the full armor of God" is an active command—something we do. There is also a sense of urgency in the command. How would you describe the importance to you of putting on the armor of God?

11. How will this study affect the way you pray about problems or difficult relationships in your life?



Thank God that the victory belongs to him. Pray for God's help to take up the armor he has provided.

NOW OR LATER

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. How does this passage fit with what you read in Ephesians 6? What does it suggest to you about the kind of fighting Christians are called to?