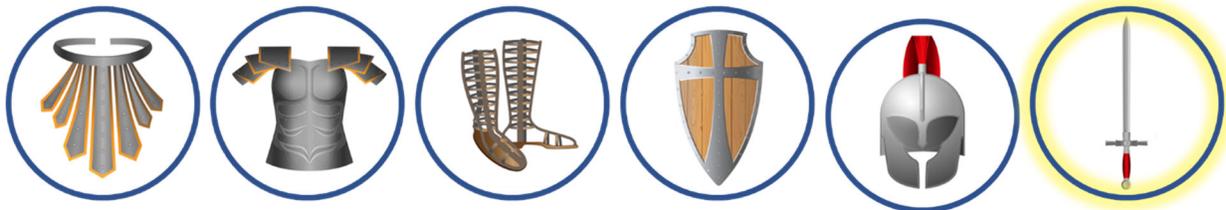




Being Prepared for Battle

Lesson #6 – Sword of the Spirit

Thursday, February 16, 2023 | MBC Men's Group



Series Overview

As in the battlefields of yesterday, there are winners and there are losers; those who survive and those who die. Often, those who won did so because they were better prepared than their enemy because they had the skills, know-how, passion, and tools to be victorious. In the battle for Christianity, we are offered a similar choice – to be prepared for battle or not.

In this series we'll explore Ephesians 6 where Paul does a masterful job laying out the elements of what we call **The Full Armor of God**. Nowhere in the New Testament does a writer so clearly outline the battle gear required for every Christian warrior, including the (1) belt of truth, (2) breastplate of righteousness, (3) feet fitted with readiness, (4) shield of faith, (5) helmet of salvation, and the (6) sword of the Spirit that is the Word of God. Ironically, of the six provided elements, only one was offensive (i.e., sword of the Spirit).

Tonight's Overview

Tonight, we're going to discuss the last and **sixth element** of The Full Armor of God – **the sword of the spirit**. I've thoroughly enjoyed being with all of you. Leading you in this study is one of my favorite series in all of the ones I've done over the past nine years. I say this to remind us that what we're doing on Thursday nights is special. Studying God's Word together, encouraging one another, praying together, and sharing life through our stories is something I'm afraid we all take for granted. What we are doing together is very unique.

One of the major points I want to discuss tonight is the power of your story. **We all have a story.** It's what makes us who we are; things like where we were born, our family, our successes, our failures, and most importantly, our relationship with God. I recently heard about an acronym that spells "story."

- **S**tart with Scripture
- **T**alk to others
- **O**bey Godly dreams and passions
- **R**ecognize gifts and abilities
- **Y**ield to the Holy Spirit

As we've gone through this series I've become more convinced than ever that God provides with a **set of armor** to accompany us into battle. As I read Ephesians 6:12 I can almost envision Jesus battling the forces of evil during his time on earth: ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*** There is no doubt that Jesus understood the high stakes in spiritual warfare. Every time Jesus encountered demons, they cowered in His presence. It's a shame we often fail to recognize and appreciate the power Jesus has over life and death!





Tonight, as we wrap up this series, we're going to focus on the Word of God. It is my observation that among Christians there are two types: those who study and apply the Bible and those that don't. Knowing *and applying* the Bible must impact why we exist, how we live, what we do, and who we are. It is worth noting that living out and obeying God's Word is as important as knowing it (maybe more). I have known Christians who know Scripture "backwards and forwards," but they're mean-spirited and do not reflect the love of Jesus. Being this way is not acceptable for a Believer. I love what James 1:22-25 says about this subject.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

So, here's the bottom line – studying God's Word, understanding it, applying it, and teaching it **should be part of our story**. However, it's a choice we must all make as it takes work and doesn't just happen.

The graphic to the right¹ provides a list of "21 Valuable Benefits of Studying the Bible." It is a great resource for helping reinforce why we should study the Word of God and what are the benefits to us individually. As human beings, we have to understand the **WHY** before we care about the **HOW** or the **WHAT**. Fortunately, the Bible says a lot about itself in terms of why we should study the Bible and what are the benefits to us.

If you've been in church any length of time, you've learned that mature Christians study the Bible and use its insights to provide direction for their lives. Listed below are a few examples I've observed from Christians I've known over the years and how the Bible has impacted the decisions they've made.

1. A trend I have seen in some Christian young people is seeking God's wisdom for **life direction** in terms of education, career, marriage, finances, and children. Many of them have told me the Bible has provided key insights for them and the choices they've made. We can learn from these young people!
2. **Finances** is a big part of our lives, and we all have to make decisions with the finite resources we've been given. The Bible speaks about the power of trusting God with our lives and also how we use our "worldly wealth" to impact lives for God's Kingdom. The bottom line is generous Christians are blessed ways that those who are selfish do not.
3. The Bible speaks a great deal about **sexual purity**, and we see ample evidence in how lack of discretion and moral purity destroyed men's lives. Some of the best examples include David, Solomon, and the nation of Israel with the horrific sins they committed in worshiping the demonic pagan idols and false gods. Today's pornography industry provide a similar temptation to men. According to the Bible, sexual purity is a command, not a suggestion. I know several men who have men in their lives who hold them accountable in this area.

21 VALUABLE BENEFITS OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

There are many blessings from reading and studying God's Word. Here are a few to encourage you in your pursuit of Him.

- 01 Receiving Direction (Psa. 119:105)
- 02 Answered Prayer (John 15:7)
- 03 Strengthened in Faith (Rom. 10:17)
- 04 Nourishment unto Maturity (Matt. 4:4)
- 05 Resistance to Temptation (Psa. 119:11)
- 06 Instruction (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- 07 Conviction (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- 08 Correction (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- 09 Training in Righteousness (2 Tim. 3:17)
- 10 Equipping for Every Good Work
- 11 Clarity of Thoughts (Heb. 4:12)
- 12 Freedom (John 8:31-32)
- 13 Wisdom Beyond Your Years (Psa. 119:99)
- 14 Revived Soul (Psa. 19:7)
- 15 Delight (Psa. 119:103)
- 16 Cleansing (Eph. 5:26)
- 17 Others Are Impacted (Col. 3:16)
- 18 Blessing and Prosperity (Psa. 1:1-3)
- 19 Courage to Be Successful (Josh. 1:8-9)
- 20 Victory in Spiritual Warfare (Eph. 6:17)
- 21 Endurance, Encouragement (Rom. 15:4)

¹ <https://pursuitbible.com/what-are-the-benefits-of-studying-the-bible/>





Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV): ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And 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.

James 1:22-25 (NIV): ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV): 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.

Matthew 7:24 (NIV): Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

John 1:14 (NIV): The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Psalms 119:11 (KJV): Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Psalms 119:105 (KJV): Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Questions

1. Why is studying the Bible important? **Consider some of the verses above in developing your answer.**
2. Why is the discipline of studying the Bible sometimes hard to do? We all struggle with making it a priority and I've never met anyone (even pastors) who says they never struggle with it.
3. What is your favorite Bible verse? When did it become your favorite verse?
4. Do you have any Bible goals in 2023 you'd like to share with the group? Examples include reading through the Bible in a year, memorizing a Bible verse once per month, starting a neighborhood Bible study, and starting a daily time of devotion with your family.
5. With this being the last night in our series, which of the six Armor of God elements has meant the most to you?

