

Small Group Leaders Notes

Ephesians 6:10-20

Context

'Finally...' These verses are not just the last verses of the book, they are the where Paul draws together all of the great themes of the book.

Through chapters 1-3 we saw how God is bringing unity to all things under Christ. We saw how God brings people from death to life through Christ. We saw that God was creating 1 new united people, the church, under Christ and through the church displaying his glory to Satan and all his forces. It is because Christ has won the victory and is powerfully the head over all things that Christians are to 'be strong in the Lord', wearing Christ's armour and praying in the Spirit. There is a spiritual battle going on but chapters 1-3 show us that Christ has won the victory.

Through chapters 4-6 Paul has been showing us what it looks like to live as the people of God united under Christ (4:1.) We have seen that we are to be united, building one another up as we speak the truth in love to one another. We're to take off our old sinful self and put on our new self made in Christ. All this application is brought together in 6:10-20 as Paul urges us to put on the armour of God.

In many ways chapters 4-6 seem very down to earth with subjects like marriage, family and work. It might seem strange that the focus shifts suddenly to spiritual warfare but it is these seemingly ordinary areas of life that are the spiritual battle ground. Here is where Satan will attack and seek to break down the unity that Christ has given to the church. It's as we stand firm in Christ putting on his armour and praying in the Spirit that we can resist the devil's schemes.

Tricky Bits

Who are the rulers, against the authorities, against all the powers of this dark world and all the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms? (v12)

There's great potential to get dragged into a long debate about the exact meaning of this verse. The best way to understand this verse is by reading it in the context of the rest of the letter.

In chapter 1 we were told that God has powerfully raised and exalted Christ *'far above all rule and authority, powers and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in this age but also in the one to come.'* (1:21.)

Again in chapter 3 we were told that God's intention *'was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...'* (3:10).

Then in chapter 4 we were told, *'In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.'*

These passages show us that there is an unseen spiritual realm in which there is not just God and his angels but Satan and his evil forces. This leads us to see that 6:12 fits into

the wider context of Ephesians and the spiritual struggle that is raging but which ultimately Christ has won by his death on the cross.

Big Idea

Be strong in the Lord by continually putting on his armour and praying in his Spirit.

Applications

Belief and Action (v14-17) From chapters 1-3 of Ephesians we see that truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and God's word are things that God gives us in Christ. As we put them on we are standing in the victory that Christ has won for us. But having put on these different things they are then to change the way that we behave and this is seen in chapters 4-6. This means that much of the application in this study will be recapping and reinforcing many of the applications that we have unearthed as we worked through Ephesians. In particular we will want to think about what it means to put on truth and be truthful with one another (4:15, 4:21, 4:25). We will also want to think about what it means to wear peace (4:1-6 and 4:26-27.)

Prayer (v18-20) Whilst prayer is not part of the armour of God it is something that we are to be doing constantly alongside putting on the armour of God. Both putting on the armour of God and praying in the Spirit are vital if we are to be strong in the Lord. In v18 there are 4 'All's' that give shape and scope to our prayers. We are to pray in the Spirit (led by the Spirit-inspired word) on ***all occasions***, with ***all kinds of prayers***, with ***all perseverance*** and for ***all the saints***. This will undoubtedly challenge both the amount we pray as well as what we pray for both as individuals and as small groups. Notice too how as those who are taking up the sword of the spirit we are to pray that we would use this sword boldly (v19-20.)

Questions

Starter Question - This study is all about how we can be strong in Jesus. Where do people normally look for strength?

Here's a simple question just to get people talking. There are all sorts of sources of strength that people turn to such as ourselves, family, community etc. Whilst we don't want to be dismissive about any of these things we do want to set up a clear contrast so that people see that it is only by standing firm in Jesus that we will have the strength we need to face the spiritual battle that we are in as Christians.

1. In this passage Christians are told to put on the armour of God (v10-17) and to pray in the Spirit (v18-20). Why are these two things so vital?

What sort of struggle are we involved in? Who are we up against?

Before we get into the details of v14-20 we want to see why these things are so vital. We are in a spiritual struggle/wrestle against the devil and his forces. It might feel like we are in all sorts of flesh and blood struggles but we must not lose sight of the real daily battle that we are in.

2. What will it look like to put on each part of the armour of God in our daily lives?

You could split your group up and ask each sub-group to look up the references for one of the pieces of the armour. You can give each member of your group a copy of the table to fill in to help. It's vital that we understand the armour of God in the context of the rest of Ephesians rather than just imagining what these different things are. That's why I have given various different references to look up.

3. Let's turn to think about prayer in v18-20.

a) When are we to pray?

We are to pray on all occasions. There are plenty of other examples in the New Testament where we are urged to pray constantly (see Ephesians 1:15-16.) Our whole attitude is to be one that instinctively turns to prayer. We are to take every opportunity to pray because we are in a constant spiritual battle and so we need God's constant help.

b) What are we to pray?

We are to use all kinds of prayers. This means that we are to pray a mixture of confession, petition, thanks and praise. We are to pray short 'arrow' prayers as we go about our daily lives as well as setting aside time for longer periods of prayer. We're to pray for all sorts of different things because Satan will attack from all sorts of different angles. This means that we should pray for practical things such as people's health, work, relationships and family life. But we shouldn't just stop there, we should also be praying for church unity and spiritual growth and maturity. These are all things that have been a major focus in the letter and in Paul's prayers (see 1:15-23 and 3:14-21.) Notice too that we are to pray for boldness in evangelism (v19-20.) As those who are taking up the sword of the Spirit it is only right that we then pray for boldness to use it!

c) How are we to pray about?

We're in a constant battle so we need to pray with great perseverance and stamina. Like the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane we are to watch and pray. We are not to be spiritually asleep, but instead alert and awake by persevering in prayer. There may be seasons of life when we find prayer harder than normal. Even in these times we are to work hard so that we persevere in prayer.

d) Who are we to pray for?

Here we see that we are to pray for all God's people. This fits perfectly with one of the big themes in the book - the unity of all of God's people under Christ. As one united people, the church, we are to pray for everyone, not just those who are like us or who we are close too. This is a big reason why we produce a prayer diary - it would be good to have some of these to hand so that those who don't have a copy can get one.

4. How could our times of prayer as a Home Group change to better reflect this pattern of prayer?

Each group will be different in how they organise their times of prayer but we should always be prepared to change the way that we do things in response to God's word. Perhaps the range of your prayers needs broadening because you tend to only pray for church events or for those who are unwell? Perhaps you need to pray more for one another which may go hand in hand with being more open and honest with one another? Perhaps you need to spend more time praying for boldness in evangelism as you go about your day to day lives?

The Armour of God

	References	What will it look like to put this on in daily life?
The Belt of Truth	1:13, 4:15, 4:21, 4:25, 5:9	
The Breastplate of Righteousness	4:24-5:2, 5:8-10	
Feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace	2:11-22, 4:1-6, 4:26-27	
The Shield of Faith	2:1-10, 3:12, 3:17	
The Helmet of Salvation	1:13, 2:1-8	
The Sword of the Spirit	1:13, 3:5-7, 6:19-20	