



Letters About Strength

Lesson Aim: To learn what it means to choose to put on the armor of God.

THE WORSHIP

Who God Is: The Spirit Who Shows Us

THE WORD

What He Has Done: God showed how He strengthens us.

Scripture Focus: Ephesians 6:10-19; Hebrews 4:12 **Key Verse:** Ephesians 6:11

Christ Connection: Isaiah 59:16-17

THE WAY

The Big Question: When have you felt you were in a spiritual battle?

UNIT 6 FOCUS VERSES

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" Revelation 21:3-4

Unit 6: The Promise of Heaven			
	Bible Story	What He Has Done	Lesson Aim
28	Letters About Weakness, 2 Corinthians 4:6-9, 16-18; 12:7-10	God revealed to Paul that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.	To know God's strength is shown in our weakness.
29	Letters About Strength, Ephesians 6:10-19; Hebrews 4:12	God showed how He strengthens us.	To learn what it means to choose to put on the armor of God.
30	Letters to the Seven Churches, Revelation 3:14-16, 19-22	Jesus told John what to write to the seven churches.	To know Jesus cares about our ongoing relationship with Him. (Salvation Message)
31	Letters About Jesus' Return, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 19:11-16; 21:1-4; 22:20	God gave Paul and John a vision of heaven and what it will be like when Jesus comes back to earth.	To know what will happen when Jesus returns.

LEADER'S ENCOURAGEMENT This week, Psalm 28:7-8. Please join us in praying, "Thank You, Lord, for protecting us from the schemes of Satan. Help the students stand their ground and understand how to use the armor of God so they can be strong in You. Amen."

Lesson Aims are based on reflecting God's character as we participate in His actions to, for, and in the world.

Take Home Elements: The Journal Entry, Action Card, and Family Discussion Card may be sent home to encourage students to reflect on the lesson. The Journal Entry is an in-depth personal study. The Action Card is a visual reminder of the Bible story, God's action, and how we can join into that action. The Family Discussion Card gives parents and guardians a way to engage their students in what they are learning.

Leader's Tip: For larger gatherings, teach THE WELCOME, THE WORSHIP, and THE WORD in a large group setting and divide into small groups for discussion with THE WAY.



Getting started

THE WELCOME

Suggestion: Choose a game that focuses on ideas such as armor, strength, or standing firm in battle.

ACTIVITY OPTION 1: FULL ARMOR OF GOD

Purpose: To introduce the full armor of God.

Supplies: Aluminum foil, toilet paper, or newspaper, light cardboard, scissors, tape, permanent marker, whiteboard, whiteboard marker

Directions:

1. Read Ephesians 6:10-17. Have students call out the parts of armor as you read them. Write them on the whiteboard.
2. Divide the group into two teams and give each team an equal amount of supplies (aluminum foil, toilet paper, or newspaper, light cardboard, scissors, tape, permanent marker). Note: If you have more than 12 people, you may want to form three or more teams.
3. Each team chooses a designated soldier.
4. On your signal, teams use their supplies to create armor (using the list from Ephesians) for their soldier. Encourage them to write the name for that piece of armor on it (e.g. shield of faith).
5. After 10-15 minutes, judge the teams on their armor. The team with the best and most complete armor wins.

ACTIVITY OPTION 2: STAND FIRM

Purpose: To introduce staying strong in battle.

Supplies: None

Directions:

1. Divide the group into two teams. Each team chooses one person as their "soldier." Let them know that they should choose someone they believe can keep a straight face while the other team tries to make him or her smile (no touching allowed). The team also choose 3 people as enemies to try to make the other team's soldier to laugh.
2. Have each team's soldier stand in the front on either side of you. Have the opposite team's enemies stand around them.
3. On your signal, the enemies try to make the soldier smile (no touching allowed). You are the judge. Whichever soldier smiles first, loses.
4. If you have time, have each team choose a new soldier and enemies and play again. Each round gets a point. The team with the most points at the end of play, wins.



The Spirit who shows us

THE WORSHIP

Note to Leader: The instructions below are suggestions only. Adapt this time of worship to suit your environment, resources, and cultural expression. Encourage students to broaden their view of corporate worship by including a variety of expressions such as group prayer, group praise, silent meditation, singing, listening to music, reading scripture, collecting an offering, drama, dance, visual arts, and/or a physical exploration of nature or neighborhoods.

Ideas for Optional Visuals: _____

Today, we worship the Spirit who shows us that He will strengthen us with His power. We will learn that the Holy Spirit strengthens us so we can stand against the powers for darkness. He strengthens us so Jesus may dwell in our hearts. His power helps us together with all believers to fully understand the love of Jesus. We give thanks to Him for showing us these things. We worship Him for His power.

Read Ephesians 3:16-18.



Sing worship songs and guide students to focus on Spirit's power.



Read the Unit 6 Focus Verses: Revelation 21:3-4.



Invite students to offer sentences of praise to God by completing the following sentence:
"Lord, we worship You for _____."



Letters about strength

THE WORD Presentation

Note to Leader: Adapt this segment to your setting (Sunday School class, youth group, multi-age gathering, youth camp, retreat, etc.). In some settings, you may choose to have a student read the scripture aloud, and then have the leader, in his or her own words, briefly communicate the Teaching Points, the Christ Connection, and the Big Question. In other settings, a teacher, pastor, or other experienced speaker may present a lecture or extended message that includes those same elements.

Ideas for Optional Visuals:

You may choose to include an object lesson, video clip, drama, dance, song, or work of art to illustrate the teaching points.

Option 1: _____

Option 2: _____



TEACHING POINTS

Consider current culture and influences impacting your students, and adjust the teaching accordingly.

Read the suggested scripture and communicate each of the points noted.

Last time, we read about our weakness. We learned that in our weakness, God's power is clearly seen by others. Today, we will read letters about the strength that comes from God. We will start with a letter Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus.

The leader or a student reads Ephesians 6:10-19.

- List of the Armor of God:
 - Belt of truth
 - Breastplate of righteousness
 - (Shoes) of readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.
 - Shield of faith
 - Helmet of salvation
 - Sword of the Spirit (Word of God)
- When faced with conflict or temptation, it often feels like we are battling ourselves or someone else. Paul gives us a larger perspective on these conflicts. When we are in a conflict, it is important to remember that our enemy is not a human or group of humans. While that may be the physical reality, the truth is that we are in a spiritual battle, serving God in a battle against the forces of darkness.
- If the concept of spiritual battles is unfamiliar to you or difficult for you to accept, then simply focus on using the strength God gives to you every day, trusting Him to reveal His truth to you.
- God gives us His resources (His armor) to give us strength and to help us fight the battle.
- Paul encourages us to use the strength God gives us. When we are in a conflict, we can choose to put on the **belt of truth**, remembering what is true about God's nature and His relationships. Just as a belt is close to us, truth keeps us close to Jesus.

THE WORD Presentation *continued*

- When in conflict, we can choose to protect our hearts with the **breastplate of righteousness**. The breastplate protects the heart. Because of Jesus's sacrifice for us, we are now righteous in God's eyes. Our hearts belong to and are protected by Jesus.
- Paul tells us the **shield of faith** can be used to extinguish the "flaming darts of the evil one."
 - Jesus and His apostles refer to the devil as the evil one (e.g. Matthew 5:37; John 17:15; 1 John 2:13). The name, "Satan," means adversary. The word "devil" means false accuser.
 - John refers to the devil as the father of lies (John 8:44). These lies can make us doubt the goodness of God, doubt His love for us, or doubt how important we are to God. The shield represents our faith in the truth about God. The darts of the evil one represent the lies that we are tempted to believe about God, ourselves, and others. Our faith in the truth can protect us from believing in the lies that can wound our relationships with God and others.
- Just as a helmet protects a soldier's head, knowing God's promise to save us protects our minds from negative thoughts. To wear the **helmet of salvation** is to always be aware of who God is and what He has done for our salvation.
- The **shoes** represent readiness to advance for the kingdom of God. The gospel of peace is the good news that because of Jesus, God has made peace with us. It makes our feet ready to go and tell the good news about Jesus.
- The belt, breastplate, shield and helmet are pieces of armor that help us defend against attack. The only offensive piece is the **sword of the Spirit**, the word of God. The Bible is our spiritual sword to help us discern truth. The writer of the book of Hebrews explains how the word of God is like a sword. Read Hebrews 4:12.
- Along with putting on the full armor of God, Paul encourages us to be on the alert, always praying for all the Lord's people. Because the battle is spiritual, prayer is our most powerful resource. Paul highlights its importance by using the word "all" repeatedly: at all times ... with all prayer and supplication ... with all perseverance ... for all the saints



Connecting the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Us

CHRIST CONNECTION

What is the connection between this story and Christ?

- More than 700 years before Paul described the armor of God, the prophet Isaiah describes the Lord Himself wearing that armor as a mighty warrior.

The leader or a student reads aloud Isaiah 59:16-17.

- Isaiah spoke of the Lord as a mighty warrior who saw that there was no justice in the world. There was no one to intervene, so the Lord Himself intervened, putting on His own spiritual armor to battle the forces of darkness.



THE BIG QUESTION

Introduce and elaborate on this question. Students will answer it in their discussion group.

When have you felt as if you were in a personal battle?



THE WAY Discussion

Putting on God's armor



GETTING STARTED Display and review the Discussion Group Covenant below:

**We will include everyone here, treating one another with respect and kindness.
We will encourage everyone here to express their thoughts and opposing views.**

Every student shares his or her best experience or greatest challenge of the past week.



READ IT AGAIN

Read Ephesians 6:10-19 and Hebrews 4:12 silently or aloud.

What does it mean to you to "hold your ground"? Why is this essential in our battle against the enemy?

List the various items God has given us so we can stand against the devil.

There are 6 pieces of armor we are given for the battle. The first one is the belt of truth. Why do you think truth is foundational for us as Christians in our battle with the enemy?

What should accompany our use of the armor of God (Eph 6:18)? Why is it important in spiritual warfare?



THE BIG QUESTION Invite students to share their answers.

When have you felt you were in a spiritual battle?



TAKE ACTION Lead students in a discussion using the questions below.

Which of your pieces of armor are you best at using?

Which of your pieces of armor do you need most for the battles you face now?

Has the Word of God ever been like a sword in your life?

Ask each student to complete this sentence: **God calls us to put on His armor SO THAT others might _____.**



PRAY Share prayer requests and answered prayers.

Have students pray with partners, or have the whole group pray together.



FINAL FIVE MINUTES When only 5 minutes remain, begin this segment.

Give each student Action Card #29 and Journal Entry #29. **Take home today's Action Card as a reminder of how we can join in what God is doing. Use the Journal Entry as your personal devotional study. Complete your Journal Entries at home and keep them together in a notebook or in your Bible.** Optional: Provide parent or guardian with Family Discussion Card #29.

PROPHETS & PROMISES

JOURNAL ENTRY #29

Letters About Strength

Ephesians 6:10-19; Hebrews 4:12

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

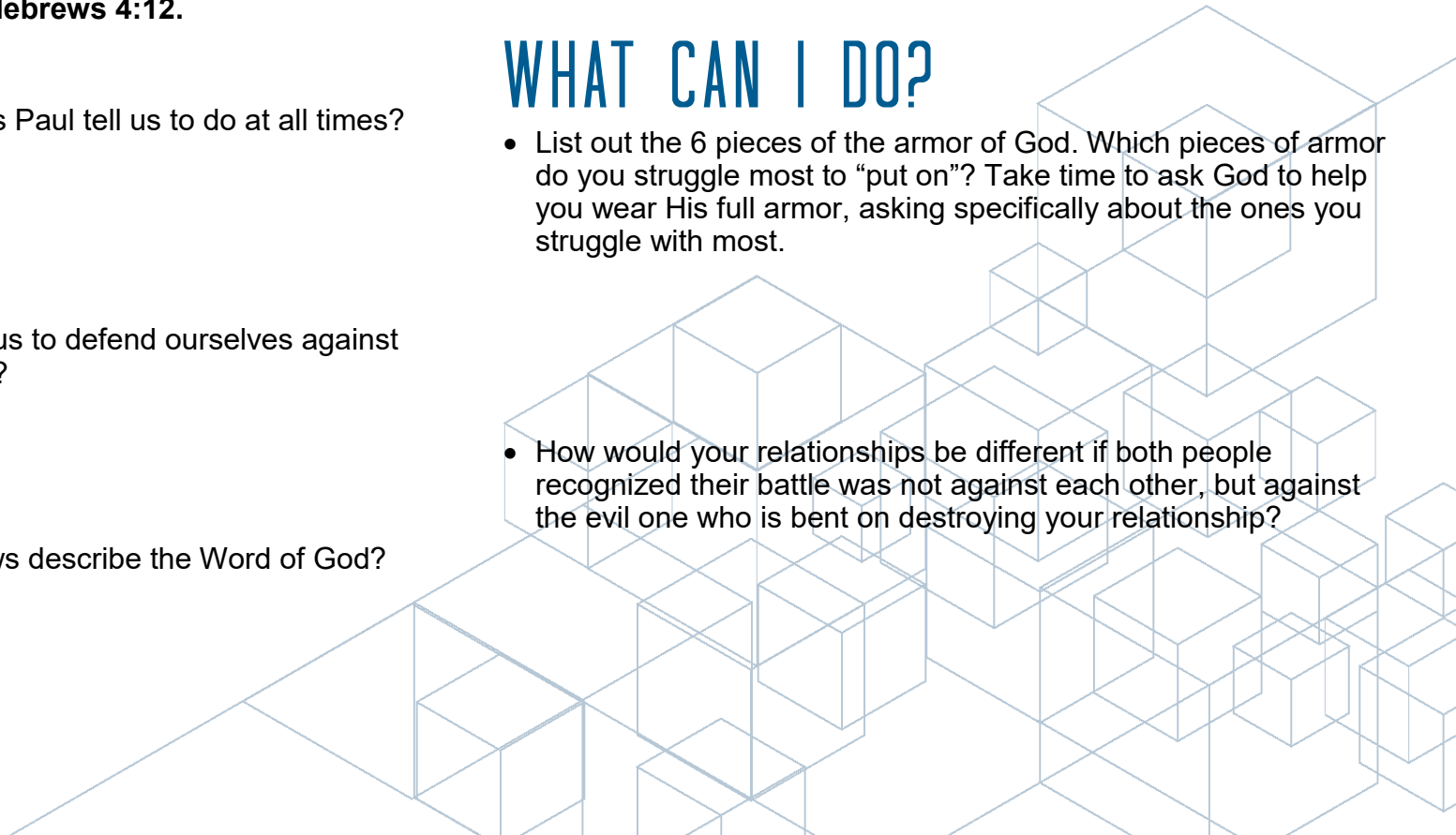
- **Pray!!!** Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to learn from this passage.
- **Read Ephesians 6:10-19; Hebrews 4:12.**
- In spiritual battles, what does Paul tell us to do at all times? Why is it important?
- Which pieces of armor help us to defend ourselves against attack? How do they do that?
- How did the writer of Hebrews describe the Word of God?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- The 2nd piece of armor we are given is the breastplate of righteousness. How would you define righteousness?
- Paul is calling us to “stand” - to hold our ground when the enemy unleashes his attacks and schemes against us. Why do you think Paul commands us to stand four times in these verses?

WHAT CAN I DO?

- List out the 6 pieces of the armor of God. Which pieces of armor do you struggle most to “put on”? Take time to ask God to help you wear His full armor, asking specifically about the ones you struggle with most.
- How would your relationships be different if both people recognized their battle was not against each other, but against the evil one who is bent on destroying your relationship?



LETTERS ABOUT STRENGTH

EPHESIANS 6:10-19; HEBREWS 4:12

JESUS SHOWED HIS APOSTLES HOW HE STRENGTHENS US.

WE ARE CALLED TO PUT ON THE *FULL ARMOR OF GOD*.

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Family Discussion #29/P&P

LETTERS ABOUT STRENGTH

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-19; HEBREWS 4:12.

WHAT DID PAUL SAY IT MEANS
TO BE STRONG IN THE LORD?

WHEN HAVE YOU FELT YOU WERE
IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE?

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