

SECTION 13 (Joint): A MAN OF WAR (Ephesians 6 v 10-20)

THE BIG IDEA:

The Christian life is a battle to resist the devil and follow Jesus—and God has given us each all we need to stand firm.

Depending on the character of your teenager, it might be worth watching a few minutes of a war movie (check the rating!) beforehand, as Q1 is intended to be a link between our enjoyment of war-hero films, and the reality of our spiritual warfare.

Since this is your last session together, do arrange to do something social together at some stage soon, either just the two of you or with friends, something which is suitably “manly” (like watching a war film! Alternatives might be: going to a sports event, going hiking, doing some DIY or garden-clearing.)

GUIDANCE FOR QUESTIONS:

1. There’s something about a battle that is “blokey”! We tend to love the hero, who faces great odds and stands firm and in the end wins—and we tend to want to be him, too!

2. Correction: The word you’re looking for isn’t in verse 10.
STAND. Take your stand / stand your ground / stand / stand firm.

3. The devil, and all the powers and authorities in the spiritual world that are on his side. The struggle is “not against flesh and blood”—this wouldn’t be a battle you could film, but it is a real battle.

4. This answer isn’t in the passage, but the devil is “fighting” the Christian because he wants to overpower him, stopping him following Christ and living as a Christian. You might like to turn to 1 Peter 5 v 8: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”. The devil hates the fact that, in Christ, we are alive eternally—his great aim is to make us dead again, by convincing us not to trust Jesus anymore.

5. Again, the answer isn’t explicit in the passage—but Paul is writing to normal Christians in chapter 6, and so the answer is EVERY Christian. It’s not just a battle for pastors or youth workers or “special” Christians. It’s every Christian, including both of you.

6. Put on all the armour God gives us. Notice that God supplies the armour, but we need to decide to put it on.

7. *Belt = truth*: God’s truth is the foundation of everything—the belt went underneath a Roman soldier’s clothing and he tucked his tunic under it and hung his sword from it. The sense is of hidden strength and confidence.

Righteousness = breastplate: the status of being right with God, and living God's way, is the ultimate defensive base.

Shield = faith, which puts out the devil's flaming arrows. When the devil attacks by suggesting that we are not good or able enough to stand on Christ's side, faith replies that on our own we are not but in Christ we find forgiveness and acceptance from him.

Sword = word of God: the Bible is what God uses to get through people's spiritual defences and enable them to see who he is. This is an attacking weapon, taking the fight to the devil.

Shoes = gospel of peace: this isn't completely clear, but "readiness" can also mean "equipment"—so we won't slip because we know we are at peace with God, and on His side.

8. Prayer.

9. Because God can do absolutely anything, and so can enable us to stand firm and not give in when the devil tempts us not to live Jesus' way. Prayer is a bit like an airstrike, which we can call in to hit the enemy and make him retreat. So Paul uses the word "all" repeatedly; spiritual warriors must pray all the time about all sorts of things and for all Christians, and always do so.

10. Make the gospel message known "fearlessly", even though he's in chains. The devil wants Christians to keep quiet, because talking about Christ's gospel is a wonderful way to take the fight into enemy territory and win new soldiers for Jesus. What better way for both of you to stand firm against the devil than to tell others that they can change sides and be made alive through Christ?!

11. When we are tempted, the devil is trying to knock us over as Christians. He's trying to stop us living under God's rule, and ultimately he's trying to get us to stop trusting that we have forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus.

When we're tempted, we need to *realise that we are in a battle*. So it is going to be hard to resist the temptation, but we must not give in. We need to *put on our armour*: to remember what is true about God and about how to live; to remember we are righteous; to have faith in Jesus; to remember we're at peace with God; to remember what God says in His word (interestingly, in Luke 4 v 1-11, when Jesus is tempted, He actually quotes Bible verses at the devil to resist him, which we could do, too). And we can pray that God will enable us to stand firm. And then we need simply to say "no" to the devil—we need to win this particular battle by simply *standing firm and living Jesus' way*.

13. Because it's how people can be rescued from living under the devil's power, disobeying God, and facing His eternal anger. It's the way people realise they can put their trust in Christ, follow Him, and have eternal perfect life.

We often try to avoid doing it because we are worried people might not listen; they might laugh at us; we might say the wrong thing; we just don't love people, or God,

enough to try to gain God more praise by telling people how great He is. These aren't very good reasons!

A word on the devil...

It may well be that as you go through this Bible section your teenager will want to know a bit more about the devil. This is just a short start-to-finish guide to what the Bible has to say.

When God made the physical and spiritual realms, He looked at it all and saw that it was "very good" (Genesis 1 v 31). At that time therefore the angelic world must have been wholly good. However, by the time of Genesis 3 the serpent, who is the devil (Revelation 12 v 9), was tempting Eve to sin, successfully. Therefore, at some stage between creation and the events of Genesis 3, some angels did "not keep their positions of authority [as angels, with great power under God's rule] but abandoned their own home" (Jude 6). It is likely that Isaiah 14, which is describing the fall of a Babylonian king, moves into describing the fall of the devil in verses 12-15, where Isaiah says: "You have fallen from heaven ... you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God ... I will make myself like the Most High'. But you are brought down ... to the depths of the pit."

Since then, beginning with Eve, the devil "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5 v 8). The devil has power because, as sinners, we are all under the right penalty of spiritual death and cannot have the eternal life that God created humanity to enjoy.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3 v 8; see also Luke 11 v 17-22), which he did on the cross (Hebrews 2 v 14). Now that sinners can be forgiven, we need no longer be under the devil's power: his only real weapon, of pointing out to God that people have sinned and must be judged, has been taken away through Jesus becoming sin for us and bearing our judgment (2 Corinthians 5 v 21; Colossians 2 v 15).

One day the devil will be made totally powerless, and punished for ever by God (Revelation 20 v 10); until then, he still retains some power and thus wages war against God's people (Ephesians 6 v 10-13).

So at the moment, the devil is powerful but defeated. Perhaps a useful illustration is from the Second World War. Once the Allied troops had landed in France on D-Day in June 1944, Hitler's defeat in the war was certain. However, it took until May 1945 for final victory, when he was rendered powerless and destroyed. Between June 1944 and May 1945 Hitler was defeated but powerful, and succeeded in taking millions of people to death along with him. Living between the cross and the final judgment, we know the devil is defeated but he still has the power to tempt us. He is still aiming to convince us to sin, and then convince us we either do not need forgiveness, or cannot have forgiveness. So as Christians we need to "stand your ground" (Ephesians 6 v 13); and when we fail to, we need to turn back to Jesus as our King and the way we are forgiven.