

# Heavenly Places

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The author's website is available at: [www.shawnadiehl.com](http://www.shawnadiehl.com)



# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>POINT ONE: TRUTH IS OUR DEFENSE AND OUR WEAPON</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>POINT TWO: YOU DO NOT STAND ALONE!</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>POINT THREE: WE ARE IN CHRIST!</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CONCLUSION: ARISE, SHINE &amp; STAND</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>41</b>



# INTRODUCTION

I am so excited to be your guide on this journey through the book of Ephesians. This is one of my favorite letters of Paul and there is so much to explore inside. This book is based on a sermon I preached on spiritual warfare from Ephesians 6 but really comprising the whole book of Ephesians. (You can hear the sermon on my YouTube channel). Nearly every chapter in Ephesians mentions something related to the heavenly realms. Until we understand our position in the heavenly realms we will not know how to resist the enemies attack. There are three simple points to understand if we are to experience the victory that Christ has given us over the demonic realm. This study will explore each of those points and the passages of Ephesians that address them.

This is a passionate subject for me because of my own experience with being oppressed by the enemy. For too many years I believed the lie that the oppressed, defeated life was just the way it would be until Jesus came back. Then I learned the truth and the truth set me free to live the joyful, victorious life I now live. I'm not saying that my life is easy or that I don't still have to overcome lies I've believed. I am in process just like we all are. However, since I realized the truth of who Jesus is and what he has done for us, his church, I have never again lived in a constant state of fear, demonic torment, or hopeless oppression.



I will share my story in Chapter One but the rest of the book is an interactive Bible study that will require your participation. I will guide you through the process of understanding what the Scripture is saying in its historical context and from there what it is saying to us today. However, the journey is yours to take. I suggest that you take your time going through this study and really let the Holy Spirit speak to you on a deep level. There are no deadlines to meet so enjoy the journey.

## *About Me*



You probably want to know a little bit about your guide on this journey, since an inexperienced guide might take you in the wrong direction. My name is Shawna and my passion is helping disciples of Jesus engage the Bible in a transformative way so that they are encountering Jesus everyday. I have given the last eight years of my life to studying how it is that we understand Scripture. The official name for this is hermeneutics. All of my study and research wasn't for my sake alone. I've had so many conversations with faithful, God-loving believers who have a hard time engaging the Scripture in a way that brings them life and transformation. I want to equip the Body of Christ to know how to do just that and put tools in the hands of pastors who need to equip their congregation to rightly handle the Word of God.

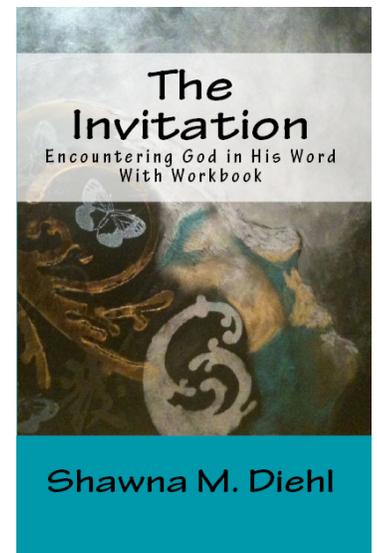
I have two Masters degrees in theology and am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in Renewal Theology from Regent University. I also teach Bible and Theology online for Regent. My calling is to pour out my life for the sake of the Church and I have been doing that for nearly twenty years now! I have served the church as a teacher, pastor, church planter, worship leader and more. I am ordained through the River International Revival Network and serve the River as an Area Leader in Florida.

It has been my deepest honor to equip people to understand and experience the truth in Scripture over the years. I believe that the Bible is the authoritative written Word of God, which means that it communicates God's truth to us in a way that makes us responsible for what we do with that truth. We are living in a day of relativism and disrespect for authority where people are left without any solid ground on which to build the foundation of their life. Even some in the church have given way to the culture's pressure to live and let live. It makes me sad to think that so many people have been deceived to think that there is life outside of relationship with and obedience to Jesus Christ. Now more than ever, it is important that we renew our minds with God's Word and stand as a beacon of

truth, love, and hope to a generation that is becoming increasingly disillusioned with the lies our culture has perpetrated. I promise you that more you ground yourself in God's Word and learn to trust and obey what he reveals in the Scripture, the more you will be able to stand as that beacon.

## *What You Will Need for Our Study*

There are a lot of great Bible study tools available, however, you won't need a lot in order to take this journey through Ephesians. I have tried to provide all the background information to guide you in your study. However, I encourage you to use your own Bible to highlight what is catching your attention and to make notes. You should also use a journal, notebook or computer, although I provide some space for you to write in this book. If you need a Bible or are wanting a good study Bible I recommend the ESV Study Bible. It is a good translation and the study notes follow a more orthodox perspective. Of course, reading the passage in several translations is always recommended. You can take advantage of websites such as [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) to read several translations side by side. If you sign up for a free membership you can even makes notes right online.



You can find free Bible study resources at my website as well as books and other resources available for purchase. For more information visit

[www.shawnadiehl.com](http://www.shawnadiehl.com)

If you want a more in-depth look at the Bible study method we will be using then I recommend purchasing my book, *The Invitation: Encountering God in His Word* from my website. I also host regular webinars and online courses that can equip you in understanding the Bible and encountering Jesus in His Word.

## *Outline of my Study Process*

### 1. *Prayer*

Every time you sit down to study God's Word you should begin by praying that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the written Word of God. Your study time should also be an ongoing conversation with the Holy Spirit as he takes you a journey of discovering transformative truth.

### 2. *Context*

We will discuss the historical and literary context of Ephesians throughout our study.

### 3. *Observation*

We will take time to carefully read and observe each passage. We will be looking for thoughts or phrases that stand out, repeated words, phrases or ideas, and people, places, events or dates. We will also develop our ability to ask in-depth questions about the text.



### 4. *Interpretation*

We will utilize various tools to help us interpret the text including cross-referencing and word studies.

### 5. *Meditation*

This is a step that is sorely missed in many people's study of the Scripture. We will engage in the meditation method called *Lectio Divina* or Divine Reading.

### 6. *Application*

No study is complete without understanding how we are to respond to the text in our present time and culture. We will conclude each chapter with a time for you to respond to the truth that has been revealed to you.

# POINT ONE: TRUTH IS OUR DEFENSE AND OUR WEAPON

*“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.. and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6: 14, 17*

I am blessed to have the family heritage that I have. For generations my family has loved and served the Lord. There are not enough riches in the world to compare with the treasure that my parents and family gave me – a love for God and love for people. However, even a godly upbringing didn't seem to protect me from the enemy's attack. I don't know how the door got open for demonic oppression in my life – and frankly it doesn't matter (especially now that I'm free of it). I don't often talk about this period in my life because there's no point in giving the enemy credit. Everything he tried to destroy me with, God has used to make me the person I am today. God has turned all my ashes into beauty, and that is my testimony. I have not been destroyed – I have been blessed beyond imagination.

I only share this part of my life so that you know how much God can do in a person. There is no one out of his reach. There is always hope. The enemy would have you believe that your life will always be the way it is now. For me it was a



roller coaster ride of extreme spiritual highs when I thought maybe I had broken free of my bondage then devastating lows. Fear ruled my life. There were nights I slept with the lights on because in the dark I would audibly hear the demonic voices whispering over me. I had horrible nightmares and visions. I would often catch glimpses of demons stalking me so that I was afraid to walk outside after dark. There were times I wanted to ask for help but found myself paralyzed and unable to speak. Fear was like a cancer that I tried to cut from my body. I would have done anything to drown out the chorus of voices in my head. After a while I accepted that this was the way it would always be. I probably had a mental illness and I would just have to learn to function in spite of

it. It was important to me that no one knew, especially my godly family. The hopelessness of my situation led to a destructive lifestyle of promiscuity and self-medicating. For ten years – from junior high through college – this is how it was. I knew somewhere inside that I really did love God and hoped that he loved me too. I believed that he had enough grace and power to keep me from going to hell as long as I believed in Jesus. Someday in heaven I would be free but for now I would have to endure the oppression because the devil ruled the earth. Even though I believed in Jesus I was still in reality held prisoner by the power of darkness.

## *What? God is for me?*

Then I started hanging around different people...

...a different kind of Christian than I had ever known. These people believed that God didn't just want me to behave and read my Bible – he wanted to bless me because I was his kid. They believed that Jesus did more than save me from eternal hell fire – he cleansed me from my sin and gave me a whole new nature. My identity was no longer as a sinner but as a saint and priest of the Most High God. God didn't just tolerate me – he really did love me and even enjoyed me. As far as he was concerned there was nothing separating us. And if God was for me then how could the enemy possibly keep me in bondage (Romans 8:31)?

It took months of hearing these truths over and over again for them to start penetrating my heart and mind. Then one day I was home sick from work and I read *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil Anderson, prayed the prayers in the back and for the first time in ten years felt really free. Next, I read Benny Hinn's book *Good Morning Holy Spirit* and prayed to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now I knew God had not abandoned me to do the best I could, but had given me the power to overcome through the Holy Spirit.

I then learned that a relationship with God is not one sided. He is responsive to his children. He is always speaking and always present. In fact, there is only one thing that can keep me from hearing the voice of my Father and that is listening to the lies of the enemy.



A couple weeks after I prayed the *Bondage Breaker* prayers the demonic voices tried to come back and tell me that my freedom wasn't real. I was still in bondage and had just experienced another spiritual high. This time I choose not to listen. I said out loud, "No. God is for me!" and I've never heard from them

again. Even though I still had to overcome sinful habits I had picked up and retrain my thinking, I had enough truth to be able to maintain my freedom from demonic torment.

## ***The truth will set you free!***

The most important thing I learned from *The Bondage Breaker* was that our struggle with the enemy is not a power struggle. He would like us to think it is because how could we possibly hope to overpower a malevolent supernatural being who has all of hell at his disposal and hates us with a passion. He will do everything he can to get you to believe that he is in charge for the time being. It's not true. Jesus already defeated him. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus alone (Matthew 28:18). It was given to him by his Father, which means that the devil never ever had the upper hand on God. Jesus took the keys of death and hades back from the enemy at the cross (Revelation 1:18). The devil doesn't even get the keys to his own kingdom! The only power Satan has is the power we give him because we're afraid of him or agree with his lies.

Our struggle with the enemy is not a power struggle, but a truth struggle. He is always trying to convince us to believe a lie. But if we choose to stop listening to him and agree with God instead then the victory that Jesus won at the cross becomes activated in our life. So who are you going to listen to? Who will you believe? Everything the devil tells you is a lie. Everything the Father says that you are is true. I know it seems too amazing, too good, too overwhelming to be true – but would God lie to you?

## *Ephesians 6:10-13*

I'm going to do something a little unusual for our Bible Study. I'm going to start at the end of the book! I've always been one to read the last page of the novel before starting a new book. Paul sums up the letter to the Ephesians with the well-known passage on spiritual armor. Notice especially what he says about the heavenly realms in this passage because this will be a repeated theme in our study. Starting at the end will help us understand where he's going as we study the other passages in Ephesians. Don't worry. We will come back to chapter 6 at the end of our study as well.

I encourage you to start with a time of prayer, thanksgiving, and worship. By engaging with the Holy Spirit so that you sense his presence you will guard against this becoming just a cognitive activity. This topic in particular warrants extra sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 6:10-13 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading.

**Finally! Everything in Ephesians has led to this moment! It all comes down to this. Here is what Paul wants to leave his readers with... "Be strong in the Lord!" The command to be strong in verse 10 is in the passive voice indicating that the object (you) is being acted upon by the subject (the Lord). This is a command to allow the Lord to empower and strengthen you through your union with him (c.f. Joshua 1:6-9; 1 Samuel 30:6; Ephesians 3:16). However, the command in verse 11 to "put on the whole armor of God" is in the middle voice indicating that the object is acting upon his or herself (c.f. Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10-14). What does this tell us about our responsibilities in spiritual warfare? What do we do and what does God do?**

## *The Battle is Real!*

When Paul first found the Ephesians believers they were disciples of John the Baptist but had not yet heard about Jesus or the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I suggest you read Acts 19). These were presumably Jewish believers whom he had met at the Synagogue, his first stop whenever he entered a new city. Someone may have heard John's teaching on a pilgrimage 20-25 years and brought it back to the small group of seekers at Ephesus. For all those years they had kept John's

message of repentance alive in their hearts, but now Paul had arrived to teach them the fullness of what John had ushered in. Twelve men became disciples of Jesus, were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and immediately the church began to grow. It didn't take long for Paul to come into conflict with the synagogue and so he left, disciples in tow, and began speaking in a gentile lecture hall.

Paul's ministry was so impactful that we are told people were turning from witchcraft to become a part of the church. In fact, deliverance seemed to be big business in Ephesus which makes sense being that it was the center of worship for the goddess Artemis. Revelation 9:20 implies that when people worshipped idols they were actually worshipping demons. In such a spiritually charged atmosphere the believers would need to know how to defend themselves against the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). For the Ephesians the spiritual realm or "heavenly places" was a part of their daily reality.

Paul emphasizes the battle that is taking place by using the word "against" six times in verses 11 and 12. In the Greek the word "against" implies nearness like in hand to hand combat. It tells us that this wasn't just some esoteric theological struggle – the battle with demonic forces in Ephesus was real! In addition, verse 12 provides different categories of demonic powers.

- The word translated "rulers" in the ESV literally means "the beginning" and is also used in Ephesians 1:21 and 3:10. It indicates a being that is preeminent above the others listed.
- The word translated "authorities" in the ESV means "power of authority or government, jurisdiction" and is used in Ephesians 1:21; 2:2; and 3:10. It implies that there are evil powers that operate within certain jurisdictions or regions.
- The word translated "cosmic powers" in the ESV means "lord of the world, prince of this age, the devil and his demons." This is the only place the word appears in the New Testament. In the Greek tradition this word was used to describe pagan gods, however Jewish tradition saw them as demonic spirits.<sup>1</sup>
- The words translated "spiritual forces of evil" in the ESV should be considered a general description of all demonic powers rather than a

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<sup>1</sup> Hoehner, 827.

description of a new entity. This phrase also serves to give us the location of these forces being in the “heavenly places.”

This isn't the first time Paul has listed the powers that we are up against. In Ephesians 1:21, Paul gives us a very similar list and tells us that Jesus is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.” It is absolutely true that Jesus has already disarmed the demonic powers (Colossians 2:15) and that he has all authority (Matthew 28:18) which means the devil has none. Yet in Ephesians 6 Paul also makes it clear that our struggle with the demonic realm is still very real. We will see that the struggle Paul is describing in Ephesians 6 is not an internal struggle with sin or negative emotions. The attack wasn't personal in that way. The battle came from the opposition the Ephesians faced as they preached the gospel in a very dark demon filled city.

Ephesian 6 makes it clear that as we confront the gates of hell in an effort to rescue those held prisoner by darkness, we will face conflict. Those who claim to be under spiritual attack akin to what Ephesians 6 teaches because they are depressed or their lives are a mess don't really understand the passage. It is more likely that these people are the prisoners that need rescued. If this is you then you should ask yourself, am a part of the Army of God advancing against the enemy, or am I barely making it myself, much less rescuing anyone else? Even Christians can be held prisoner, as my story witnesses, if they don't know the truth about who they are in Christ and how to stand in the truth.

It makes perfect sense that as we advance against the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18) we will come into conflict with the demonic. So how does Paul tell us to defend ourselves against these evil spiritual forces? Not with gimmicks, power struggles or rituals (that's what got the seven sons of Sceva in trouble in Acts 19:14). Truth is our primary weapon and defense. Not just the belt of truth on which everything hinges, and not just the Sword of the Spirit which is truth. Every piece of armor is contingent on us understanding the truth of what God says.

## *Ephesians 6:14-18*

Read Ephesians 6:14-18 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Then let's examine each of the pieces of armor that Paul mentions and what Ephesians says about their unique aspects.

“In him you also, when you heard the word of **truth**, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13).

“...you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the **truth is in Jesus**” (Eph. 4:21).

**The Belt of Truth:** While what is described in Ephesians 6:14 is belt-like, the actual wording of the Greek is, “Stand therefore, by girding your waist with truth...” (Mounce). There are several things to note about these two verses in Ephesians. First, the Ephesians have heard the truth by the gospel having been preached to them. The result of them hearing and believing the truth is that they are now included in him who is the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ.

“...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true **righteousness** and holiness” (Eph. 4:24).

**The Breastplate of Righteousness:** Before Paul instructed them to “put on” the armor of God (Eph. 6:13) he instructs them to “put on” the new self, provided to them through the blood of Jesus (Eph. 2:15). By putting on the new self they are in essence putting on the breastplate of righteousness since that is part of the nature of the new self.

We should not be thinking individualistically about this righteous and holy new self. In fact, self isn't a very good translation of the Greek word here. A better translation would be “new person” and it is the same Greek word used in Ephesians 2:15. Paul tells us in chapter 2 that this new person is created in Christ Jesus and made up of all those, Jew and Gentile, who have been reconciled to God. When we put on the “new person” of the Body of Christ our spiritual DNA becomes the DNA of that Body which is righteousness and holiness.

“For he himself is our **peace**, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making **peace**” (Eph. 2:14-15).

“This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the **gospel**” (Eph. 3:6).

**Feet Fitted with readiness that comes from the Gospel of Peace:** Are you starting to see how interdependent these pieces of armor are? The good news about peace is that inclusion in God’s plan is no longer limited to those with whom he made the Sinai covenant. The law of that covenant created animosity between Jew and gentile because gentiles represented everything that Israel was to be separated from. But now, through Jesus, we all have the opportunity to be reconciled to God. Peace with God results and peace with each other! That is good news worth sharing.

“For by grace you have been **saved** through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

**Helmet of Salvation:** To understand this verse in the correct tense it should be translated, “For by grace you are saved...”. The Greek here is actually a present indicative active verb meaning that your current reality is that you are saved. Grace (the object) has acted upon you (the subject) to bring this reality about. What does it mean to be saved? Paul describes it for us earlier in Ephesians 2...

<b>Once dead...</b> “...you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked” (v. 1).	<b>Now alive...</b> “God made us alive together with Christ” (v. 5).
<b>Once you had evil at work within while following the prince of the power of the air...</b> “following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (v. 2).	<b>Now you are in Christ, seated in heavenly places...</b> “...and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (v. 6).

<p><b>Once an object of wrath...</b>  “...we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (v. 3).</p>	<p><b>Now an object of grace...</b>  “...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v.7).</p>
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Salvation isn't just that he forgave us our sins, but that he has repositioned us in His Son seated above the demonic princes that once dominated us. He changed our very nature from objects of wrath into objects of grace. When the truth of your position in Christ gets down deep into your heart your mind is also impacted. Confusion about your standing with God leaves. Fear that the enemy will get you disappears. Performance motivation and anxiety is replaced by the assurance that Christ has already done all this for you!

“This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our **faith** in him” (Eph. 3:11-12).

“...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through **faith...**” (Eph. 3:17).

**Shield of Faith:** Faith is the key that God gave us that allowed us to unlock all the benefits of salvation and our position in Christ. It is also what allows the Lord access to dwell inside us. If we are within Christ and he is within us, what access does that give the enemy to us? Appropriately, Paul uses the Greek word that describes a full, body length shield that will cover the whole person, in contrast with a small round shield used closer proximity. The purpose of this shield is to “extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16). The Greek word for “darts” is a generic term for any projectile including arrows and spears. In ancient warfare flaming arrows or spears were hurled at the shield of the enemy in an attempt to get them to throw aside their shield and leave themselves unprotected. To deflect this kind of attack the Roman soldiers would cover their wooden shields in skins and leathers and soak their shields in water before a battle. If our shield is faith then the water it is soaked in is our communion with Christ. Without that

ongoing communion (described in John 15) our faith can become dry, vulnerable to the attack of the enemy, and in the worst case scenario we may throw it aside in an attempt to fight the battle without it.

“In him you also, when you heard **the word** of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit.**” Ephesians 1:13

**Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God:** Notice that the sword Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:17 is given to us by the Spirit of God. This is the same Spirit who secures and authenticates our position in Christ’s Body. The “word” of God mentioned in 6:17 is the same “word” mentioned in 1:13 and should be associated with the Gospel that the Ephesians heard and believed. How is the gospel like a sword? When the gospel of salvation is preached the kingdom of darkness is raided and its prisoners rescued and brought into the Kingdom of God!

**Summary:** So if we were to take away the metaphoric reference to armor and state the truths that Paul is representing here what might that sound like?

Remember the truth you first heard and believed about Jesus, that you are now a part of the new person, the Body of Christ, and that you have peace with God! This is the peace that you proclaim to others! Remember that he has taken you out of the kingdom of darkness and evil no longer has dominance over you. Believe that you are now positioned in Christ Jesus above every demonic spirit. It is faith in your position in Christ, and his presence within you, that protects you from any attack the enemy might hurl at you from below as you remain in communion with Jesus. When you share this good news and true word about salvation in Christ you are doing damage to the demonic kingdom

Putting on the armor of God isn’t a daily declaration that “this morning I am putting on my helmet of salvation, I am picking up my shield of faith...” Putting on your armor is living in the reality of your position in Christ Jesus! It is believing the truth about what God has done for you because of his great love for you (Ephesians 2:4; 3:18-19).

# *Meditation*

*Lectio Divina* has been practiced for hundreds of years as a way of engaging the Holy Spirit in the text of Scripture. It literally means “sacred reading” in Latin and has an air of mysticism about it. However, don’t let that intimidate you. You needn’t be a mystic to learn to use this ancient and time-honored method.

There are four basic steps to *Lectio Divina*; Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation. At first it may take some practice to feel comfortable but before long these steps will flow naturally as you engage with the text. Give yourself plenty of time and a quiet place to learn how to use this approach. You may also want to have a journal on hand to record the various stages of the exercise.

(1) Reading: Choose a short passage or verse with which you are already familiar. Quiet your mind, still your heart and connect with the Holy Spirit. Slowly and thoughtfully read the chosen passage or verse. Try this now with Ephesians 6:10-12.

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(2) Meditation: Feel the impact of the words that are being spoken. What is the emotion being conveyed?

Read the verses again and absorb each phrase. Perhaps pray in tongues as you read. You will know it is time to move to the next step when you feel your heart welling up in response to God.

(3) Prayer: You should find yourself naturally responding to God as an overflow of absorbing the passage. Your prayer may be one of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, or supplication. Pour out your heart to the Lord and when you have emptied your heart to him move onto the next step. (Note: you may want to use your journal at this point).

(4) Contemplation: As you started out the exercise in a place of quiet before the Lord, now you return to that place and let his presence wash over you. You may hear him speak to you about the passage or what his presence conveys to you may be beyond words. Record what you are hearing/experiencing below:

Conclude the exercise with a prayer of commitment to obey the Word and to let the Word continue to transform you.

## *Application*

Thinking about what we've just studied and meditated on, answer the questions below.

1. How does truth protect us from the enemy's attack?
2. How are we to use truth as a weapon?
3. How is it that we "put on" the armor of God?
4. Based on our study of the armor of God, what are some of the primary truths that we are to believe?
5. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about how to apply this passage to your life?

## POINT TWO: YOU DO NOT STAND ALONE!

*“In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:22*

When Paul instructs us to put on the Armor of God the picture is not of a lone warrior standing against the onslaught of the enemy. The picture is of an army who has gone forward into battle together only to find that the Lord has already fought for them.

### *Ephesians 2:11-22*

Read Ephesians 2:11-3:12 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

1. What specifically does Paul want them to remember about their life without Jesus? What emotions is he trying to get them to identify with in verse 12?
2. In verse 11 Paul identifies the Gentiles as uncircumcised in their flesh.
3. Both Jews and gentiles had to brought to God through Jesus...

<sup>11</sup> *Therefore*

**remember that at one time** you Gentiles **in** the **flesh**,

called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision,  
which is made in the **flesh** by hands—

<sup>12</sup> **remember that** you were **at that time**

separated from Christ,

alienated from the commonwealth of Israel *and*

strangers to the covenants of promise,<sup>2</sup>  
having no hope *and*  
without God **in** the world.

<sup>13</sup> ***But now in Christ Jesus***

you who once were **far off**  
*have been brought near* by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For *he himself* [emphasis] is our **peace**,

who has made us both **one and**  
has broken down **in** his **flesh** the dividing wall of **hostility**  
[how has he done this?]

<sup>15</sup> *by* abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances,  
that he

might create in himself **one** new man in place of the two,  
so making **peace**,<sup>16</sup> *and*

might reconcile us both to God in **one body** *through* the cross,  
*thereby* killing the **hostility**.<sup>17</sup> *And*

he came and preached **peace** to you who were **far off** and  
**peace** to those who were **near**.

<sup>18</sup> For *through him* we both have access in **one** Spirit to the Father.

<sup>19</sup> So *then* you are no longer strangers and  
aliens, but

*you are fellow citizens* with the saints and  
members of the household of God,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

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<sup>2</sup> c.f. Eph. 2:19; 3:6

<sup>3</sup> c.f. Eph. 2:12; 3:6.

<sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

<sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

## ***Context***

Paul's instruction to stand is reminiscent of the Lord's instruction to Israel's army in 2 Chronicles 20:17 to "stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf." They did not have to fight but they did have to march out as an army to engage the enemy. Not only did they march out, but they put the praise and worship team in front. If they had apathetically hid behind their walls they would never have seen the Lord work on their behalf.

The problem is that there is a tendency in our western churches to hide behind the walls of the church. We have let our culture put us under siege when it we who are supposed to be advancing against the kingdom of darkness (Matthew 16:18). In the meantime, the culture that preaches tolerance is slowly eating away at our identity as believers and as a church. We try to defend ourselves against the onslaught of culture. We boycott Starbucks, prohibit our children from watching questionable cartoons, and refuse to bake cakes. We aren't going out to the battleground, we're still hiding behind our Christianity, reacting to culture instead of engaging it. At best this has resulted in a stalemate and at worse we are being overwhelmed, marginalized and even persecuted. It certainly doesn't seem like we're winning the conflict.

How do we get out of this quagmire of culture wars and engage the real battle as the supernatural, empowered, army of God that we are? It begins with understanding who we are as the church and our purpose here on earth.

## ***Ephesians 3:1-12***

Read Ephesians 3:1-12 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

[Chapter 3:1] For this reason

I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

<sup>2</sup>assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup>how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

<sup>4</sup>When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup>which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup>**This mystery is that the Gentiles are**

**fellow heirs,**

**members of the same body, and**

**partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

<sup>8</sup>To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given,

to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and

to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

<sup>10</sup>so that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.**

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<sup>4</sup>c.f. Eph. 2:12, 19.

<sup>11</sup>This was according to the eternal **purpose** that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup>in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

## *Meditation*

(1) Slowly and thoughtfully read Ephesians 3:6, 8-11.

<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel... <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord...

(2) Meditation: Feel the impact of the words that are being spoken. What is the emotion being conveyed?

Read the verse again and absorb each phrase. Perhaps pray in tongues as you read. You will know it is time to move to the next step when you feel your heart welling up in response to God.

(3) Prayer: You should find yourself naturally responding to God as an overflow of absorbing the passage. Your prayer may be one of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, or supplication. Pour out your heart to the Lord and when you have emptied your heart to him move onto the next step.

(4) Contemplation: As you started out the exercise in a place of quiet before the Lord, now you return to that place and let his presence wash over you. You may hear him speak to you about the passage or what his presence conveys to you may be beyond words. Record what you are hearing/experiencing below:

Conclude the exercise with a prayer of commitment to obey the Word and to let the Word continue to transform you.

## *Application*

Thinking about what we've just studied and meditated on, answer the questions below.

1. How does verse 12 describe our present culture. Are there certain aspects of our culture that demonstrate being separated, alienated, without hope and strangers to a covenant relationship with God? Can you identify these aspects in your life before you came to Christ?

## POINT THREE: WE ARE IN CHRIST!

Christ is positioned above every... and we are positioned in Christ...

The fate of the universe does not hang in the balance. The enemy never had the upper hand on God.

Seated with him in heavenly places.

We're declaring on earth as it is in heaven... that is our warfare...

We are seated in the throne room in Christ Jesus. We're not trying to get into God's presence. We already have the victory because of our victory in Christ. Ephesians 1:11-

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened... whether or not you see it – it is true.

### *Ephesians 1:3-14*

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who has blessed us **in Christ**

with every spiritual blessing **in** the heavenly places,

<sup>4</sup>even as he chose us **in him** before the foundation of the world,

that we should be holy and blameless before him.

**In** love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us<sup>[b]</sup> for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us **in the Beloved**.

<sup>7</sup> **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> making known<sup>[c]</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth **in Christ** <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> **In him** we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope **in Christ** might be to the praise of his glory.

<sup>13</sup> **In him** you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee<sup>[d]</sup> of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,<sup>[e]</sup> to the praise of his glory.

## *Ephesians 1:15-23*

Read Ephesians 1:15-23 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

<sup>15</sup> For this reason,

because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and  
your love<sup>[f]</sup> toward all the saints,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you,  
remembering you in my prayers,

<sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,<sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power

toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the **heavenly places**, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

## *Ephesians 2:1-7*

Read Ephesians 2:1-7 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

**2** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body <sup>[a]</sup> and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>[b]</sup> **4** But <sup>[c]</sup> God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the **heavenly places** in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

## *Meditation*

(1) Slowly and thoughtfully read Ephesians 2:4-7.

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(2) Meditation: Feel the impact of the words that are being spoken. What is the emotion being conveyed?

Read the verse again and absorb each phrase. Perhaps pray in tongues as you read. You will know it is time to move to the next step when you feel your heart welling up in response to God.

(3) Prayer: You should find yourself naturally responding to God as an overflow of absorbing the passage. Your prayer may be one of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, or supplication. Pour out your heart to the Lord and when you have emptied your heart to him move onto the next step.



(4) Contemplation: As you started out the exercise in a place of quiet before the Lord, now you return to that place and let his presence wash over you. You may hear him speak to you about the passage or what his presence conveys to you may be beyond words. Record what you are hearing/experiencing below:

Conclude the exercise with a prayer of commitment to obey the Word and to let the Word continue to transform you.

# *Application*

## CONCLUSION: ARISE, SHINE & STAND

Ephesians 5 – stand up because you know who you are. When the light shines on you, you become light. Light naturally displaces darkness.

### *Ephesians 5:8-14*

Read Ephesians 5:8-14 in your Bible. As you read make note of any words, thoughts or phrases that stand out. Also, write down any questions that come to mind as you are reading. The notes and questions below will help you to interpret the text.

<sup>8</sup>for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

## *Meditation*

(1) Slowly and thoughtfully read Ephesians 5:13-14.

<sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

(2) Meditation: Feel the impact of the words that are being spoken. What is the emotion being conveyed?

Read the verse again and absorb each phrase. Perhaps pray in tongues as you read. You will know it is time to move to the next step when you feel your heart welling up in response to God.

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(4) Contemplation: As you started out the exercise in a place of quiet before the Lord, now you return to that place and let his presence wash over you. You may hear him speak to you about the passage or what his presence conveys to you may be beyond words. Record what you are hearing/experiencing below:

Conclude the exercise with a prayer of commitment to obey the Word and to let the Word continue to transform you.

# *Application*



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