

The Most Foundational Discipline: Consume the Word

Intro: “Prayer and seeking the Lord will attract the enemy’s opposition far more than busyness, activities, and ‘ministry’ in the church.” – Josh

- This is true because Acts 6:4 says prayer and the Word are the works of the ministry
- Sometimes we can be busy for Jesus, but that doesn’t mean we are being very effective at shaking the kingdom
- Satan isn’t worried about you being busy or spread thin in life
- But when you start seeking the Lord individually and as a church? → watch out!
- Anticipate Spiritual Warfare church... So what is it? Lies
- *The Devil / Satan was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44 NIV)*
- Disunity (lies), gossip (lies), doubts (lies), fear (lies), anxiety (lies), greed (lies), lust (lies) → it’s all lies! How do you fight lies? With truth.

Background on Ephesians

- Many believe Paul wrote Ephesians during his Roman imprisonment (ca. A.D. 60–62).
- You can imagine Paul under house arrest, surrounded daily by guards – Roman soldiers.
- Chapters 1–3 focus on the believer’s position in Christ (rich doctrinal truth)
- Chapters 4–6 outline practical implications (implications of that truth)
- The book ends, in Ephesians 6:10–20, with Paul’s final challenge of the letter
- Paul’s charge, coming out of the rest of the letter, is to say, “We are at war. This is a hostile environment. Stand firm! Get ready.”

Paul’s Charge in Ephesians 6:10–12

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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.”

- That’s intense. We wrestle (hand-to-hand combat) not against flesh and blood, other people, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers...
- This sounds like a complex, organized demonic realm exerting influence in the “heavenly places.”
- Paul describes our world as “This present darkness” → the fallen world system overshadowed by evil. Sounds like a dark, hazy cloud that overshadows everything
- As a disciple, your life involves unseen conflicts way beyond sociopolitical struggles, your co-worker who pokes fun at you, or your tennis elbow
- You are at war, and this is a war you cannot win with carnal (fleshly, tangible) weapons or armor (or amulets, cross necklaces, garlic, wooden stakes)

- You can't even see the enemy who is trying to devour you (prowling, crouching) → The war is often the **manifestation of lies** entrenched in your mind, psyche, and soul
- No wonder "be strong" is literally "BE STRENGTHENED"
- We need continuous empowerment from an outside source, a divine source, to give us the strength we need to stand firm
- We have to depend on God's power, not our personal strength.
- I share this because as we commit to the disciplines, **God's means of drawing CLOSER to Jesus and becoming LIKE Jesus**, the enemy notices. He doesn't want your growth
- So what do we do against lies? How do we stand firm against lies incarnate in demonic activity? How do we win a fight we can't see? What must we do to "be strengthened?"
- To put it another way: What is the most foundational discipline?

Ephesians 6:13–18

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." (ESV)

- Paul is sitting in prison, looking at each part of the Roman soldier's garb and relating its value to spiritual lessons
- He says, "Take up the whole armor of God" to stand firm
- This is not about "defeating Satan." → Jesus did that!
- This is about holding your ground and being able to counterattack so that when the battle is through, you are still standing!
- Paul lists each part of the armor

Armor of God: Tied to the Word

- **Belt of Truth**
 - Held the tunic and gear together.
 - Belt of truth refers to God's revealed truth in Christ
 - Eph 4:21, "...as the truth is in Jesus"
 - The truth of Christ, the truth of the revealed Word, holds it all together. Without TRUTH, it all falls apart
- **Breastplate of Righteousness**
 - Protected vital organs, especially the heart. Let me tell you about the attacks on your heart → guilt... shame... compromise...
 - The breastplate of righteousness deals with all of the above
 - The Word teaches you how to live righteously
 - But when you fail, and fail, you will... remember:
 - The believer's imputed righteousness in Christ (Romans 3:21–26)

- The Word teaches us that we ARE righteous and shows us how to LIVE righteously
- **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace**
 - Enabled soldiers to march swiftly and stand firm with traction.
 - The Word of God teaches us the truth of the gospel
 - The OT points to it; the NT unpacks it
 - Our feet are ready because we stand firmly in the peace Christ has won, which we know about because of the Word confirmed
 - We have confidence in what we believe, which gives us **traction**
 - When the enemy presses against us we can say, “No. This IS true. I believe it fully and completely. I am not going to slide off the cliff.” → shoes without treads
 - But the gospel also makes us ready for action, ready to move forward and proclaim Christ’s Good News (truth) to others!
 - Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful... are the feet of him who brings good news”

Summary so far:

- We are held together by the TRUTH of the Word. It’s all about truth.
- The Word reminds us of our righteousness and teaches us the right way to live.
- Our confidence in the Gospel as revealed in the WORD by the Spirit gives us traction to stand firm and run ahead to share Jesus with the world

● **Shield of Faith**

- Large, rectangular shield covering most of the body.
- Imagine the enemy shooting flaming arrows at you – you can see them coming from his castle peaks
 - Temptation... accusation... doubts... lies... shame... guilt... failure...
- Each of them is aimed to harm you and to ignite, spreading to those around you → burning them too
- That’s what happens when the enemy gets you in a chokehold. Impacts you, your family, your friends, your community
- Paul says that faith (the assurance of things unseen) extinguishes every arrow, rendering it blocked and harmless
- Faith in what? Good sentiment? Wistful thoughts?
- No! Faith in the WORD of God; faith in TRUTH
- That shield of faith is built out of the impenetrable, inflammable, reliable Word
- You trust in it, the same way you trust in that shield to block the arrow headed toward your chest or your head

● **Helmet of Salvation**

- Protected the head and identified the legion.
- Your head is important.
- It’s the seat of cognition → your ability to think and process
- Gotta protect that watermelon!
- But the helmet also marked who you were, what legion you fought with → the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan

- The helmet of salvation is the marker of your identity. It guards your mind, reminding you of WHO you are and WHOSE you are
- The battlefield of the mind is a serious thing
- Transformed by the renewing of our mind
- But the helmet of salvation, rooted in the TRUTH of the Word, guards your mind against those attacks, those thoughts, reminds you of your identity
- So you can say like Paul, “I take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ” → “I know who I am... child of the king; doulos of Christ”
- **Sword of the Spirit**
 - A short sword, often used at close range.
 - The Sword of the Spirit sounds like an epic weapon
 - But what is it? The Word of God
 - Scripture: God’s revealed message
 - Sharper than any two-edged sword, able to divide seemingly indivisible things like the soul and spirit, bone and marrow
 - Used defensively to parry the lies of the enemy, riposte, and offensively to advance God’s truth
 - Paul continues, urging the church to pray. But what do they pray? That which the Word instructs

Importance of the Word

- We are at war, church... and do you know what is the obvious, most foundational resource given to us by God to be used by his Spirit in us?
 - The Word of God
- Consuming the Word of God is the most important discipline in your life
- Arguably every other disciple discipline is built upon it—from prayer to evangelism
- Without the Word, you stand on your own feeble foundation, shifting sand, but with the Word, you stand upon the bedrock of God’s unchanging character → the wise man builds his house upon that rock
- Jesus summarized, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
- Consuming the Word is an umbrella discipline
- We could and will spend many weeks over the next two months unpacking things that all tie back to the Word of God, the Bible
- For our purposes today, let’s quickly run through some basic ways to consume the Word that should be in your arsenal. We will explain many of these with more depth in the coming weeks.

Ways to Consume the Word

- Hearing → biblical preaching
- Reading → reading for breadth
- Studying → reading for depth (with pen and paper)
- Memorizing → hiding it in your heart

- Meditating → chewing, chewing, and chewing some more
- Obeying → output of the Word // what goes in, must come out

Conclusion:

- **Summarizing the Armor of God and the Word:**
 - Each piece of the armor—truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit—is deeply rooted in consuming Scripture.
 - The way we fight LIES is with TRUTH, so you need to KNOW what is true
 - We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12)
 - Without a daily intake of God’s Word, our spiritual armor becomes weak and incomplete. You get gaps, chinks, cracks...
- **The Scriptures MUST be Central in Your Life**
 - As a soldier trains with his weapon and maintains his armor, we must train with the Word and stay fresh with it
 - Daily engagement with Scripture strengthens our resolve: “Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10).
 - If tragedy or attack befell you this week, built upon lies and deceit, would you stand? Would you be able to remind yourself of what was true?
- **Read Alone**
 - Set aside a specific time each day for Scripture reading—morning devotion, lunch break reflection, or evening study.
 - Grab a reading plan & bookmark on your way out so you can begin.
 - Start using a journal to record insights, questions, and thoughts.
 - Memorize key verses that strike you
- **Read with Others**
 - Consider grabbing a few friends to read the Word together; hold each other accountable in consistent Bible consumption.
 - Reading in community deepens our understanding and motivates us
- **Read to Obey**
 - Consuming the Word isn’t just about knowledge—it’s about transformation.
 - Don’t just read it, apply it!
- **Encouragement to Persist:**
 - Building this discipline takes time—consistency over perfection.
 - Embrace small, steady steps: That reading plan outside is about 5 minutes a day, but offers you suggestions to go deeper
 - Remember Jesus’ words: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”