

The Shield of Faith

(Ephesians 6:16)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Would you believe me if I told you that if you fell backward into my arms, I would catch you and not let you hit the floor? [Teacher, have several volunteers prove their faith by doing it.] It's one thing to say you have faith, but quite another to prove it. Today we're going to learn about what faith is.

Opening Prayer

Lord, some of us may have heard that we need to have faith in You in order to go to Heaven after we die. We want to live with You for all eternity, but sometimes we're not sure what it means to have faith in You. Sometimes we wonder if we have enough faith in You for You to accept us. This morning, teach us what it means to have faith in You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

"above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." (Ephesians 6:16)

Lesson

The past few weeks we've been studying the pieces of a Roman soldier's armor and how they relate to our spiritual walk with Jesus.

Let's review by reading Ephesians 6:10-13

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (11) Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. (12) For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore, put on every piece of God's

armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

In battle, it was important for a Roman soldier to be properly dressed. He needed armor as a suit of protection. And in the same way, God has given us spiritual armor to protect us from our enemy, Satan.

Let's review the pieces of the spiritual armor that we've learned about so far and how we put them on.

Belt of Truth

We put "truth" on by:

1. Learning as much as we can of the Bible's truths
2. Always being truthful in everything we do

Breastplate of Righteousness

We put "righteousness" on by choosing to do the right things... things God approves of.

Gospel of Peace Shoes

We put "peace" on by:

1. Making peace with God by receiving His gift of salvation.
2. Making peace with others by forgiving them as God has forgiven you.

Who remembers what the word "gospel" means? (Good news) What is the "Good News?" (That Jesus paid for your sins) So we learned in last week's lesson that we are to be prepared to tell people the good news about the peace we have with God.

Today we're going to give our soldier something no soldier of Rome would have wanted to venture into battle without.

Ephesians 6:16

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

To understand how remarkable faith, used as a shield, can be for us, let's find out what a shield did for a Roman soldier.

What Was a Roman Soldier's Shield Like?

A shield was a soldier's best protection. It was about 2 feet across and 4 feet long. He carried the shield in one hand and could move it to protect any part of his body. So it offered protection for almost every part of the soldier's body.

It was curved so that spears and arrows would hit it at an angle and bounce off. That same curve also gave the soldier room to move about behind it as his movements changed in battle. Most shields were made from wood and were covered with leather. They were bound around the outside with iron or bronze. They were very strong. A soldier was safer when he was not afraid to hide behind his shield. To get to him, the enemy's arrows had to get past the shield first and then pierce through the armor that was worn on the soldier's body.

When you picture a soldier using his shield, you usually think of him holding it in front of him. The sides of the shield were made to hook together with the shields of other soldiers so that an army could use them to form a wall of protection. Often a whole regiment of Roman soldiers would lock their shields together over their heads and at their sides. They looked like a giant turtle in a shell. Together, a group of soldiers could move forward and use picks and crowbars to break down a city gate while they were protected on all sides from the enemies' arrows.

The enemy used everything they could think of to defeat the soldiers. Knowing the soldier's shields were made of wood, the enemy often set their arrows on fire before they shot them. Roman soldiers covered their wooden shields with cloth and tough leather,

then soaked them in water so that when a flaming arrow landed on the wet shield, the fire would immediately go out.

Satan, our enemy, shoots flaming arrows, or "*fiery darts*," at us, too. Some of the darts Satan shoots are lies, hateful thoughts about people, or the desire to sin. We don't know when Satan will shoot one of his darts. He's like a sniper who shoots when we least expect it. We must always have our shield of faith in hand and be ready to use it.

When you know what faith is, you can understand how it can be your shield, your protection from whatever Satan flings at you. Let's talk about what faith is.

What is Faith?

Say that I tell you that I will take the whole Sunday school class to the zoo next week, if you get your parents to sign this slip of paper. I tell you to come back next week with a sack lunch, play clothes on and your signed "permission" slip. Next week, when you come to Sunday school dressed for the zoo, carrying your brown-bag lunch and with your signed slip of paper in your hand, you come knowing that we are going to the zoo. That's faith. Faith is when you count on someone to keep a promise because you know the person can be trusted to tell you the truth. When you say you have faith in Jesus, you're saying that you trust and believe that what He did on the cross really paid the price for your sins. You are counting on God's promise to take you into Heaven when you die.

How Does the Shield of Faith Protect You?

Satan wants you and me to doubt God. He wants us to doubt God's promises, His faithfulness, His goodness, and His power. But you know that God can be counted on to do what He has promised. Believing God will stop Satan's arrows from hurting you.

When you have the Shield of Faith, all of the love, care, concern, and salvation that God has promised in His Word to those who love

Him are yours. There is nothing Satan can do to keep God's promises from being true in your life. He can't penetrate your shield as long as you trust in God and His Word. When you put your trust in something or someone else, it's like laying your shield aside. That's when you become open to Satan's power to lead you away from God.

We need to surround ourselves with Christian friends so that when we are tempted to give up our faith, we can "hook on" to their shields and let them encourage us (Hebrews 10:23-25). Hold your Shield of Faith high by trusting the truths you know about God. Even when things seem to be going wrong, believe that God is your always present, all powerful, loving Father, working in your life for your good — even when your feelings tell you something different. Faith is acting on what you believe even when you have doubts.

You use your Shield of Faith by believing and trusting God's promises. As you trust His promises, He will protect you from Satan.

Closing Prayer

Lord, it's so good to remember how faithful You are to us! Thank You for always keeping Your promises to us! Even when the hard things in life start to distract us, help us always to remember that You are always by our side and that nothing is impossible for us to do with Your help. Thank You that You are the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Almighty One that we can always trust in. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Let the children work on the *Faith Rebus* word search, or send it home as a "take home" paper.

Ping Pong Ball Toss: Prepare two egg cartons with various points on the cups. Set them up side by side. Have each child take a turn. If they get the right answer they get an opportunity to throw three ping pong balls into an egg carton for points. The child or team with the most points wins.

Or, use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What does God give us to stand against the tricks of the devil? (A suit of armor)
2. Is one piece of armor enough to stand against the devil? (No, we must put on the whole armor of God)
3. What does it say in verse 11 about why is it easy to sin and hard to do right? (The devil plays tricks on us)
4. What piece of the armor do we use when we do the right thing? (The Breastplate of Righteousness)
5. What piece of the armor do we use when we remember that Jesus paid for our sins and we can stand firm against Satan? (The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace)
6. What piece of the armor do we use when we tell the truth? (The Belt of Truth)
7. What piece of the armor do we use when we trust God's promises? (The Shield of Faith)
8. What is faith? (When you count on someone to keep a promise because you know that person can be trusted to tell the truth)
9. What are the arrows Satan shoots at us? (Lies, hateful thoughts about people, desire to sin, doubts that God really means what He says)

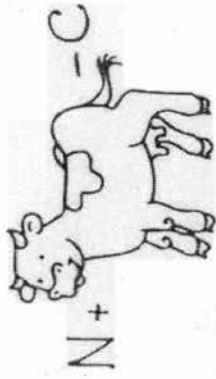
10. How can we stop Satan's arrows of doubt? (By believing God's Word)
11. How do you put on the Belt of Truth? (By learning the truth and telling the truth)
12. How do you put on the Breastplate of Righteousness? (By choosing to think or do the right thing.)
13. How do you put on the Shoes of Peace? (By believing what Jesus did for you really paid the penalty for your sins, by making peace with others, and by being ready to tell someone about Jesus)
14. How do you take up the Shield of Faith? (By believing and trusting in God's promises.)

Easier Questions:

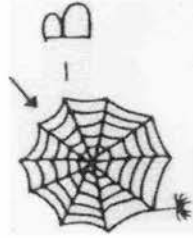
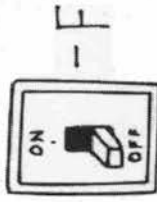
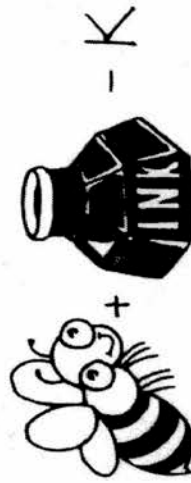
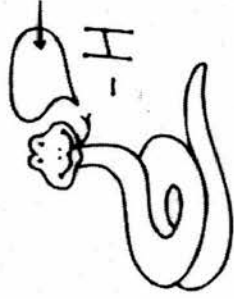
15. Who can we always count on to tell us the truth? (God)
16. Who are we pleasing when we do not tell the truth? (Satan)
17. Who is the armor of God for? (For every Christian)
18. How do we know that our sins are forgiven? (Because the Lord Jesus paid for them and promised that we would belong to Him forever)
19. Can we use our armor all by ourselves? (No, the Lord Jesus gives us strength to stand against Satan.)

Faith Rebus

In Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul describes the full armor of God. One of the pieces of armor is the shield of faith. But what is faith? The writer of the book of Hebrews gives us one definition of faith. To find out what it is, solve the rebus below. Then check your answer in Hebrews 11:1.



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