

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The fourth series of 5 Bible studies is about living in the world. We will be studying the following 5 Bible topics: “Money in the world”, “Truthfulness in the world”, “Temptations in the world”, “Spiritual warfare in the world” and “Suffering in the world”. Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE IS ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE WORLD.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Ephesians 6:10-18. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

Ephesians 6:10-18. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (T) Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. (S) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (T) Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (S) Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, (T) and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (S) In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (T) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (S) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is the fact that the devil and his army of demons are real enemies and will try every trick and plan to make me fall and be defeated. There are certain “evil days” when the forces of evil launch an attack on me. Therefore, I am *learning from the Bible about the evil schemes of the devil*. According to Luke 8:12, his strategy is to take God’s word away from people’s mind and heart. According to John 8:44, he is always a liar. According to 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, he blinds people’s minds so that they cannot understand the gospel. According to Luke 4:6-7, he makes people believe that good things can be obtained by doing bad things. He misquotes the Bible (Luke 4:6), he plants insincere and wicked people in the Christian Church (Matthew 13:37-41), he tempts people to commit sexual sins, especially when they lack self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5) and he spreads false teachings through false teachers everywhere (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

(T) An important truth for me is the fact that this passage combines sovereign grace and human responsibility. On the one hand, all the spiritual weapons, which constitute the full armour of God, come from God. God made these weapons and gives them to his soldiers. On the other hand, the Christian soldier must put this armour on and must use the weapons for both defensive and offensive warfare. Thus, in spiritual warfare, I want to *be completely dependant* on God and his resources on the one hand and *be completely responsible* to fight the battles with dedication. I want to be strong, but not in my own strength. I want to be strong in God’s strength and by taking a real stand against the forces of evil.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1<sup>st</sup> Question. What is spiritual warfare?

(T) The Bible says that our struggle is not against people, but in fact against evil spiritual forces. The *rulers, authorities and powers* are different kinds of evil spirits who are under the control of the devil and who work through evil people. The evil spirits have their abode in the *heavenly realms*, which is the region above the world, but beneath the heaven where God and the redeemed people live. These evil spirits are fallen angels. That is why they oppose the living God and try to destroy his work of salvation in people. That is also why the evil forces in the world are often friendly to other religions, but very hostile to the Christian faith. *Spiritual warfare* is continual and active fight against the schemes and activities of evil spirits and their collaborators, the evil religions, the governments and the evil people. Spiritual warfare can only be done with *spiritual weapons* and by relying on the *spiritual power* of the living God, the God who revealed himself through the prophets of the Bible

and who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. The aim of spiritual warfare is to ward off their attacks, to remain standing through all evil days and to gain ground and snatch people away from their control.

2<sup>nd</sup> Question. What is the belt of truth that we should buckle around our waist”?

(S) In physical warfare, the belt (or girdle) was fastened around a short tunic worn by the soldier. Thus his legs and arms were free for action. Whenever he was not engaged in battle, the soldier attached his breastplate and sword to his belt. In spiritual warfare the belt represents *truth or sincerity*. The main question for the spiritual soldier is, “Do I sincerely want to fight battles in spiritual warfare?” The belt of truth is the spiritual soldier’s *motivation to fight*. Sincerity is a mighty weapon. A sincere person is far more likely to influence others than a hypocrite! In Judges 7:3 we read that more than two thirds of the army returned home, because they were not sincere about fighting! But Gideon and three hundred motivated soldiers defeated a very large army that night.

3<sup>rd</sup> Question. What is the breastplate of righteousness that we should put on?

(T) In physical warfare, the breastplate was the armour that covered the body from the neck down to the thighs. It consisted of two parts, one covering the front of his body and one covering his back. In 1 Samuel 17:5,38 it is called a *coat* of armour. Thus the soldier’s vital organs, like his heart and lungs, were protected. In spiritual warfare the breastplate represents *righteousness*. It is not the righteous position that God ascribes to believers, but the righteous acts that God gives to live a moral and holy life. The main question for the spiritual soldier is, “Am I living a righteous life that will enable me to engage in spiritual warfare?” The breastplate of righteousness is the spiritual soldier’s *ability to fight*. Without living a righteousness life, the spiritual soldier cannot have assurance of salvation, he has no defence against the devil’s accusations and he lacks power and effectiveness in prayer (James 5:16)! Without living a righteousness life, he will be ineffective in spiritual warfare! But righteous conduct is a mighty weapon for defence as well as offence. For example, in 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 we read about the spiritual battle in the areas of purity, patience, kindness, sincere love and truthful speech. And the weapons of righteousness enables the spiritual soldier to meet attacks from both the right and the left side. Living a righteous life makes the spiritual soldier strong in the spiritual battle!

4<sup>th</sup> Question. What are the shoes of readiness that we should put on?

(S) In physical warfare, Roman soldiers were in the habit of putting on shoes that were thickly studded with sharp nails, in order to keep them from wearing out on the long and hard rocks of the Roman roads. Thus, the soldier was well prepared for very long walks. He was able to walk quickly and very far in times of war. In history we know that the armies of Julius Caesar covered very long distances in such short periods of time that they again and again caught their enemies off guard. In spiritual warfare the shoes represent *preparedness and readiness to fight*. This preparedness or readiness is brought about by the gospel of peace. The gospel brings a person into the right relationship with God and his fellow soldiers. It gives him peace with God, peace with his neighbours and wholeness of the former brokenness in his own life. The main question for the spiritual soldier is, “Am I prepared and ready to fight battles in spiritual warfare?” The shoes of readiness are the spiritual soldiers *readiness to act immediately*. For example, the rich man in Luke 12:13-21 cared only for multiplying his possessions and he did not care for being rich toward God. He was totally unprepared to die that same night! The manager in Matthew 24:45-51 maltreated his employees and wasted his time with eating and drinking at parties. Also he was totally unprepared for the return of his master that same night!

5<sup>th</sup> Question. What is the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one?

(T) In physical warfare, this shield was oblong in shape, covered with leather and about 120 by 75 centimetres in size. It was designed to protect the heart, lungs and other vital organs against arrows of the enemy, which were dipped in pitch and set on fire before they were shot. When these arrows collided with the shield, their points were blunted and their flames extinguished.

In spiritual warfare, the flaming arrows originate from the devil or from his evil people. The devil’s quiver is full of all kinds of flaming darts, which are designed to destroy Christians. Some of the devil’s flaming arrows are designed to cause doubt, suspicion, fear, anguish, greed, vanity, envy or lust in the minds and hearts of Christians. Some of the devil’s deadly arrows are the tongues of evil people who destroy truth, confidence and good reputation through their gossip and slander (Jeremiah 9:8). Some of the devil’s devious arrows are to infiltrate the Christian community and to sow discontent and disunity among Christians (cf. Matthew 13:25,38). And some of the devil’s violent arrows are designed to persecute Christians and even to murder them.

In spiritual warfare the shield represents *faith in action* (subjective) rather than the content of the Christian faith (objective). The shield represents the faith that believes that God’s words and promises are true and that acts on the basis of this assurance. Faith is both a defensive and an offensive weapon. The main question for the spiritual soldier is, “Am I able to actively defend myself against the devil’s attacks?” The shield of faith is the spiritual

soldier's *ability to defend himself*. For example, when Jairus' daughter had died, Jesus exhorted him not to fear, but only to believe that she would again live. Jairus had to actively lift up the shield of faith and ward off the flaming arrow of fear. (Luke 8:49-50). In 1 John 5:4 we read that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. By faith in action, we Christians overcome sin, we overcome the sinful world and we overcome the devil and his flaming arrows.

6<sup>th</sup> Question. What is *the helmet of salvation*?

(S) In physical warfare, the helmet was made of iron, brass or leather and was designed to protect the head. In spiritual warfare, the helmet represents *salvation*. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 it also represents *the hope of salvation*. In the midst of hardships and persecution, the Christian soldier needs assurance of salvation, both for the present as well as for the future. Without it, he may easily give up fighting. The knowledge that God himself is fighting for him (Exodus 14:14), that God himself will be with him when he passes through water and fire (Isaiah 43:2) and that God himself will ultimately rescue him from all persecutions and sufferings (2 Timothy 3:11), makes the Christian soldier strong to continue the spiritual fight. The assurance that God, who began a good work in the Christian, will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6) makes him strong to persevere in the spiritual fight. Salvation can also become an offensive weapon. In Psalm 40:1-3 we read how David sings *a song of salvation* after God rescued him from sinking away in troubles. He sings, "God put a new song in my mouth ... Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." Also the preaching of *the gospel of salvation* to others is one of the best offensive weapons. Then you will often see that God's words never return empty to him, but accomplish that which pleases him (Isaiah 55:11) The main question for the spiritual soldier is, "Am I protecting my mind and thoughts against the devil's attacks?" The helm of salvation is the spiritual soldier's *ability to protect his thoughts and feelings*.

7<sup>th</sup> Question. What is *the sword of the Spirit*?

(T) In physical warfare, the short sword was carried and used by the heavily armed Roman soldier. It was excellent for both defence as well as offence and won many victories for Rome. In spiritual warfare, the sword of the Spirit represents *the word of God*. It is speaking God's word in specific situations. Whenever the proclamation of God's word is in harmony with the Bible, it is the sword of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will use the words of the Bible to expose people's sin, to convict them of guilt, to refute their arguments against the truth, to convince them of God's truth, to dispel their doubts, to drive away their fears, to put the devil to flight and to light up the path they should walk. The main question for the spiritual soldier is, "Am I using my own words or God's words in spiritual warfare?" The sword of the Spirit is the spiritual soldier's *ability to attack and conquer in the spiritual fight*. For example. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he quoted God's word from the Bible three times. He used the sword of the Spirit to conquer the temptations and traps of the devil.

8<sup>th</sup> Question. Is *prayer* a part of spiritual warfare?

(S) Ephesians 6:17-18 are connected. The Christian soldier should use the sword of the Spirit and pray in the Spirit on all occasions. *Praying in the Spirit* means praying in the sphere of the Spirit, that is, in harmony with the will of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Bible and in complete dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian soldier should pray all kinds of prayers, like cries for help, requests for wisdom, intercessions for others and thanksgivings for answered prayers. He should always keep on praying for all the saints, that is, pray that God's sovereign rule, God's sovereign will and God's glory would become more and more manifest in their lives. The question for the spiritual soldier is, "Am I persevering in prayer during spiritual warfare?" Prayer is the spiritual soldier's *ability to stay in direct contact with God*. Through prayer, God can turn his problems into opportunities and his defeats into victories!

(T) **STEP 4 and STEP 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

Do not forget to pray about one truth that God has taught you in Ephesians 6:10-18.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Which spiritual weapon do you need most in your life at this time? Start using it!

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from 1 Peter 2:19-23. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".