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# Dear Friend,

We are so glad to go on this journey of fighting the good fight of true faith with you. We are so happy that you are wanting to grow more in your understanding and faith in God. We pray that this devotional gives some help and clarity to what faith is and Who, Why, and How we fight to have it. We're in your corner. Now Let's Get Ready to Rumble!

Love, Your KidCity Crew



# Week 1: True Faith

# <u>Day 1:</u>

## <u>At Home as At BlueLake</u>

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."* 

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

Isn't summer just the best? No school. No Homework. No bedtimes?

The "no" things aren't even the best part. More freedom. More family time. More time to relax or to learn about something that we REALLY care about.

But the best part of the summer has to be CAMP! I mean, a week of making friends, playing games, laughing SO hard we fall over and learning about God, what can be better than that? This year, camp was amazing. We talked all about Fighting to Follow. When we learned that when we as Jesus followers fight, it doesn't look like we think it would. We also learned what we are fighting for.

We are fighting the good fight for true faith.

That is what we are going to be talking about throughout these next couple of weeks, but before we get started on that, let's keep talking about camp. Camp is always a time where we feel closer to God. We don't exactly know why that is. Maybe it's the fact that we are away from all of our "tech" devices. Maybe it's because we're surrounded by all of our "church friends". Maybe it's the small group leaders, or services. But there is one thing we know for sure. It's not because Camp Blue Lake is closer to heaven than our little area of south Alabama.

We know that something special happens at Camp Blue Lake. We've seen so many amazing things happen and God move in so many ways. But God doesn't want those things to stay at camp. He wants us to take what he has done and said to us at camp to the world. That's what Jesus meant in Matthew 28. Go take the things of God everywhere. And for us, "all nations' starts at home. How cool would it be to have the strong moments of worship like at camp in our living rooms? Or if we prayed over our parents the same way we pray over our friends and leaders at camp? The world needs kids just like you to step out in faith and take Jesus home, to school, to the sports field, and everywhere in between. We can't leave Jesus at camp or at church. It's up to us to take what happened at Camp Blue Lake and change the world with it. To continue to fight the good fight for true faith.

- 1. What was your favorite part of camp?
- 2. Who did you hang out with the most at camp?
- 3. What is one thing you learned at camp?
- 4. How can we take what we learned and experienced at camp home?

# <u>Day 2:</u> <u>Remembering Faith</u>

*"Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see."* 

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)

When we started camp we said we are "fighting the good fight for true faith". Before we start talking about a fight for true faith, we should probably know what faith is, right? The bible gives us a definition of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. Faith is the evidence of things we cannot see. In other words, faith is believing what God said even when we can't see it. We used a BIG fan at camp to explain this. We can't see the wind. We can see those things that wind affects but we can't see the wind. God can be seen the same way. We may not be able to see God with our eyes but we do see all of the things that He affects. The weather. The Earth. The stars. The Ocean. Our family. Our emotions. God is in control of everything.

We can have faith in God because we see all of the things that He has affected. We can trust that He will do all the things He said he would and have hope for them because of all the things we've seen God do in the past. Let's explain it like this. Have you ever done a "trust fall". A trust fall is when you cross your arms and fall backwards into a friend's arms because you "trust" that they are going to catch you. This can be pretty scary if you aren't sure your friend is going to catch you, but it gets easier to trust that friend as they catch you over and over again. I once had a friend who was really into trust falls and he would push his luck. I remember him being in a different room and yelling "trust fall" and having faith that you were going to make it to him and catch him. Can you imagine if our faith in God was as strong as my friend's trust and faith in people?

This is what TRUE faith is. Faith in God. Faith in Jesus. Faith that God is who He says He is and that He'll do what He said He would do. True faith is Faith in the truth of God. Jesus tells us in John 14:6 that He is the way the TRUTH and the life. True faith is faith in THE truth.

A good way to build our faith in God is to remember F. A. I. T. H. We are going to spend the rest of this week explaining in more detail each of these letters but for now here is what they stand for. F - "Fix your eyes on Jesus". A - "Aim for love". I - "Imitate God". T - "Trust God with Everything". And H - "Hear the word of God". These five steps will help us to strengthen and grow in our faith in God. F. A. I. T. H. will help to lead us into having true faith that we can fight for.

- 1. HHave you ever participated in a trust fall? How'd it go?
- 2. What is something you know is there but cannot always see?
- 3. What does it mean to have faith?
- 4. How can you have faith today?

# <u>Day 3:</u> <u>F - Fix Your Eyes in Jesus</u>

"... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)

Have you ever tried running while looking over your shoulder? If you have, you'll notice that it's SO hard to run in a straight line while looking over your shoulder. That's because wherever you place your eyes is where you will start to go. Hebrews 12:2 tells us exactly where to put our eyes. ON JESUS! Jesus is not only the creator of our faith but also the one who makes it perfect. The only way to walk the way of Jesus is to keep our eyes on Him.

There is a story in Matthew 14 where Jesus walks on water in the middle of a STORM! (Ultimate flex) And when His disciples see Him, Peter does what all of us would do and asks Jesus if he can join. Jesus agrees and tells Peter to walk on the water to Him. AND HE DOES! At first it's going swimmingly (pun intended) but after a while Peter remembers that there is a storm going on around him and he gets so worried that he takes his eyes off Jesus. Afterward he begins to sink and Jesus rescues him and says "Your faith is so small!" he said. "Why did you doubt me?" (Matt.14:31 NIRV)

Peter had so much faith when he was focused on Jesus. I mean he WALKED ON WATER! He only began to sink when he took his eyes off Jesus. His faith shrunk when he stopped focusing on Jesus. The same thing happens to us. When our eyes are focused on Jesus, we can do BIG things that require a-whole-lot of faith. When we start focusing on what's going on around us, it can feel like we're sinking in a sea of all our problems. What does this mean for us? I mean Peter had the physical Jesus standing right in front of him. Of course he could keep his eyes on Him. But I can't see Jesus' body, so how do I keep my eyes on Him?

When you and I talk about keeping our eyes on Jesus, we're talking about our "spiritual eyes" or our focus. We may not be able to see Jesus in person, but remember, faith is evidence of the things we can't see. We know what Jesus did when He walked on Earth. We know how he acted and treated other people. We know how he lived His life here on Earth. We keep our eyes on Jesus by focusing on living our lives in the same way that Jesus lived His and by doing things to bring honor to Him.

- 1. Have you ever run into something because you weren't looking in front of you?
- 2. What does it mean to "fix our eyes on Jesus"?
- 3. What are some things that make us take our eyes off Jesus?
- 4. How can you focus on Jesus even in the middle of scary circumstances?

### <u>Day 4:</u> <u>A - Aim For Love</u>

*"Love is the purpose of my command. Love comes from a pure heart. It comes from a good sense of what is right and wrong. It comes from faith that is honest and true."* 

1 Timothy 1:5 (NIRV)

We play a game at camp that most people love; Euro-Dodgeball. There are two schools of thought when playing this game. The first group of people aim to get as many people out as they possibly can. The next group is a one that shoots their balls like a basketball towards the can to try to win the game in glorious fashion for their team. No matter which of these groups you belong to, there is one thing in common: you know what you're aiming for.

When it comes to growing in our faith it is also helpful to know what we are aiming for. Jesus tells us exactly what we should be aiming for in Matthew 22. Jesus is being questioned by all of the smartest religious teachers and in order to trap Jesus, they ask Him a question that seems like it's impossible to answer. "What is the most important commandment in the Law?" In other words, they asked which of God's rules is the most important for us to follow. Jesus answered something that no one was expecting. In Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replies, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.'"

Jesus didn't just answer their question. He gave them extra credit. His answer was LOVE. Love God first and love your neighbors as you love yourself. If our goal as followers of Jesus is to become more like Jesus, then we need to follow His commands and the greatest is love.

Where does love come from? The bible teaches in 1 Timothy that love comes from a pure heart, a good sense of what is right and wrong and from faith that is honest and true. We know that the only way to have all of these things is to become closer to Jesus.

So as we're all learning how to strengthen our faith to be sure that it is true and honest, then we should try our very best to show love. First to God and then to those around us. Our aim should never be to hurt someone's feelings, or win an argument or even to get our way. Our aim when we are fighting the good fight for true faith should be to love. It's through the way we love that we can be sure that our faith is true.

- 1 How do you play Euro-Dodgeball? Do you aim for other kids / leaders or for the can?
- 2. What is your favorite rule? (Ours is HAVE FUN)
- 3. What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, and strength?
- 4. How can you show love to others this week?

# <u>Day 5:</u>

### **Immitate God**

"You are the children that God dearly loves. So follow his example. Lead a life of love, just as Christ did. He loved us. He gave himself up for us. He was a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God."

**Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIRV)** 

Who do you want to be like when you grow up? Is it your parents? Steph Curry? Is it Wonder Woman? Or maybe your small group leader? No matter how old we are, we all want to be like someone as we grow up. But how do we reach that goal? It's easy, we act like them. We learn how to do all of the cool stuff that they do so that we can be as much like them as possible. If we want to be like Steph Curry, we will shoot 70,000 3-point shots until the sun goes down. To be more like Wonder Woman, we'd learn how to lasso bad guys and look cool doing it. For us as christians, our goal is to be more and more like Jesus. And just like those people we look up to, the best way to become like Jesus is to act like Jesus. To Imitate God. Or follow God's example. Ephesians 5:1-2 tells us to do just that. It tells us to follow God's example and lead a life of love just as Jesus did.

There are obviously some things that Jesus did that we can't do, but there are also a bunch of things we can and should do. Like, help out a friend in need (Lazarus). Or be kind to someone that no one else is nice to (Zaccheus). Forgive people who hurt us (Peter). And there are so many more examples that we can follow, but the important thing to remember is to follow Jesus. Jesus was and is the greatest example of who to be like. And even though our parents and mentors are great, becoming more like Jesus will teach us how to be the best parts of those people we look up to.

When we become more like Jesus we learn to love better, to be kinder and to have joy when times are hard. Ultimately, we give up the things that we want to make sure we do the things that God wants. Jesus gave himself up so that we can live forever with Him. Now, in following His example, we give up the things that don't honor God in order to lead a life like Jesus. We don't pick on our little siblings, no matter how much they get on our nerves. We don't say mean things to our teachers or friends when we don't get our way. Instead we give up those things that we want to do and we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. As a great bracelet once said. WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?)

- 1. Who do you want to be like when you grow up?
- 2. What does it look like to follow Jesus in our everyday lives?
- 3. What can you do this week to "Imitate God"?

### <u>Day 6:</u> <u>T- Trust God with Everything</u>

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

There is a game we play sometimes and it's a blind folded obstacle course. The goal of this game is to get from the starting point to the ending point without seeing where you're going. The only help you get is a teammate talking you through how to get to the end. This game requires you to listen and know the voice of your partner and trust that they are going to lead you to the correct place. This is exactly what our lives can look like when following Jesus. We may not know exactly where we're going or what we're doing but we need to know God's voice and to TRUST that He is going to take us to the right place and that He knows what He is doing.

That's exactly how Proverbs 3:5-6 explains trust. Trust God, Submit your ways to Him and He will make your path straight. God knows what He's doing. He MADE EVERYTHING. Which means you. He made you with a plan and a purpose. Trusting God puts us on the roadmap he makes for His plan and purpose for us.

It's our trust and submission to God that proves our faith in Him and makes it stronger, but what does it look like when we don't trust those plans and purposes of God? Well let's go back to our game. When we are on the obstacle course trying to make our way to the end, if we are not listening to our teammate we can end up in the wrong place. We end up tripping over all the stuff and even ourselves because we are choosing to do it ourselves without knowing what's coming. God, just like our teammate, sees what is coming up in front of us and can lead us out, over, and through any obstacle that is in the way. By deciding that we can do this ourselves and not listen to God we are jumping off the path He planned for us and tend to make things harder on ourselves.

The bottom line is this: When we trust in the Lord, He makes our paths straight. It's by trusting in God's plans and purpose for our lives that we are able to walk in true faith in Him.

- 1. Have you ever needed directions for something?
- 2. Why is it hard to trust the directions of God sometimes?
- 3. How can you put your trust in the Lord right now?

# <u>Day 7:</u> <u>H - Hear the Word of God</u>

*"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* 

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

This whole week we've been talking about true faith. What it looks like. How to have it. How to show it. However, there is still one question left to answer. "Where does it come from?" Well Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes from hearing the word of God.

How else would you know about God unless you heard His word from somewhere. Do you remember when you first heard about God? Was it Mom and Dad talking to you about who God is or reading you bible stories before bedtime? Was it someone on stage in KidCity telling you all about the amazing things God has done not only in the bible but also in their lives? Or was it a small group leader who wanted you to really understand what the memory verse was saying this month?

Whatever it was, one thing is for sure. You wouldn't know who to have faith in if you never heard about God and His word. This is one of the reasons church is so important. Church is a place designed to have the word of God spoken and heard. Whether it's your grown ups, or your brothers and sisters, or even you, church is a place where the word of God can be heard on every level, but church is not the only place where you can hear the word of God. You can hear His word by reading your bible wherever you are. You can hear it by talking to your parents about God and His word. You can hear it by talking to your small group leader.

Hearing the Word of God doesn't just begin our faith. It also helps to make it bigger. The more we hear God's word, the more faith we have. The more you hear God's word, the more you know about God. The more you know about God, the easier it is to believe in Him and all He promises. It's like this. The more you talk to a friend, the closer you and your friend become. The closer you become the more you trust them. It's the same way with God. The more you spend time reading and hearing His word, the closer you feel to Him. The more time you spend talking to God and letting Him talk to you, the more trust, belief and faith you'll have in Him.

Today let's end with a challenge. Let's take some time to talk to God and to read or listen to His word.

#### **Thinking Questions:**

- 1. How often do you talk to your best friend?
- 2. When was the last time you heard the word of God?
- 3. What are some different ways we can hear the word of God?
- 4. Take some time to talk to God and to read or listen to His word.



# Week 2: Don't Forget Your Armor

# <u>Day 1:</u>

## **Don't Forget Your Armor**

*"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."* 

**Ephesians 6:13 (NLT)** 

So we're talking about the good fight of true faith. There's one thing you never want to forget when you go into battle. That is your protection or your armor. How would you be able to withstand everything that comes at you? You can't! The same goes for spiritual battles. Did you know that we all have spiritual armor, too? We have the armor of God. This is the armor that is for us to have when we walk into these spiritual battles so that we can stand our ground and not fall. This week we are going to talk all about the Armor of God. We will take a day for every piece of armor to talk about exactly what it is and how it protects us. But what is the armor of God? Ephesians 6 gives us a list of this armor when it says this in verses 14-17 (NLT): "Stand your ground, putting on the Belt of Truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

We have six pieces of armor: A belt, body armor, shoes, a shield, a helmet and last but not least, a sword. Each of these pieces of armor are represented by gifts that God gives us as we follow him. These gifts are truth, righteousness, the gospel or good news, faith, salvation, and the word of God. This means that in order to withstand the fight for true faith, we need to make sure that we are "suited up" with each of these gifts that God gives us.

Our enemies have a hard time convincing us to move away from the plans that God has for us when we walk through our lives with each and every one of these attributes. But, be careful. If we forget even one part of our armor it'll be easier for our enemy to attack us in that way. That is why we hope that this week's devotion will make it easier for you to know what armor to put on and when.

Let's try this challenge for this week. Let's pretend we are putting on actual pieces of armor before we go out for the day. Let's use our hands to remember the spiritual weapons that God has given us to overcome the enemies of our soul. Let's start right now.

#### **Thinking Questions:**

- 1. Put on your armor. Start with your helmet of salvation and make your way down to the good news shoes putting on every piece of armor on the way.
- 2. Which piece of armor are you most excited to talk about?
- 3. How can we remember to put on our armor everyday?

## <u>Day 2:</u> <u>Helmet of Salvation</u>

*He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken.* 

**Psalm 62:2 (NLT)** 

Have you ever been in a situation where you let your thoughts get the best of you? Or have you ever been told something and completely believed it until someone who loved you told you that what you were told was wrong? Let's talk about one of the things God has given us to protect ourselves from the lies and confusion of the enemy so that we can have a truly awesome relationship with God-the Helmet of salvation! In Ephesians 6:17 Pauls starts the verse in this way; Put on salvation as your helmet.

One of the first things that the enemy would love to attack you with is your salvation. You have to know how something works before you can truly understand it! And salvation is one of the major parts of what we believe, Jesus came from heaven to die for us so that we could be saved!

So what is salvation? Salvation just means to be saved. We all have done wrong things in our life (that is called sin) and fallen short of God's perfect standard. But, Jesus loved us so much that He came down from Heaven and died to forgive our sins and rose again so that we can be saved. This is what we mean when we talk about salvation. That Jesus saved us from living a life completely apart from God.

So why a helmet? A helmet protects your head from things that your head is not supposed to come in contact with, for example, you should wear a helmet when you skate or ride a bike because if you fall your head should not hit the ground without being protected. In Jesus' time, the soldiers would use helmets to protect their heads from attacks from the enemy. Today our military uses helmets in the same way. The helmet is protecting the head, including what the head contains. The head contains our brain, which controls the reasoning for everything that we do. You could have the strongest muscles in the world, but without a brain, they mean nothing. So, it is important for us to understand salvation, not because we need to win an argument or to have knowledge. Understanding salvation is so significant that Jesus gave His life for it. He gave his life for us. The helmet of Salvation will protect our minds from the attacks of our enemies.

- 1. Have you ever worn a helmet? Why?
- 2. Have you ever felt like your thoughts are being attacked?
- 3. How can you remember to put on the Helmet of Salvation today?

## <u>Day 3:</u>

### **Breast Plate of Righteousness**

Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor.

Proverbs 21:21 (NLT)



Yesterday we talked about the piece of Armor that protects our head and mind. Today, let's talk about the piece of armor that also protects a very important part of us: the heart. Today we're talking about the Breastplate of Righteousness. But what is righteousness? Righteous means: God's goodness, and perfection. So with our own power, we in no way can be righteous, we could never put on that breastplate by ourselves. We need God to help us put it on for us. Paul recounts in Romans 3:10, "None is righteous, no, not one." So ask yourself: Whose righteousness can we have? Only God's! Jesus says in Matthew 6:33; But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So how do we use the Breastplate of Righteousness? There are 2 main ways that we can use the Breastplate of Righteousness. First, we can use it to protect our relationship with Jesus by deflecting the lies of the enemy with the truth of God. When the enemy attacks with lies, the Breastplate of Righteousness is in place to keep you protected so that you can leave unharmed. God, in his infinite power, gave you the ability to reject the attacks of the enemy through the Breastplate of Righteousness! Secondly, we can use the Breastplate of Righteousness to protect our hearts. If the enemy can get to your heart, he can do more damage than you could ever imagine. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." In a way, this breastplate keeps us spiritually alive. It helps us to accept what Jesus has said is right and reject the attacks of the enemy.

The enemy might try to tell us that we can become righteous by doing good things. That's not true. Romans 3:22 says this, "We are made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. This happens to all who believe." Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all of the things we do to try to make ourselves right with God are like filthy rags. Rags don't make good armor. This is why our enemies try to make us work to be put in a good place with God. They know that if we are wearing the righteousness that Jesus gives us instead of trying to earn righteousness ourselves that we are too protected for him to attack our hearts. The bible tells us that through righteousness, we are as bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1), we aren't easily shaken (Psalm 112:6) and that we will get back up if we fall (Proverbs 24:16). He knows that Jesus blessed the righteous (Matthew 5:6) and that God delivers the righteous from attacks and pain (Psalm 34:19). This is why we need to make sure we take off the filthy rags of our own attempts at righteousness and pick up and put on the Breastplate of Righteousness that Jesus gives us.

- 1. Why is it important to protect our hearts?
- 2. How do we get righteousness?
- 3. How can you put on your Breastplate of Righteousness today?

# <u>Day 4:</u> <u>Belt of Truth</u>

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

*John 14:6 (NLT)* 



Have you ever tried to put on a pair of pants that were just too big? Like you were definitely tall enough for them but the waist was too big. There is only one way to be able to wear those pants: a belt. When we think about our armor, we should think about The Belt of Truth as the thing that holds it together. It's what holds our sword and keeps our breastplate in place. If you have ever forgotten to wear your belt when you needed it, you know that you spent the whole day picking your pants back up. How can you ever wield your sword or run into battle if all of your armor is just falling off? This is why we need the Belt of Truth, but what is the Belt of Truth?

The Belt of Truth is Jesus. We know this because of John 14:6: Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Like we said before, a belt holds all of the armor together but it also has another purpose. In biblical times, when a soldier would go to war, the belt he wore didn't look like the belts that you and I wear. Their belts would have intricate designs and super fancy buckles that were specific to their army. Their belts would signify where they came from and what side they belonged to. When the opposing side saw their belts, they knew what kingdom they fought for and to whom they belonged. The belt held two purposes: support and identification.

How do we put on the Belt of Truth? We believe what Jesus said about us. In order to buckle the Belt of Truth around our waist, we need to believe what Jesus said is true. This is how the belt holds all of our other pieces of armor together. We need to believe that Jesus really is our salvation and that Jesus really does give us His righteousness. Holding firm to the belief that Jesus' words are true, true faith in him brings eternal life. Jesus holds our armor together and our faith in him marks us as one of His own. When we place our faith in Jesus and believe that what he said is true, we get to respond to his perfect love with worship. We can worship Jesus through the way that we live our lives.

When we put on our Belt of Truth, we rely on Jesus to hold us together. By wearing the Belt of Truth, we show everyone that we belong to God. From the inside out, we show that we are on God's side and ready for battle.

#### **Thinking Questions:**

1. Have you ever forgotten to wear a belt when you needed one? What happened?

- 2. What does the Belt of Truth do?
- 3. How do you put on the Belt of Truth?
- 4. How can you be sure that you are wearing your Belt of Truth today?

# <u>Day 5:</u> Shield of Faith

*The Lord protects those of childlike faith; I was facing death, and he saved me.* 

**Psalm 116:6 (NLT)** 

Captain America is without question one of the coolest superheroes ever! He's always sticking up for the little guy and protecting them from bad people. The coolest thing is that he does all of it using a shield. He doesn't have super healing or bulletproof skin so he needs something to protect him in times of trouble. Today, we're talking about our shield. The Shield of Faith. And just like Captain America, our shield is to help us be protected from attacks of our enemy.

Ephesians 6:16 says this about our shield, "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." (NIV)

We are going to talk more about our enemy in week three, but for now, just know that there is an enemy of our soul! The enemy will try EVERYTHING to get us off the path that God has for us. During the time that Paul was writing Ephesians, there was a common practice in war. They would shoot flaming arrows at their enemies intending to light them on fire! But people who fought in wars knew that this was coming and would SOAK their shields in water to put out the fire.

For us, our enemy isn't using physical arrows that are on fire. Instead, their weapon is temptation. The enemy wants us to do the things we know are wrong. That's what sin is. He makes the wrong things look good. That is what temptation is: making things look like they are good for us even though we know they are not. We can fight temptation with faith in God's truth. We can trust that when we do, God will put out the "flaming arrows' shot at us by the enemy.

It can look like this. You forget you were supposed to clean your room, and play instead. When your parents ask you if your room is clean, you might be tempted to lie and say that you did clean your room. But, you have faith in God. You remember that he said not to lie and that lying isn't good for us. Or maybe your siblings make you mad. You might be tempted to be mean to them. But, you have faith in God. You remember God said to pray for those who do mean things to us. Through the Shield of Faith, God protects us from the arrows of temptation and helps us follow His perfect plan. So today, let's put on our Shield of Faith and be ready for when the "arrows" fly.

- 1. Who is your favorite superhero?
- 2. Have you ever been tempted to do something wrong? How did you respond?
- 3. How can we pick up our Shield of Faith today?

# <u>Day 6:</u> <u>Sword of The Spirit</u>

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword...

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

If you were to go into battle with only defensive weapons, that battle might not go very well. The great news is that we have one piece of armor that is not only used to defend ourselves, it's also used to fight back! It's the Sword of the Spirit. The Sword of Spirit is the Word of God, but how do we use it like a sword to fight back against our enemies?

In Matthew 4, Jesus is visited by the devil who tries to tempt and trick Jesus into doing something Jesus knows he shouldn't do. The devil tried three times to trick Jesus, and all three times Jesus responded to what the devil said with the phrase, "It is written".

Jesus knew the best way to fight off the devil's plans was to use his sword. But no one is just born a swordsman or swordswoman. It takes YEARS of training and practice to be good at using a sword. In the same way, we aren't born knowing what the word of God says. We have to practice. Our practice doesn't look like swinging our bible around like a sword. How silly would that look? Instead, it looks like knowing what our bible says. It's up to us to read and study our bibles. We need to do what Psalm 119:11 says and hide the word of God away in our heart. When the enemy comes, we can be ready to fight back with the sword that God gave us.

Let's put this into practice. Here are some things that the devil tries to tell us and some scriptures that we can use to fight back.

When the Devil says:	You Say:
You aren't big enough.	I am more than a conqueror with Jesus (Romans 8:37 NIV)
You mess up too much.	I am forgiven (Psalm 103 NIV)
You're all alone.	God is with me. (Psalm 23:4 NIRV)
No one likes you.	God made me amazing and wonderful (Psalm 139:14 NIRV)

- 1. Why is it important to have a Sword in Battle?
- 2. How did Jesus fight off the attacks of the Devil?
- 3. How can you hide God's word in your heart?
- 4. How can we practice using the Sword of the Spirit today?

# <u>Day 7:</u>

# **Good News Shoes**

*"For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile."* 

Romans 1:16 (NLT)

We have made it to our last piece of armor. In Ephesians 6, we are told to stand firm when the battle comes our way. If we're going to be sure to stand firm, we are going to need a good pair of shoes. As Forrest Gump's mama said, "You can tell a lot about a person by their shoes, where they're going, where they've been." Today we're talking about the Good News Shoes, or as Ephesians 6 (NLT) says, "For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared."

Why do shoes count as armor though? Well if you're asking that question you've never stepped on the spikey ball of death that we in the south call "stickers". OUCH! However, in the time that they were writing this verse shoes were really considered a piece of armor. It's hard to believe now because the Jordan One gives us no reason to believe that it could be armor, but when we talk about shoes for armor, it's more like talking about a pair of cleats. If you've ever played a sport like football, soccer, or baseball / softball then you know having the right pair of cleats can change everything. It was the same way during battles in this time. The shoes (or sandals) that they had for armor had spikes in the bottom of them to keep them from slipping on the battlefield and to help them hold their ground. If soldiers didn't have these shoes, it would be hard for them to gain the upper hand and even harder for them to be able to protect themselves.

So how do Good New's Shoes give us the ability to stand firm? They do because knowing the Good News of Jesus and living it out helps us to 1) know where we're fighting from and 2) have a solid foundation to stand on. Our foundation for all of the battles that we will face when it comes to our faith should always be the Good News that Jesus came to live a perfect life, die as a sacrifice, and rise again so that we can be made right in the eyes of God. When we know this and walk around our everyday lives standing on this news, then whatever attack our enemies throw our way can't knock us down or move us away from God. When we know that Jesus is the one holding us in place, then we know that nothing else can stand against us. No weapon, no attack, no doubt, no battle can succeed against those who know that the good news of Jesus is our standing ground (Isaiah 54:17). But our shoes come with our job: to give out the Good News to everyone we can and to help them put on their very own pair of Good News Shoes. Are you ready?

#### **Thinking Questions:**

- 1. What is your favorite pair of shoes that you have?
- 2. Have you ever worn a pair of cleats? If so, how are they different from regular shoes?

- 3. How can you make sure you are wearing your Good News Shoes today?
- 4. How can you share the Good News with your friends?



# Week 3: There Is A Fight

## <u>Day I:</u> <u>A Different Kind of Fight</u>

*"Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world." Ephesians 6:12 (NIRV)* 

What do you think of when you think of fighting? Do you think of punching and kicking? Do you think of a boxing match? Or maybe you think about people yelling at each other trying to get their points across. Whatever it is you think about when you think about fighting, forget it. When it comes to the fight that we as Christians have, it looks different from what everyone thinks about when they think of a fight. Instead of scraped knuckles and bruised skin, our fight involves prayer and spiritual tactics. And even though our fight looks different from what we are used to, make no mistake, we ARE in a fight. The good fight for true faith.

When we talk about the kind of fighting we as Christians fight, it is regularly called "Spiritual Warfare." How fitting it is that our fight doesn't look like a boxing match. It looks like a battle scene from a movie. With armor and weapons and enemies. And even if we cannot see it with our eyes, we are fighting this battle everyday.

If all of this sounds scary, don't worry. We've already won the battle. Jesus did that for us. In Jesus, we don't fight to get victory. We fight because we already have victory. The purpose of the devotions this week is not to scare you. Instead, we hope to help you as you enter into this battle. To tell you who or what you are fighting and how to defeat them.

There are 3 big "enemies" that we battle against. The first is called "the flesh"-the wants that we have that are not from God. In the flesh, we want and often do things that we know are not what God wants. The second is called "The World." This enemy isn't the world as in the planet Earth (how cool would that be?) Instead, the enemy called "The World" is all that we see happening around us that goes against God's words and perfect plan. Our third enemy is one that you may have heard-"the devil." The devil is the enemy of our soul. The opposition of God, he is one who tries to convince you that what God has for you isn't good.

We're going to talk all about these enemies and how to defeat them and they will become less and less scary. Remember, we already have victory in these fights. Thanks to Jesus, we don't have to be afraid of our enemies. We just have to know how to fight back against them.

- 1. What do you think about when you think about fighting?
- 2. What does it mean to fight against "spiritual forces"?
- 3. Take some time and remember Jesus already beat our enemies. So we can too.

### <u>Day 2:</u> <u>Round 1 - The Flesh</u>

"Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."

Romans 8:5-6 (NIV)

We start our fight with our first opponent: "The Flesh." Even though the name sounds like a super villain from Ninja Turtles, this enemy is a little closer to home. In order to better fight the battle we have with The Flesh, we need to understand what the flesh is. In the simplest terms, the flesh is our wants and desires that do not align with God's wants and desires for us. "Fleshly desires" are things like pushing our siblings when they make us mad, or being mean to our parents because we don't want to do what they said.

The flesh is an all about me and what I want to do attitude-the very opposite of what God wants for us. In the book of Isaiah, God tells us that His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. The Bible is filled with examples of God commanding us to serve others, as Jesus perfectly exemplified on Earth. Still, the enemy of the flesh tries over and over again to convince us that our way is better than God's way.

The battle with the flesh primarily happens in our minds. The flesh tempts us to focus only on what we want, not what God wants. The flesh will say things like, "I know what I'm doing is wrong but at least it's not as bad as that person over there!" or "I know I need to spend time reading my bible and praying, but I'm so close to beating my video game." Or "I know I should help my sister with her homework but I REALLY want to watch TV." The flesh wants to keep us from the things of God.

Romans 8:5-6 gives us a warning against living to satisfy the flesh versus living to satisfy God. It says, "The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." Those who let the flesh win choose to go down a path that leads to death. Those who choose God's way choose eternal life.

Now we know about the flesh: how it fights and how we should battle against it. Tomorrow, we will talk about how to focus our hearts and minds on the things of God

- 1. Who is your favorite super villain?
- 2. Who is "the Flesh"?
- 3. How does the flesh try to attack us?
- 4. What is one way the flesh is trying to attack you?

### <u>Day 3:</u>

### Round 1 pt. 2 - Finishing Flesh

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)



Now that we know what "the flesh" is and how it likes to attack us, let's talk about how to fight back. Did you know that Jesus had to fight these same battles? Jesus gave the perfect example for us of how to fight against the flesh.

So how did Jesus fight the flesh? He used the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God! When Jesus Himself was tempted by the devil, He used the word of God to defeat His enemy. Before the devil came to tempt Jesus (see Matthew 4,) Jesus had just been baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Right after Jesus' baptism, God called down from heaven saying "This is my beloved son in whom I am very pleased." Jesus immediately leaves this experience and goes out into the wilderness for 40 DAYS!! During His time in the wilderness, Jesus decided not to eat or drink ANYTHING. To set Himself apart for the Father, He prepared spiritually for the fight that was ahead.

It is in these moments that the devil appears to Jesus and starts his battle. Matthew 4 says, "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus had to be SO HUNGRY. He didn't eat for 40 DAYS! I get cranky if I forget breakfast. Knowing Jesus was fully human, the devil used a lie about food as his first attack. Remember, Jesus was fasting (not eating) to set Himself apart for God the Father. Even so, He didn't cave to the desires of the flesh. Jesus chose to sacrifice food so that He could spend time with His Father in prayer. After 40 days of not eating, any person would've wanted to EAT! But Jesus fought the flesh and the devil's temptations by quoting the word of God. Jesus answered, "It is written:" He knew the best way to battle the flesh was to attack its voice with the voice of God. Jesus knew that no matter what He was going to follow the word of God even if His flesh were to say something different. So that's how we fight the flesh. We fight with the word of God, no matter what the flesh says. Hiding God's Word in our hearts, we trust in God alone to fight for us, through His word. Let's continually set our minds on God's words as we fight–not the words of our flesh. Knowing God's plan and purpose are perfect, let's trust in Him alone. When we stay rooted in the word of God, His truth will come to mind, and we'll be able to spot and fight against the temptations of the enemy.

- 1. How long does it take for you to get cranky if you haven't eaten?
- 2. How did Jesus fight "the Flesh"?
- 3. How can we better know what the word of God says so that we can fight the flesh?

# **Day 4:**

## **Round 2 - The World**

"Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NIRV)

We've made it to the second enemy we must fight in this good fight for true faith. This enemy is The World. (Cue Gru laugh and minions chants) When we talk about "the world" as our enemy, we aren't talking about the great big beautiful blue planet that we all know and love. We're talking about the spirit of the world. We are talking about the way that some things seem like they are okay for everyone else but for us as christians, we know that it's against the way God designed us. Just like the flesh, the world tries to convince us that it's okay to do something that God says isn't okay. The lies the world tells us are, "It's fine if no one gets hurt" or "everyone else is doing it so it has to be ok." But we know, as sons and daughters of God, that we aren't like everyone else.

We are made different through Jesus. We are kind when others are mean. We serve people when others only want to be served. Jesus tells us in John 17 that we don't belong to the world anymore. We belong to his kingdom which is way cooler. But because of that, people aren't going to always understand us. They might even think that we're weird. That's okay though. Because the world didn't really like Jesus. The more we are like Jesus the more the world will think that we are weird.

Romans 12:2 tells us not to live lives like this world does. Instead, God tells us to change the way we think and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The message the world gives is to live to impress other people. All around, you'll see people working to get the applause of others. It's tempting. However, we are called to be people of God. As a good Father who wants what is best for His kids, He wants us to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to Him. In fact, He sent His Son, Jesus, to serve as a perfect example of how we should live. Every day, every hour, and every minute, let's live lives that reflect the character of God.

For us, fighting the world today in our own strength isn't a total knockout. As humans, we are not here to destroy or end the world, but to change it, through the power of God in us. Together, let's trust in God to win the fight with the world. Let's give Him all of our trust, all of our faith and all of the glory.

- 1. What is something that "everyone" is doing but you don't?
- 2. How do you tell whether you are acting like someone "of the world"?
- 3. What's the biggest difference between someone of God and someone of the world?

### <u>Day 5:</u>

### **Round 2 pt. 2 - Overcoming The World**

*"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."* 

1 John 4:4 (NIV)

So now that we know what it means to fight the world, we need to understand how to fight. Defeating the world doesn't look like us hiding away from everything that is happening around us. It looks like us showing the world what it looks like to be people of God. Living for God can be hard, especially when our friends, neighbors, and those we love aren't people of God.

If the people around us are living like the world, we can be very tempted to be like them. If we're not careful, we could fall into the trap of speaking and acting in ways that the world says are right. But God tells us in His word in John 4 that the Spirit of God who lives in us is greater than the spirit of the world. We are fighting with God on our side.

We ended yesterday by saying that winning our fight with the world looks like us changing the world. It's easy to say "I'm too small," "I'm not old enough," or "I don't know enough" to change the world. But the bible tells us in 1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV) "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." God can use us to change the world if we will let Him. Let's teach people what it looks like to be children of God. Let's walk this out in love.

Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments are to love God with everything you have and to love your neighbor as yourself. Through these commandments, Jesus provided a roadmap to defeating the world. God tells us in John 16:33 that in this world we will have trouble. He continues by saying that He has overcome the world. The enemy may try to make you question what you know is true–what God says is good. But, we can trust that God is good. He always has been and He always will be. Because He has first loved us, we can love those around us well. Each day, we can show God's love by speaking and acting lovingly. When we do show love, we can bring glory to God. Our enemy wants to take us out. The good news is that our God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, who made us in His image, is loving us, holding us, defending us and fighting for us.

This is where we get to change the tide of the battle. We get to go and attack. We take ground by bringing God's truth and love to as many people as we can. Every day, we have new chances to treat people with the same love and kindness we receive from God. As we obey God's commands by loving people, more and more and more people hear about the good news of Jesus. As we share the good news, more people become people of God. Our mission on this earth is to go and tell the good news that God sent Jesus to come to earth, live a perfect life, die, come back to life and rescue the world. Through this mission that the bible calls "the Great Commission," God uses us to push back the darkness and shine a light on Jesus, the hope of the world.

- 1. Do you ever feel like you're too small or young to make a difference?
- 2. How can you make a difference no matter how old you are?
- 3. How do we defeat the world?
- 4. How can you show the love of God to someone today?

### <u>Day 6:</u> <u>Round 3 - The Devil</u>

... But then the devil comes. He takes away the message from their hearts. He does it so they won't believe. Then they can't be saved.

Luke 8:12 (NIRV)

Today we are introducing the final enemy on our list: the devil. The devil is known to be a liar, a cheater, a trickster, a tempter, and someone who wants to turn our attention away from God and put it anywhere else. The devil just doesn't like us. We give praise to the God that he turned his back on. The devil is a thief, whose mission is to steal, kill, and destroy. But there's no need to be afraid. You see, Jesus has already defeated the devil. God has already won. In our lives on this Earth however, the devil will try his hardest to keep us away from the path that God has for us. Let's talk about what the Devil tries to do.

First, the devil comes to steal our joy–the joy that comes from life with Jesus. True joy is found only in Jesus. The devil will try with all of his might to make us forget how much God loves us.

Secondly, the devil comes to kill our identity as children of God. The first time we see the devil he comes in the form of a serpent in Genesis 3. There, he tricks Eve into eating the only fruit in all the Garden that God said not to eat. He asks her a question and feeds her lies. Genesis 3:1-5 (NIV) says this," Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The crazy part about this is God already tells us that we are created in His image. The devil tricked Eve into thinking that God lied to her and that He was keeping something good from her. The lie the devil told her led to the first sin.

Lastly, the devil comes to destroy our future and God's plan for us. It was never God's plan for people to fall into sin and death. Even though humans sinned, God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to rescue us from sin. Even though the sins of Adam of Eve did lead to death and darkness, as God promised, He provided a way for us to have eternal life, through Jesus.

The devil will do anything he can to take your focus away from Jesus. Has someone ever seen something you have, and gotten jealous? Maybe they wanted the thing you had, and because of jealousy, decided to break it. The devil can't have life with God and will do anything to keep you away from a life full of joy, hope and peace with God. He'd rather that you be sad with him. The good news is that we know how the story ends. God has already won and will defeat the devil once and for all. So we can resist the devil and walk in God's good plans for us–that we may have life and have it to the full. (John 10:10 NIV)

- 1. What is one time you got tricked?
- 2. What does the devil want?
- 3. How do you think we beat the devil?

### <u>Day 7:</u>

### **Round 3 pt. 2 - The Devil is Defeated**

*"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* 

James 4:7 (NIV)

You made it! Can we just take a second to celebrate you? For 21 days, you have spent time learning more about God, His word, and the battles we fight as His followers. We still have one more thing to talk about, though. How do we defeat the devil? Like we said earlier, the devil was defeated already by Jesus when He rose again from the grave and gave us access to live forever with God. But, how do we get the devil to leave us alone? James 4:7 gives us a way: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The first thing we need to do is submit ourselves to God, which means that we follow the things that God tells us. We can submit ourselves to God by believing that what God says is true. We also can show that we submit to God through our worship. When we praise God for who He is and what He has done, it shows that we are accepting that He is in control. You may have heard your worship leader in 56 or KidCity talk about why we raise our hands in worship. We lift our hands to show God we are giving everything we have to Him. In this posture, we get to give God all of our worship and all of the glory. We get to surrender everything to God, and let go of everything else, so that we can have more of God.

The second thing we need to do is resist the devil. We already talked a little about how the devil tried to tempt Jesus. He first tried to convince Jesus to eat–and give in to His flesh–when He was setting Himself apart for God. The second thing the devil did was question His identity, asking Him if he was the Son of God. But, Jesus didn't fall for that, either. For this next round, let's focus on the last time the devil tried to tempt Jesus. It says in Matthew 4:8-11, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

Jesus resisted all the devil's attempts to make Him disobey the will of the Father. And guess what happened? The Devil ran away. That's what it means to flee. The same power Jesus used to resist the devil is available to anyone who follows Jesus. Romans 8:11 says, "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you." Jesus Has defeated the devil and we can too. How AWESOME!

- 1. What was your favorite day in this devotional?
- 2. How can we walk in victory against the devil?
- 3. What is one way you need to resist the devil?



## **Resource Page:**



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