

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy
Ephesians 6:10-24

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Be sure to have on hand a copy of "Youth!!! Take Ten" (page 13).

Worship Time Leader:

Choose three or four stanzas of **A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**. Make copies from the copy given at the end of the worship time. Ask members of your group to read these aloud. **Please mark those you will use carefully, beforehand. There are 12 verses. You won't have time or concentration to choose during your Sharing Time presentation.**

Music Sources:

A Mighty Fortress is Our God, *The Worship Hymnal* #656; CCLI #42964 Public Domain

Awesome God, *The Worship Hymnal* #63; CCLI #4099

Bless His Holy Name, *The Worship Hymnal* #151; CCLI #17566

I'll Live for Him, *The Worship Hymnal* # 549; CCLI #23165 Public Domain

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy*****Focal Text**

Ephesians 6:10-20

Background Text

Ephesians 6:10-24

Main Idea

We must take steps to be prepared spiritually to live faithfully and effectively as Christians.

Question to Explore

What steps are you taking to be prepared spiritually to be faithful to the Lord this week?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide on steps they will take to be prepared spiritually to live as faithful Christians.

Gathering together:

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Awesome God, *The Worship Hymnal* #63; CCLI #4099

I'll Live for Him, *The Worship Hymnal* # 549; CCLI #23165 Public Domain

First thoughts:

In 1929 Ernest Hemingway wrote a novel, **A Farewell to Arms**". He drew from his experiences as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in Italy during World War I. He later was to serve as a war correspondent during the Second World War. He was rejected by the military in America because of a bad eye. He was drawn to subjects about fighting, conflict, and other manly affairs.

We can learn some things from his writings. He won the Pulitzer Prize for his last major work, **The Old Man and the Sea**. Although denied the role as a combatant during the wars, he always found his way to the place where the fiercest battle was being waged. He was a pretty good tactician also.

Hemingway wrote short stories and novels, and almost always dealt with conflict in them. But he was a man of great conflict. Externally he was a man's man, but there was also a delicate part to his nature. He could be very sensitive, or very rough.

He was a conflicted man. He took his own life in 1969 after returning from treatment at Mayo Clinic. Reflection on his life raises the question: Was he really ready for the great struggles life gave him. Married four times, he seems to have been a restless man, and died at his own hands, a testimony that life was either too difficult or that it was meaningless. He may have believed that he was doing the manly thing in taking his own life.

The question and challenge raised in today's session is profound and the answer not easily lived out for most of us. How do be Christian when life is not easy. Paul offers us sound advice. Let's listen to what he has to say.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy

Focal Text

Ephesians 6:10-20

Background Text

Ephesians 6:10-24

Main Idea

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Question to Explore

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Introduction to your personal study:

I am a list person. I like to have a list to double check when preparing for a trip or packing a child for camp. Preparation is even more important when we face challenges to our faith or outright attacks. In the final section of his letter, Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus telling them how to prepare for the spiritual attacks that they and all believers will face.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

Paul has been writing to the church at Ephesus encouraging them to live lives fully submitted to the Holy Spirit. Such lives are characterized by unity and harmony in home and work relationships. Families should reflect qualities of love and respect above and beyond those without Christ's empowering presence. Paul now warns the believers that this kind of life will not be easy.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Ephesians 6:10-12 Our Spiritual Battlefield

As a final word, Paul commands the Ephesian believers to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 6:10 Our power and strength comes from God. Philippians 4:13. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead, Ephesians 1:20; and brought each of us to life when we were dead in our sins and trespasses. 2:1-5. We must recognize that the scheming devil, the prince of the power of the air, is seeking our demise. 2:2; 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8-9. Paul emphasizes that our struggles are not against people in this world; rather they are spiritual in nature. 6:12. In order to fight against spiritual enemies we need to put on spiritual armour, the full armour of God. 6:13.

Ephesians 6:13-18 Our Spiritual Armour

It is not a matter of "if" we engage in spiritual battle; we will. The question is, "Will we be prepared when the battle comes?" 6:13. Because the day of evil will come, we need to get ready, to prepare to stand firm. The imagery of battle is clear. We will be attacked spiritually. If we fail to prepare, we open ourselves and our families to unprotected onslaught. Some commentators have suggested that Paul wrote this passage using the visual aid of the Roman soldiers who were standing guard over him.

Paul begins with the belt of truth, for Christ is the way the truth and the life. John 14:6. Our starting point must always be Christ and His truth. Next is the breastplate of righteousness, we must come into battle with a pure heart. Ephesians 6:14. 1 John 1:9 teaches that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleans us from all unrighteousness. But we must first confess our sins. In order to put on the breastplate of righteousness, we need to intentionally keep "fessed up." In other words, we need to pray for forgiveness immediately after we recognize we have sinned.

If we are to stand firm, we must have our feet shod with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 6:15. Peter also urges us to always be ready to give a reason for the hope within us, the good news of Christ's death for our salvation. 1 Peter 3:15.

Next we are called to take up the shield of faith, to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. 6:16. Satan will attack us, yet he is helpless before our mighty God; we will live by our faith. Habakkuk 2:4.

Paul charges that we put on the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. 6:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Like Paul, we should not be ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God to save everyone, Jews and gentiles alike. Romans 1:16. God's Word is living and sharper than any double edged sword; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12. His Word is like a fire, a smashing hammer. Jeremiah 23:29. God's word is the only piece of armour used to attack. Often we are tempted to use our words, how feeble they are in comparison!

Finally, we are to pray. Paul urges us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. Ephesians 6:18 We need to pray to resist temptation Luke 22:40; we need to pray without ceasing 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Even when we do not know what to pray or how to pray, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us. Romans 8:26-27. Prayer should be our first response when confronted with evil not the last resort.

Paul again reminds us to be alert and to pray for all believers. Ephesians 6:18. He closes this section by asking for pray for himself; for clarity when he speaks and for courage in preaching the gospel. Ephesians 6:19-20.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Ephesians 6:10-20

Background Text

Ephesians 6:10-24

Main Idea

We must take steps to be prepared spiritually to live faithfully and effectively as Christians.

Question to Explore

What steps are you taking to be prepared spiritually to be faithful to the Lord this week?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide on steps they will take to be prepared spiritually to live as faithful Christians.

Connect with Life:

Say: A tolerant society is often characterized by openness to differing ideas, yet we are constantly bombarded with media messages that contradict or ridicule a life committed to Christ. Some of these attacks are merely inconvenient, others strike directly at core values we hold dear.

Ask the group to suggest examples of different kinds of spiritual attacks. Note that spiritual warfare may be subtle, but it is inevitable.

Guide the Study:

Review the background material from the Teacher Preparation section. Emphasize that God's people do not have to face the battle alone.

Encourage a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:10-12.

Seek a response: Where does our power come from? (God's mighty power)

Note that Paul depicts the believer as standing firm in the face of the devil's schemes.

Ask the participants to list whom our struggles are against. (The leaders and powers of spiritual darkness in our world, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms).

Emphasize that we are not in battle against flesh and blood, but the spiritual forces of evil all around us.

Ask if anyone has read The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis.

Share that in this novel, C. S. Lewis creatively shows how subtle the enemy's attacks can be through letters written by Screwtape, an older, experienced demon to his young nephew, Wormwood.

Explain to the group: Screwtape advises his nephew who is in charge of tempting and tripping up a certain young man. We, in real life, can safely assume that we too are targets of attack and need to be prepared with the full armour of God.

Have someone read Ephesians 6:13-18.

Remind the class: Paul was writing this letter while under house arrest. He may have even used his Roman guard as his visual aid in describing the armour.

Now tell the group: Just as no soldier would go into battle without the proper equipment, neither should we fail to prepare. Note that this passage does not say, "if" but "when" the day of evil comes. Those who have prepared with the full armour will be able to stand.

Note to Leader: List each piece of armour on a white board or poster as it is discussed as follows.

Belt of truth

Encourage a brief discussion of the belt of truth.

Have someone read or quote John 14:6. Note that our starting point must always be Christ and His truth.

Breastplate of righteousness

Say: Our second piece of armour is the breastplate of righteousness.

Discuss 1 John 1:9.

Share: We can breathe spiritually by exhaling our sins through confession and inhaling God's forgiveness. It is important for our own spiritual protection to confess our sins just as soon as we are aware that we have committed them.

Feet fitted with readiness from the gospel of peace

Invite a volunteer to describe the next piece of armour. (Feet fitted with readiness from the gospel of peace).

Comment: We need to always be prepared to give a reason for our hope, to describe God's gift of salvation.

Encourage the class to briefly write an outline of their spiritual journeys including the following three points:

1. life before knowing Christ,
2. how he or she came to know Christ,
3. and how knowing Christ has made a difference.

Say: You can use this outline to tell what God has meant in your life.

Ask a volunteer to briefly give his or her testimony of faith. If no one volunteers, share your own faith journey.

Remind the class of the value of being prepared and to look for opportunities to tell about God's work in their lives.

Shield of faith

Have someone tell about the shield of faith.

Ask for examples of flaming arrows of the evil one. (Doubt, despair, discouragement, ridicule) Say: We can fight these with faith. Note that faith will not only ward off the attack but extinguish the arrows.

Define faith using Hebrews 11.

Helmet of salvation

Note the importance of the helmet of salvation.

Call for a brief discussion: How can we protect our thoughts and intellect from attack?

Encourage class members to guard their minds and hearts from unwholesome media. Ask for practical suggestions for movies, internet, literature and music use.

Sword of the Spirit

Have someone describe the sword of the Spirit using Hebrews 4:12. Note that this is the only piece of armour used to attack.

Discuss how feeble our own words are in comparison with the power of God's Word.

Prayer

Have someone read Eph. 6:18-20.

Ask: When should we pray? (On all occasions)

List things we should pray for on a white board or poster. (All kinds of prayers: for clarity in speech, for courage to share the gospel, for the needs of churches, governments, etc.)

List those for whom we should pray. (Each other, all believers, spiritual leaders, etc.)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Conclude with this thought: We will face spiritual attacks, but God has equipped and empowered us to stand firm against them. Let us be intentional to put on the full armour daily.

Lead the class in prayer; asking God for His power and protection, and thanking Him for His presence with us always.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy **Ephesians 6:10-24**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Memorize for Power!

Ephesians 6:10 is a great verse for young people to memorize.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Memorize the verse and say it to one another.

In your daily life, when might this verse be a good thing to remember?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***How to Be Christian When It Is Not Easy***
Ephesians 6:10-24**Beginning the Service:**

Bless His Holy Name, *The Worship Hymnal* #151; CCLI # 17566
Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Of the 30 million Kurds, the largest people group in the world without their own country, 8 million are the Sorani Kurds of Iran and Iraq. Outwardly, the Sorani appear pro-western, strongly Islamic and intensely proud of their violent and oppressive history. Underneath, however, many are dissatisfied and searching. Few have hope in their future or find joy and satisfaction in their religious views. They defend cultural traditions they inwardly view as restrictive. Yet, even if they had their own homeland, their individual and clan quest for power would prevent harmony. The true Kurdish homeland must be found in the kingdom of God! Pray for individual Kurds to come to know Christ as Saviour.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

A Call to Battle

Introduction:

The Epistle to the church at Ephesus rings with challenge over and over. As Paul comes to the end of this brief letter the call is sounded to be prepared for the battle which inevitably comes to one who is faithful to Jesus Christ. In these closing verses I find two focal points that draw my attention. Instead of a farewell to arms, we have been given a call to arms, a call to a battle. This is a call for a two-fold readiness.

Know the foe and use the weapons.

1. A call to be aware of the real enemy

A. A call is issued to the saints at Ephesus to wide-eyed awareness of the enemy against whom they are to do battle. (Ephesians 6:10-20). The entire passage rings with the sound of clashing swords and whirl of chariot wheels of men at war in a fight to the death.

The enemy is identified by a number of phrases in verses 10-11. We must be aware of the wiles of the devil. The author may be emphasizing the spiritual nature of the warfare of Believers by identifying it in different ways. We must know the spiritual nature of the battle in which we are engaged. What are the wiles of the Devil? (Verse 14). The rulers, authorities, and the cosmic power of this present darkness portray them, or these words may be indicative of the same force under different names suggesting the various parts of human culture. Evil is systemic and is pervasive as the air we breathe. Young Christians are particularly vulnerable at this point as they have not learned how to identify evil in culture.

B. The enemy is not flesh and blood; our enemy is not another human—but is the forces at work in humanity and culture. The Christian fight is no easy contest which can be won once and for all. Eugene Peterson's translation in **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** (p. 2128) states the situation clearly:

“God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to the use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This struggle is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and his angels.” (this is Peterson’s way of reducing verses 10-11 into their essential meanings).

The seriousness of our struggle against the powers of this evil age cannot be over-exaggerated. We have been lulled into complacency by an easy evangelism that makes salvation something a child can grasp. When reminded of the nature of our

struggle a retired businessman looked bewildered and said, "No one told me the Christian life was this tough."

2. Weapons we are to use in our war with evil

A. Again, Peterson's translation is helpful: ***"Be prepared. You are up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet: .Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out "***

Nothing has been said directly about the pieces of armour Paul uses in the identification of the Christians weapons. Perhaps any identification of the piece of armour named the belt of truth will be of little help in getting at the meaning of this peace of armour. Truth is certainly an essential part of the protection a Believer wears, and when truth is sacrificed for expediency the message of the Gospel suffers and is often distorted. But to identify this part of armour with the belt worn by the Roman soldier takes us far afield since a Christian sharing this story will spend much time in finding a good analogy in contemporary language. It will be noticed some translations of this passage do not mention the different parts of a soldier's armour.

The parts of the armour of Believers often overlooked are the word of God and prayer, as if these were not part of Paul's catalogue of the pieces of armour. But the word of God, and by this we understand him to be talking about the written word, the Bible, is absolutely essential. A long-time Bible teacher of older adults recently said: "I have been thunder-struck with the biblical illiteracy of retired men and women who have been in Bible study for years. I have given up on trying to educate them along these lines and have tried to deal with a small passage of scripture in a way they can grasp it close to their heart. They often struggle with a bigger picture of preparation for confronting evil."

Call to Commitment:

Conclusion: Be Ready! We have a real fight on our hands, and we are called upon over and over in the struggle until death is our release. We have a strong enemy, but an even stronger Master, who enables us to fight the good fight.

Concluding the Service:

Choose some of the stanzas of Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." You may read the stanzas or give them to several members of your group to read.

Luther wrote this hymn while under friendly confinement in the Wartburg castle in central Germany. For Luther, spiritual battle was as real and far more serious than physical battles.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Estribillo 1

A mighty fortress is our God
A bulwark never failing
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe
His craft and pow'r are great
And armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal

Estribillo 2

Did we in our own strength confide
Our striving would be losing
Were not the right Man on our side
The Man of God's own choosing
Dost ask who that may be
Christ Jesus it is He
Lord Sabaoth His name
From age to age the same
And He must win the battle

Estribillo 3

And tho' this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us
We will not fear for God hath willed
His truth to triumph thru us
The prince of darkness grim
We tremble not for him
His rage we can endure
For lo his doom is sure
One little word shall fell him

Estribillo 4

That word above all earthly pow'rs
No thanks to them abideth
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Thru Him who with us sideth
Let goods and kindred go

This mortal life also
The body they may kill
God's truth abideth still
His kingdom is forever

Estrillo 5

A mighty fortress is our God
A sword and shield victorious
He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod
And wins salvation glorious
The old satanic foe
Has sworn to work us woe
With craft and dreadful might
He arms himself to fight
On earth he has no equal

Estrillo 6

No strength of ours can match his might
We would be lost rejected
But now a champion comes to fight
Whom God Himself elected
You ask who this may be
The Lord of hosts is He
Christ Jesus mighty Lord
God's only Son adored
He holds the field victorious

Estrillo 7

Though hordes of devils fill the land
All threat'ning to devour us
We tremble not unmoved we stand
They cannot overpower us
Let this world's tyrant rage
In battle we'll engage
His might is doomed to fail
God's judgment must prevail
One little word subdues him

Estribillo 8

God's Word forever shall abide
No thanks to foes who fear it
For God Himself fights by our side
With weapons of the Spirit
Were they to take our house
Goods honor child or spouse
Though life be wrenched away
They cannot win the day
The Kingdom's ours forever

Estribillo 9

A mighty fortress is our God
A trusty shield and weapon
He helps us free from ev'ry need
That hath us now o'ertaken
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight
On earth is not his equal

Estribillo 10

With might of ours can naught be done
Soon were our loss effected
But for us fights the valiant One
Whom God Himself elected
Ask ye Who is this
Jesus Christ it is of sabaoth Lord
And there's none other God
He holds the field forever

Estribillo 11

Though devils all the world should fill
All eager to devour us
We tremble not we fear no ill
They shall not overpow'r us
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will
He can harm us none
He's judged the deed is done
One little word can fell him

Estribillo 12

The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit
And take they our life
Goods fame child and wife
Though these all be gone
Our vict'ry has been won
The Kingdom ours remaineth

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