

ARMOR OF GOD

A BIBLE STUDY

for Tweens and Parents in Today's Spiritual Battle



CATHERINE BIRD

Praise for **Armor of God**

“Armor of God is just the resource I’m looking for as a mom of two tweens. Full of conversation-starting questions, bonding activities, and practical ways to put what we’re learning together into action, this book equipped me to help my kids face the very real war before them. Working through this resource, I (for the first time in a long time) found myself helping my daughters get dressed—this time with holy, kingdom-forged armor.”

—**JL Gerhardt**, author and minister

“I loved every chapter of this book! My favorite chapter in *Armor of God* is ‘The Shield of Faith.’ Being a single mom, ‘faith over . . .’ became my mantra, and I said it over and over again when I needed a gentle reminder of God’s promises to me. I loved Catherine reminding me that the Shield of Faith is not something we wear; rather, we use it to cover ourselves from evil and trust God’s love for us no matter what we are going through. My faith can move mountains!”

—**Dede Babcock Johnson**, St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church, boy mom

“Parents and ministry leaders alike will be blessed by this work. As a father, I love the idea of using this text as a tool in equipping my fourth grader with the armor of God as he prepares to enter middle school. As a veteran student ministry pastor, I appreciate how this tool equips parents for their role of discipleship, but also lends itself for use in a ministry context. The suggested activities in the text, as well as the ‘Letters from the Battlefield,’ illustrate clearly the immediate and long-term application for the armor of God in the life of both student and adult. Enjoy this special journey with the tween in your life!”

—**Lucas Randall**, family ministry student director, Hill Country Bible Church

“As a parent of five, I can attest to the spiritual warfare plaguing our nation’s youth. *Armor of God* is just the fortification our family needs to help fight the battle. I am looking forward to sharing Cat’s thoughts and insights with not just my teenage sons, but also with the rest of my children and their friends. We need all the reinforcements we can get!”

—**Erica Jones**, mom of five

“As an adult, it is difficult navigating the battlefield in our lives, our world. Additionally, we are given the responsibility of teaching our children how to overcome the obstacles in their lives. Satan preys on weakness; it is crucial that we are equipped in faith to face the battles we encounter. This book is a must-have in the home and ministry of the church!”

—**Jodi Marfell**, director of children’s ministry, Bethany United Methodist Church, Austin, TX

“My son is ten years old and in fifth grade. As he matures and crosses all of life’s bridges, I’m grateful to have a toolkit with specific examples of prayers and activities that address challenges faced by youth today. When we read this book together, we not only strengthen our relationship with each other, we grow in our faith.”

—**Julie Long**, busy working mom with a preteen boy, Spring Hill, TN

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Foreword by Teri Lynne Underwood



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A NOTE TO PARENTS

Armor of God is an eight-week study designed and intentionally written for tween kids (approximately ages nine to twelve) to share with their mom or dad—or both! As parents, we can probably all agree that raising children in today's culture is not for the faint of heart. There is a spiritual war raging around us, and the enemy prowls around our camp like a roaring lion and seeks to devour our children (1 Pet. 5:8). We are called as parents to equip our children and teach them the ways of the Word so they do not become casualties to the ways of the world. The Bible tells us to clothe ourselves with the armor of God (Eph. 6:14–19) to defend against the enemy and his schemes.

That is the heart behind this study. It is chock full of wisdom and practical modern-day examples that explain what the spiritual war is, who we are fighting against, and how and why we have a winning strategy through Jesus. By the end of this study, I pray parents and tweens will understand that Satan's attacks come in many forms (depression, anxiety, bullying, cheating, lying, and more). Yet, with the armor of God, they can stand firm against evil and resist the enemy's schemes to separate them from the One who created them and loves them most.

Format of the Study

This study is unique in that each chapter is not broken down into daily reading and study. This is an eight-week format designed to facilitate joint

Bible study and discussion between parents and their tweens. Parents and kids may approach weekly study however it fits into their schedules. If you want to read and study a little bit each day, great! If it works better for you to consolidate into two days, go for it. The structure of this study is intentionally flexible.

SITREP Sections

SITREP is a military term for *situation report* and within the context of this study provides readers with a status check and understanding of the current topic of discussion. There are a few ways to approach the SITREP sections within this study, which include conversation starters and questions to get you thinking more deeply about each chapter discussion. Answer the questions in each chapter together or on your own. Some parents and tweens may choose to write directly in the Bible study book, while others may prefer a notebook or journal where you can jot down your thoughts separately. In the pilot group, the girls were definitely preferential to journals while the boys preferred talking through their thoughts aloud in a group setting. Choose whatever method works best for you and your family. If you are going through this study with a group, your facilitator will lead you through some engaging discussions and fun activities that relate to each week's topic.

Parent and Tween Activities

In this study, you will also find activities specifically designed for parents and tweens to complete together each week. These activities are meant to facilitate fellowship between parents and kids while helping them dig a little deeper into the biblical topic of each chapter. The activities presented throughout the study focus on designing and constructing each reader's own "spiritual" armor, which in a biblical context reflects the elements of armor historically worn by Roman soldiers. During the first week, tweens and their parents will draft a rough concept for their own designs. At the end of the study, tweens and parents will don their fancy new armor and engage in an entertaining battle of their own. The pilot group used colored powders, but any messy, fun substance will do! Have fun and feel free to

include other family members. This can be an exciting adventure, so enjoy and get started today! (*Note this adapts well to small group study.*)

Letters from the Battlefield

I am most excited about this new Bible study feature. Sometimes, my friends and I lament how our children seem deaf to the sound of their parents' voices. We lend a piece of advice, and it simply goes in one ear and out the other. However, a peer of said child could lend the same advice and the words are taken to heart. While we know as parents we weren't alive when the dinosaurs roamed the earth, we *have* traveled quite a bit more on the road of life than our mini-mes. In addition to the wisdom of their *elderly* parents, it is helpful for our children to hear from peers about their own struggles, which may seem more relatable than our "Well, when I was your age . . ."

That's not to say that the parental wisdom we impart isn't important and relevant, because it is. It is also just as critical for kids of today to hear from other tweens and teens who are battling similar struggles or have already weathered really rough seas and have insight to share as a result of those experiences. These are teens and tweens who have been active on the spiritual battlefield and who have been brave enough to share their stories with you and your children. These tidbits are included at the end of each chapter and are aptly called "Letters from the Battlefield." I pray your children are touched and inspired by the vulnerability of these young men and women and that your tweens heed the call to equip themselves with the armor of God.

Let's get started!

A NOTE TO TWEENS

Dear Friend,

Welcome to Spiritual Warfare 101, tween edition! I'm so happy you're here, and I know we're going to get through this together! As a teen myself (you'll be there soon too!), I experience spiritual warfare on the daily in every aspect of my life. Whether it's through peer pressure, a whisper in my ear, or even a testing situation, it's everywhere. So, let's dive right in and dig a little deeper into this thing called spiritual warfare!

First of all, I feel the toughest spiritual warfare I fight against comes in the form of peer pressure. It's so easy to listen to your friends and want to fit in. Trust me. I've been there. Most of the time it's harmless, innocent fun . . . *until* it's not. Whether people are urging you to gossip, try drugs or alcohol, or perform an act you know does not honor God, sometimes it's hard to say no, especially when it's your friends.

You know that gut feeling you get when you know you shouldn't be doing something? Yeah, that's the one. Wanna hear a secret? That's the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is constantly watching over you and helps you combat spiritual warfare and the enemy. I know I've been in many situations like this—and when I listen to the Holy Spirit, it turns out great! I try to live my life for God and choose to make right decisions that honor him, but sometimes it doesn't work out that way. *Sometimes*, I choose to ignore that gut feeling from the Holy Spirit and make a choice that doesn't quite honor God, and I face the consequences for that choice. But even

though I may have lost that single battle, I did not lose the war, because I have the best tool at my side, ready to help combat anything that comes at me. Thanks, Holy Spirit! So, learn to listen to that gut feeling, because the Holy Spirit knows what he's talking about!

Spiritual warfare and the enemy come in many, many forms. The enemy is always one step behind, whispering in your ear. Maybe it's to cheat on the math test you didn't study for (guilty!); or maybe it's skipping church to go hang out with friends instead. The enemy is extremely sneaky, and he has many tricks up his sleeve. But don't worry! Remember, you've got the Holy Spirit on your side. In these situations, I like to combat spiritual warfare with simple logic, such as, "I can always do corrections if I fail this math test or just do better on the next test," or "I can hang out with my friends after church today." I use these simple statements and logic because I like to pretend Jesus is standing right next to me, watching me, and listening to me (because he always is!). I like to pretend he's there physically. If Jesus was standing next to you, you probably would make the decision to best honor him, right? Me too! Spiritual warfare has got nothing on us with Jesus by our side!

Now y'all, pay attention to this next sentence. The enemy hits us the hardest, and we have the biggest struggle with spiritual warfare, when it comes to who we are and who God says we are. The enemy *loves* to whisper lies in our ears when we mess up. He may say things like, "Wow, no way *you* can be a child of God; you make *way* too many mistakes," or "Hmmm, you look really ugly today; actually you look awful every day." I have struggled with this, and I still do on a daily basis. The enemy makes up sneaky lies that get into our heads; and the sad part is, sometimes we start to believe them. But God doesn't want us to believe those lies! He wants us to believe we are fearfully and wonderfully made in his image (which is pretty awesome to me)! Yet, I totally understand the struggle. The best way I have found to remember that I am created in the image of God is to write and stick a note on the mirror I look at every day, telling myself how much God loves me and how worthy I am to him. This helps so much when I'm feeling down or letting the enemy sneak into my head and my heart.

Here's another fun fact about spiritual warfare: the enemy loves to kick us when we're down. Gross, right? We are most susceptible to listening and

believing what the enemy has to say if we're already in a bad place. But don't fret! There's a quick and easy way to combat the enemy and win more battles when he attacks! Ask God to protect your heart and your mind from the enemy. Proclaim that you know you are a beautiful or handsome child of God and that you are fearfully and wonderfully made in his image. Now this may take some practice; it definitely took me a couple tries. But I promise, Jesus is always on your side; he will be the first to protect your heart with all his might. Spoiler alert!!! Jesus *always* wins.

So my last piece of advice is this: Use your God-given armor (Eph. 6:14–18) to protect your mind and your heart. Know that God is just a quick prayer away and is always on your team to combat the enemy and his evil tricks. Every single time. You've got this, friend!

Abby F.



FOREWORD

About a week ago, my daughter turned twenty. And a couple of days ago, I visited a brand-new baby, born in the same hospital where our girl was born. My husband and I walked past the room where Casiday made her grand entrance into the world and headed into the room where a tiny little boy, just a few hours old, was nestled in his mother's arms. And I thought how true that old saying is: "The days are long, but the years are short."

You're in one of the hardest seasons. The tween years are tough on parents and on tweens. Everyone is learning to navigate life as it seems to change almost every day. It can feel completely overwhelming. And, if we aren't careful, we can easily find ourselves in what seems like a battlefield in the one place that is supposed to be a refuge—our homes.

In these pages, you'll find that the very best way to minimize the battle is to keep our eyes on the *real* battle for our hearts. Paul says our enemy isn't flesh and blood but rulers and powers in this world (Eph. 6:12). We have to know the truth about this and understand that we need to fight for our relationships, not against each other.

Once we recognize the real enemy, we need to make sure we're using the right tools. And that's where this amazing resource comes in. You'll

spend the next several weeks learning about the spiritual armor that God has given to each of us. As you learn what each piece offers and how to best use it, you'll also discover how remembering that we're on the same side helps us encourage and support each other, even when it's hard.

If you haven't considered doing this study with a group of other parents and tweens, can I just whisper a word of encouragement for you to think about that? While our homes are our first community, the additional insight and support we gain from learning and applying God's Word together is another layer of protection and strength. The enemy will work hard to separate you from your people, but know that your community is essential in battling against Satan in the spiritual war.

Cat and I have done some serious prayer battle together. We've held each other up and stood in the gap for one another and our families many times. Through those experiences (and countless phone conversations full of laughter and tears), we've discovered the beauty of fighting with our community for the things that matter most. Your community makes you stronger. Now is a great time for you to learn those same truths.

You'll also want to pay careful attention to the "Letters from the Battlefield." Let's face it: I'm old. Cat is old. And you probably think your parents are old. (We know you are way too polite to say it, but we also know there's a reason "Okay, boomer" is such a popular saying.) It might be easy for you to dismiss what we're saying or even tuck it away, thinking it will be good information for you when you're old one day. These letters, which appear in each chapter, are from people just a few years ahead of you—young men and women who have grown up with cell phones and the pressures of social media. They know more about the way the battle can rage in your life than your parents or other adults may understand. I hope you'll pay careful attention to what they've shared and that you find encouragement through their words of wisdom. (Parents, you might be surprised at how much their words can encourage and challenge you as well.)

Y'all, Cat Bird is one of my dearest friends. She has a heart bigger than her Texas home. She loves God and his Word, and these pages are evidence of how much she wants you to know the same Jesus who has changed her life. I'm grateful for the way she loves and encourages me, and I really

believe you're going to feel that same deep care she has for you as you dig into *Armor of God*.

I love what Cat has created in this study. We can impact both those long days and the short years in a powerful way when we spend time together—parents and sons/daughters—in the Word. You're holding a tool that can help you grow closer together and grow closer to the Lord.

As you work through these pages, you'll learn new things about one another and become a source of encouragement to each other as you focus on fighting the battle we all face. Enjoy these moments you have, and be certain that your time in the Word and the time you invest in your relationship will reap big rewards!

Praying for you all!

Teri Lynne

Teri Lynne Underwood is a pastor's wife and future nurse's mom. She lives in north Alabama, where she teaches Bible study, speaks at women's events, does lots of laundry, and wrangles her family's very grumpy basset hound, Buddy. She's the author of *Praying for Girls: Asking God for the Things They Need Most* and has contributed to several books and devotionals, as well as the *(in)courage Devotional Bible*. You can connect with Teri Lynne on Instagram at @terilynneu or on her website www.TeriLynneUnderwood.com.



Stand, therefore,
with TRUTH LIKE A belt around your waist,
RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE armor on your
chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for
the GOSPEL OF peace. In every situation take up
the SHIELD OF faith with which you can
extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
Take the HELMET OF salvation and the
SWORD OF THE Spirit—which is the
word of God. PRAY AT ALL times in the
SPIRIT with every prayer and request, and
STAY ALERT with all PERSEVERANCE
and INTERCESSION for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:14–18 (CSB)



PART ONE

Preparing for Battle

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers of this darkness,
against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.*

Ephesians 6:12 (CSB)



KNOWING YOUR ENEMY



For though we walk in the world, we do not fight according to this world's rules of warfare. The weapons of the war we're fighting are not of this world but are powered by God and effective at tearing down the strongholds erected against His truth.

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 (*The Voice*)

The Backstory

Last summer, my family and I took a trip to Washington, DC. We spent ten very full days visiting historical landmarks, including the White House, Mount Vernon, the Lincoln Memorial, several Smithsonian museums, and a long list of other exciting sites within the National Mall and beyond. Each destination was packed with middle-school children and their chaperones taking in all the sights, sounds, and smells that make the US capital such a memorable place. Of course, each fun stop was outfitted with a gift shop where tourists could purchase some fun mementos to take home. In addition to the gift shops, vendors lined the streets, offering all kinds of interesting wares for passersby.

One day during our trip to DC, we were on a guided walking tour through Ford's Theatre and nearby landmarks when our group passed by the Trump International Hotel. We noticed the presence of police and that traffic had been halted in both directions. It dawned on us that the president was *inside* and about to depart for the White House. No matter how you feel about the man personally, there is some exhilaration at seeing the president of a nation—a sight which many people never see in their

lifetime. Cheering ensued as the president was rushed to the awaiting motorcade, and then several black vehicles sped by surprised spectators. The whole unexpected encounter lasted less than twenty minutes, but it was a highlight of our trip to the nation's capital and one of the first experiences our kids share when they talk about their trip.

I imagine this is how tourists felt in ancient Ephesus when they visited the renowned Temple of Artemis, which was built in honor of a goddess of fertility (also sometimes known as Diana). Once named as one of the Seven Wonders of the World and built in what today is western Turkey, the Temple of Artemis was undoubtedly a sight to behold when it stood proudly in its heyday, around the sixth century BC.¹ The temple was longer than a modern-day football field and stood surrounded by one hundred columns, each roughly fifty-five feet tall.²

As you can imagine, hundreds of thousands of tourists flocked to this destination each year in the ancient world—many to attend the annual month-long celebration honoring Artemis. Travelers would have spent money on lodging, food, souvenirs, and the same types of things we might purchase if we were vacationing away from home today. Ephesus was a bustling modern city in ancient times, much like Washington, DC, is for us today. If we were to stroll down the streets when the Apostle Paul visited in the spring of 52 AD, we would see a busy harbor with ships from all over the world docked at port and a busy marketplace full of vendors selling goods and services to visiting tourists.



Paul and his missionaries visited other important cities like Ephesus during the days of the early church. As Jesus asked Paul and the other disciples to do (Mark 16:15), Paul faithfully visited new places, often big cities like Rome, Ephesus, and Corinth, to start churches. While he was unable to stay in each place permanently, Paul wrote letters to the people he had visited to lend encouragement and wisdom as they continued the important work of growing Christian communities.

A Letter with Impact

When Paul was in Ephesus, many people accepted Jesus into their hearts and converted to Christianity. As more and more people became Christians, fewer people visited the Temple of Artemis and less became interested in purchasing souvenirs that represented a goddess they no longer worshipped. Eventually, this impacted the vendors in and around the temple, who made their living from the goods they sold. They were unhappy with Paul and his fellow missionaries and the effect their teachings had on the temple marketplace. Thus Paul had to pack up his suitcase and leave Ephesus, leaving the important work of growing the church that had been planted with new believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was to remind them what it means to be part of the body of Christ and to encourage them as they faced opposition in the days of the early church. Belief in Jesus and following his teachings meant public persecution, and many Christians in those days met in secret (as some Christian communities around the world are still forced to do today). However, that is not the danger that Paul referenced in Ephesians 6:12. Within his letter about Christian living and responsibilities, Paul also wrote to the Ephesians about an *unseen* war—a battle waged between the spiritual forces of good and evil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.
(Eph. 6:12 CSB)

What Is the Unseen War?

Simply explained, “War can be defined as organized fighting, on a large scale, over a period of time between different ethnic, national or racial groups.”³ There have been a depressingly large number of wars throughout human history. The longest wars spanned centuries, while some recorded conflicts lasted only days. These wars represent many battles fought on a variety of fronts by different types of soldiers.

In the case of war, smaller battles ensue. While a commander in chief may direct the strategy of each conflict, the tactical objectives are executed by a hierarchy of soldiers. The *unseen* spiritual war Paul references in both Ephesians and 2 Corinthians can be explained in much the same way. While the first war in recorded history took place in Mesopotamia in c. 2700 BCE between Sumer and Elam,⁴ the first spiritual battle took place long before:

A battle broke out in heaven. Michael, along with his heavenly messengers, clashed against the dragon. The dragon and his messengers returned the fight, but they did not prevail and were defeated. As a result, there was no place left for them in heaven. So the great dragon, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, was cast down to the earth along with his messengers. (Rev. 12:7–9 *The Voice*)

According to the Bible, Satan was given dominion on earth and mankind has been a target ever since. If we look back in Scripture, we learn Adam and Eve faced spiritual opposition in the Garden of Eden. Remember the serpent? Genesis 3 paints the picture of a crafty snake who tempted Eve into eating the forbidden fruit and, in turn, sharing the fruit with Adam. Prior to the first sin, Adam and Eve lived in community with God within what we can imagine was the most beautiful place on earth. They had much freedom, and Scripture tells us God only gave them a single restriction: do not eat *one* fruit. Yet they were tempted by the sight of such a delicious-looking fruit, and the serpent encouraged them to take what they wanted. Hmmm, sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Isn't this how spiritual opposition still translates to our lives today? How are we tempted into choices that seem appealing but are not necessarily good for us? Temptation takes many, many different forms. Some of us are tempted by electronics, social media, food, drugs, vaping, anxiety (yes, we can be tempted to give in to worry and fear), laziness, busyness . . . the list is endless. We'll unpack this idea further as we dig deeper into who our enemy is, how he preys on our weaknesses, and what we can use to defend against these attacks.

For now, it is important to understand that the spiritual war is real. It is happening all around us, even though we cannot see it. The purpose of this study is to help you become battle ready by understanding the landscape of the spiritual battlefield, familiarizing yourself with your armor, and learning how to defend against the enemy's attacks. The more you know, the better prepared you will be.

Most Importantly, You Are Never Alone

War is scary business, to be sure. Imagine being on a battlefield with no knowledge of your enemy and no one beside you to help you fight. A terrifying thought, right? Fortunately, that is not your situation. *You are never alone.*

Before we take a closer look at the enemy, let's take a closer look at ourselves. First and foremost, let's address what could be an elephant in the room and dispel any mistruths about *who* you are and *whose* you are. You are intentionally crafted by a loving God for an important purpose (Ps. 139:14, Eph. 2:10, Luke 12:7, Jer. 29:11). Every single one of us has doubted this truth—likely on more than one occasion. And guess what? That's part of the enemy's scheme to distract you from the truth of your royal lineage. You bear the image of our Creator (Gen. 1:27), crowned with honor and glory to accomplish important work while you are here on earth (Ps. 8:4–6, Heb. 2:5–7). *That* is who you are.

When you accepted Jesus into your heart and asked him to be your Lord and Savior, you experienced what Christians call a “spiritual rebirth” (2 Cor. 5:17). The covenant of the Old Testament in the Bible, which required a blood sacrifice for sins, was fulfilled by Jesus when he took our sins to the cross. He died so that we could have the gift of salvation and

eternal life with our Father in heaven (Eph. 2:8). We didn’t do anything to earn it. We actually don’t deserve it, but God loves each and every one of us so much that he sent his one and only Son to bear the shame of our sins (John 3:16). The old covenant of laws and works was replaced by the new covenant of grace. Christian author Jack Zavada said, “Both the Old and New Testaments are the story of the same God, a God of love and mercy who gave his people the freedom to choose and who gives his people the opportunity to come back to him by choosing Jesus Christ.”⁵ The gospel is called the good news for a reason!

As part of God’s family, Mark tells us we are to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15 NIV). That is our battle objective: to share the love of Jesus with everyone until the entire world has heard the good news (Matt. 24:14). It may seem daunting, but remember you are part of an army of Christian soldiers (1 Pet. 5:9). *You are not alone.*

Who Is the Enemy?

It is important to know our enemy, because he certainly knows you. When we, as Christians, refer to the enemy, we are referring to Satan, which comes from a Hebrew word meaning “adversary.” Everything we need to know about the enemy we can find in Scripture. In a nutshell, Satan is J-E-A-L-O-U-S. He is blatantly envious of God and wants to take his place. Look up Isaiah 14:13–14 and complete the section below. (*Hint: Use a Bible translation like the NIV that shows five “I will” statements.*) It reveals how deeply jealous Satan is of God by the promise the enemy makes himself.

You said in your heart,

“I will _____ ;

I will _____ ;

I will _____ .

I will _____ ;

I will _____ .”

Wow, Satan is so full of himself! He could not be more wrong.

You have probably seen scary depictions of the devil (another name we use for Satan, translated from the Greek word *diabolos*), where he looks

like a dragon with horns or some other creepy creature from the underworld. The truth is our enemy is probably quite appealing on the outside, but he is definitely ugly on the inside. Much like the origin of the word *devil*, one of the enemy's signature qualities is his *diabolical* nature. While our objective is to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, Satan's goal is to stop us. Make no mistake. The enemy is clever, strong, and relentless in his pursuit to wage war against the kingdom of heaven.

When Satan was exiled from heaven, God cast him down to the earth (Rev. 12:7–9), and he has dominion here (Luke 4:5–7). What exactly does that mean? It means that Satan is active among the realm of earth, and while he is extremely powerful, he does not have omnipotent control over humanity. He cannot hear our thoughts. We retain our free will, and once we become Christians, we can call upon the power of the Holy Spirit to resist him (Luke 10:19).

Our enemy never rests, never sleeps, and he is ruthless in his objective to stop the spread of the gospel. He's no dummy either. An effective commander has spies and patrols that help perform reconnaissance and collect valuable information on their enemy. Military forces all over the world and throughout the span of history have engaged the work of soldiers whose sole mission is to probe into the enemy's territory and use surveillance and patrols to learn more about them and their capabilities. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? The enemy has studied us, and he knows where we are vulnerable to attacks.

These attacks come in many forms. Writing this study, for example, placed me on the front lines of a fierce spiritual battle. The enemy is likely less than thrilled at the idea of new generations of Christian soldiers learning how to defend against his attacks. I believe there was an assignment issued to keep me from finishing this study for you. The enemy's attacks came in many forms: illness, an unexpected job change, a misunderstanding with a friend, a child hurting from a painful breakup with her boyfriend, a dog yacking on my brand-new rug, a global pandemic, and the list goes on. When I would sit down to focus and write, distractions would abound. If you are walking in the way of Jesus and chasing after him with abandon, spiritual attacks will happen to you, too. It is part of our walk

as Christians. We will face trials and endure hardships the enemy places in our paths. However, we have hope.

Spoiler alert: The war has already been won. God is imminently more powerful than Satan. Good versus evil is not even an accurate comparison. Think of a gnat on the sun. When Jesus died on the cross, he took even more power away from Satan. Remember, our enemy is angry and jealous of God. Everything he does is to distract us from focusing on *what* and *who* matters most.

While the enemy can make our lives pretty miserable from time to time, he does not have the power or authority to separate you from God. Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are marked as Christ’s own (Eph. 1:13). This means you become part of the body of Christ—a community of believers who affirm and encourage one another as we work toward the common goal of sharing the good news around the world. The “Letters from the Battlefield” included at the end of each chapter in this book provide further proof (and encouragement) from teen soldiers who are defending against spiritual opposition and actively engaged in the unseen war.

The Enemy’s Aliases

Like the talented con artist he is, Satan has many aliases. Look up the following Scriptures and match each with Satan’s corresponding name.

Ephesians 6:12	the tempter
Matthew 4:1	anointed cherub
Isaiah 14:12–14	the deceiver
Ezekiel 28:14	father of lies
Matthew 4:3	son of the morning
John 8:44	prince of darkness
Revelation 12:9	the devil

Preparing for Battle

In Ephesians 6:10–17, Paul explains the armor of God, which we as Christians can put on to defend against Satan’s schemes. Why do you think he used the analogy of a Roman soldier?

Paul actually was not the first to use the illustration we find in Ephesians. If we flip back to the Old Testament to Isaiah 59:17, it says, “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head” (ESV). Paul’s explanation of the armor of God points back to the Old Testament reference, but he develops the idea further by using a symbol that the Ephesians would have been very familiar with—the Roman soldier.

Ephesus was a Roman-governed city, and the Ephesians would have seen Roman soldiers every day. Paul used imagery that would have made sense to the Ephesians. As we dig further into our study of the armor of God, we will unpack each piece and examine its purpose more closely to understand why Paul’s analogy is still relevant for Christians today.

An Activity for Parents and Tweens: Personalizing Your Armor of God

The activities included throughout this entire study are focused on designing and constructing each participant’s own armor of God. For week one, explore the following components of a Roman soldier’s armor:

- Belt
- Sandals
- Helmet
- Breastplate
- Shield
- Sword

Spend some time talking through what you learn and draft a rough concept for your own designs. Each person should have their own! At the end of this study, tweens and parents will don their fancy new armor and engage in an entertaining battle. The pilot group used colored powders, but any messy, fun substance will do. Start thinking now, and get creative!

While parents and tweens are working on their armor designs, discuss what spiritual opposition looks like for each person. Take some time to pray over your designs and thank God for his provision of spiritual armor

to defend against Satan's attacks. If you are unsure of what to pray, the following is a prayer offering you might consider.

Dear Father in Heaven,

Thank you for crafting me with such love and purpose. I know you loved me so much that you sent your one and only Son to take the punishment for my sins. That love is so much more than I can comprehend, but I want to love more deeply. Show me how to love like you do, Lord.

Help me as I prepare for spiritual battle with the enemy. Give me insight to learn all the intricacies of the special spiritual armor you have provided, Lord. Help me remember to suit up and protect me and those I love from the enemy's attacks. Send your angels to stand with me and help push the enemy back.

Forgive me where I fail you, God. Please send your Holy Spirit to guide me, to instruct me, and to help me prepare for the important work you have called me to do. I am here, Lord! <YOUR NAME> here, reporting for duty!

*In Jesus's name, I pray,
Amen.*



WHAT'S YOUR SITREP?

It's time for a situation report, so let's check your understanding and dig deeper into the context of Chapter One.

1. Read Ephesians 6:10–19 together. Write below in your own words what Paul is trying to explain to the Ephesians.

2. Why do you think Paul used the analogy of a Roman soldier?
3. If you have time this week, do a little research on what the armor of Roman soldiers looked like. Compare those pieces to what we read about in Ephesians 6.
4. What is the unseen war, and are we defenseless? Why or why not?
5. Who do we need protection from in the unseen war?
6. How does the enemy tempt you into choices that do not honor the person God has designed you to be? What do you think the enemy sees as your weakness?
7. Do you think the armor of God is for physical protection or spiritual protection?

(Note to parents: Hopefully, this will open the door for you to talk about the need for spiritual protection. We'll unpack this further in future chapters and discuss scenarios we encounter in our daily lives that support the need for our God-given armor.)

- 8. Look up Colossians 2:15 and write it in the space below. Talk with your mom or dad about what this passage of Scripture means.

..... THIS WEEK'S **BATTLE PLAN**

- *This is a weekly call to action based on the topic of each discussion.
- 1. Write out Ephesians 6:10–19. Personalize the passage and change it to first person. For example, “I will be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” *Battle tactic: We will dig into the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, in a later chapter, but just like a Roman soldier, it is important to be familiar with your weapon! The more comfortable you are with your weapon, the better equipped you will be to wield it against the enemy.*
 - 2. Pray the armor of God over yourself and each member of your family each day this week.

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Letters from the Battlefield

Dear Parents,

At the end of each chapter in my previous Bible studies, I included a letter from me to moms reading and working through those studies with their tweens. Much life has happened since I wrote my last study, and I have prayed about how to make these times studying the Word of God more meaningful for readers. The truth is the older my children grow, the more their hearts are open to the words of their peers.

Peer influence is powerful. We don't always think of peer pressure as positive, but it can be a really, really good thing. Even as adults, we draw support and wisdom from our peers as we navigate the sometimes tumultuous path in front of us. The more I thought and prayed through plans for this study, the more I felt led to incorporate letters from older teens who might be able to lend encouragement to tweens who are participating in this study. Thus each chapter concludes with "Letters from the Battlefield," which I pray encourage you and your tweens, who may be facing a battle of their own. These letters are raw and vulnerable and paint a picture of what the spiritual battlefield looks like for our children today.

It seems like just yesterday I was listening to Tiffany on my Walkman and trying to look like Cyndi Lauper for picture day at school when, in reality, I probably looked more like Punky Brewster. Shockingly, our kids today don't relate as well to the social struggles we faced when we

were their age. While the idea of slap bracelets has stood the test of time, today's youth has no idea how awesome Trapper Keepers were/are.

Yet the social challenges that surpass age gaps include mean girls, bullies, the temptation for whatever society says is the latest "it" thing. Atari's Frogger may not hold a candle to Nintendo Switch's Mario Kart, but both can be considered huge Time Bandits. (Ahem. Eighties kids, you totally get what I just did there.)

In short, the teens of today are certainly facing scenarios we never could have imagined and vice versa. However, as parents, we still have important words of wisdom to share. My prayer is that tweens working through the pages of this study will open their hearts as they unpack knowledge of the unseen war and their own personal armor of God. I pray that your conversations are deep and meaningful. I pray that you and your children draw closer to one another while leaning more deeply into your relationship with God. I pray that none of you remains unchanged as you prepare to take your place on the spiritual battlefield.

Hugs,
Cat



Dear Friend,

This topic of spiritual opposition touches my heart, as my walk with God has never been easy. I'm sure that you maybe can feel the same way, as God can put you in situations that you never saw coming. There have been quite a

few times in my life when I've tried to take my own path rather than his. It is in times like these that I try my best to remember that God has gone before me to create an entire plan for my life from beginning to end. This, most importantly, includes all of the good and bad in between.

As I grew up in the church, I oftentimes found that I couldn't wrap my mind around why God would decide to place battles in our life. Whenever something difficult would happen to me, I felt that it was as if he just decided to leave me all alone to deal with these awful circumstances by myself.

Just over a year ago, I was heading into my second year of high school with my sister, who was starting her senior year. I felt that everything was finally falling into place with my friendships and extracurricular activities—that was until my parents sat my sister and me down to tell us that my mom had been diagnosed with breast cancer. My world stopped, and I was left completely shocked by the news. I couldn't fathom why God would do this to someone so important to me, and I became very angry with him. I grew farther and farther apart from God, as I felt that this was his doing. I didn't want to go to church, read the Bible, or even pray to ask for help. I felt that I was stranded alone in the desert with no way to get out. This was exactly what the enemy wanted.

This was my struggle until an army of people—friends, family, and loved ones—came to our rescue. They brought us meals, care packages for my mom, and offered rides for my sister and me. At first, I was reluctant to accept their help, as these were things my mom had always done for us. Over time, I gradually realized that God sent

these people to surround my family with love and support so that she could fight. These people were God's army, and they were the hope that we needed for her to continue on. For the first time in a while, I sat down to pray and ask God to forgive me for distancing myself from him. I went back to church and began to understand that although he allowed for my mom to have cancer, he purposefully handpicked this group of people to fight my mom's battle right alongside her. I decided then that the only way we were going to make it through this was by keeping a strong and steady faith in him.

Through every treatment and surgery, my family prayed that she was beating the cancer. Without our faith, this journey would've been so much more difficult, as we wouldn't have had God to lean on. The day she rang the bell (signifying the end of her cancer treatment) was a moment I'll never forget. I was beyond grateful that my mom could say that she was a cancer survivor.

Through all of the pain I watched her go through, it became very apparent to me that God sometimes has to bring you to your worst in order to let you be your best. I thought God had failed me, but instead, he showed up in ways I had never have seen before. As hard as those times may be, God surrounds you with an army to defeat whatever battle, big or small, lies ahead. May you rest in the knowledge that God is in control and trust that he continues to walk right beside you wherever you go.

Blessings,
Abby J.



Dear Friend,

My name is Breck, and I am sixteen years old. I was born into a Christian family and accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at a very young age. Even so, my relationship with God did not deepen significantly until the summer before my freshman year of high school, when I attended a church camp. It was then that I felt my relationship with God really grew. After this experience, I started to live my life for God and practice his ways. I am trying to grow in my relationship with him and act as the person I know God wants me to be, even though that can be tough as a teenager in this day and age. As I continue to grow in my faith, I have noticed many of the situations my friends and I are faced with now are actually encounters with spiritual opposition, which the Bible tells us to expect when we become Christians.

One of the ways the enemy distracts us in today's culture is by tempting teens to spend a lot of money on designer clothing, high-end electronics, and other non-essential items. I spend a lot of my own money on secondary things such as Uber Eats, Vans sneakers, and music. Although spending money on nonessentials can be totally okay, it seems to be done in excess among teens of our generation. This is one of the ways Satan tries to separate us from our faith in God. Many teens today focus on temporary desires and worldly items, rather than focusing on saving our money. As soon as money hits our hands, we are enticed to exchange it for some cool or trendy "thing" that society tells us we need right now. Worldly items like these can be distracting from

God and easily consume our lives. We need to be more cautious and try to resist Satan's temptations to over-indulge." Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:2 CSB).

The spiritual battlefield that we face every day is a place where every decision matters. It requires you to have the ability to make tough decisions, even if that means saving your birthday money rather than blowing it on an expensive new pair of shoes. The spiritual battlefield also requires us to encourage one another, not to grow jealous of what other teens have. This is tough, guys. It's hard sometimes to walk around school and avoid envying what other teens have. On the spiritual battlefield, Satan attacks us when we are weak and not expecting it. He sometimes attacks us through unexpected sources, such as through a close friend. His attacks are clever and calculated. He knows how to distract us. As Christians, spiritual opposition is not a matter of if; it is a matter of when it will happen.

There is hope, though. When I am dealing with spiritual opposition, I go to my family or God for help. I try to focus on the big picture rather than my present and temporary desires. I defend against spiritual opposition with Scripture such as:

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father,

but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

(1 John 2:15-17 NLT)

Avoiding the temptation of worldly desires definitely is a struggle for all of us, but it is also an important part of Christianity. As Christians, we must try to understand that just because we desire something does not mean that we should have it. Teens nowadays particularly are constantly enticed with buying things for worldly reasons; this is an easy habit to have and a tough habit to stop, but we must try. Following Jesus requires the ability to make choices that go against what we might specifically want in the present and quite honestly against primarily what society says is good for us.

My hope is that we can be a generation that says "no" to the ways of the world and "yes" to the ways of God. I pray we can all plan for our future and avoid expensive worldly items and other nonessential temptations that are only temporary. Our hope in Jesus is never ending.

Sincerely,

Breck

NOTES

¹“Temple of Artemis at Ephesus,” *Turkish Archaeological News*, December 14, 2016, <https://turkisharchaeonews.net/object/temple-artemis-ephesus>.

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⁴Joshua J. Mark, “War in Ancient Times,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, September 2, 2009, <http://www.ancient.eu/war/>.

⁵Jack Zavada, “Old Covenant versus New Covenant,” *Learn Religions*, January 29, 2020, <http://www.learnreligions.com/old-vs-new-covenant-700361>.