

Encouraged

with Paul's letter to the Ephesians

'So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10)'



Handouts to help you read & understand –
for personal Bible study, reading the Bible with a friend or with a group

17th Session **THEME: Equipped to stand firm**

1. Start with prayer. Then look at this icebreaker question. 10 minutes to get started

Today we will learn more about 'spiritual warfare'. There is a severe war going on, not only against every Christian who is born of God, but also against the whole church. Satan is outrageous against all who are saved by the Lord Jesus and who in their church life and in their daily lives desire to honor him by their 'walk', their way of living (as described in the second half of the letter to the Ephesians). Have you recently experienced, or do you currently experience such spiritual attacks and warfare? Take some moments to think about this and to share.

2. Read Ephesians 6 : 10 – 24 (we focus on 10-20) 30 minutes to understand the passage

Look again at verses 10 - 13 'Strength to stand – where it is and why we need it'

- Where, according to these verses, is the strength that we need to be able to stand?
- As you reread 1:3-14, pay careful attention to the places where Paul wrote 'in him'. What do you learn?
- The apostle says that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. Hence, spiritual warfare is like 'wrestling'. And also: it is not against humans. Why is that important?
- How do the spiritual forces want us to live? (For an answer you may reread 2:1-3).

Look again at verses 14 - 17 'The whole armor with which we can stand'

Look at every piece of the armor.

- For what kind of satanic attack or temptation is every piece useful?
- You may want to learn more how each piece is useful for the church. Why not use Ephesians to learn more?
Each one in the life group may look at a particular piece. After some moments of silence share what you found.
 - The belt of truth: look at 1:13, 4:21, 4:25 – what do you learn?
 - The breastplate of righteousness: look at 4:25 – what do you learn?
 - As shoes, the readiness given by the gospel of peace: look at 2:14, 2:17, 4:3, 32 – what do you learn?
 - The shield of faith: look at 1:13, 15, 2:8, 3:17, 4:5, 13 – what do you learn?
 - The helmet of salvation: look at 1:13, 2:8 – what do you learn?
 - The sword of the Spirit, the word: look at 1:13, 4:18-19, 4:26 – what do you learn?

Look again at verses 'Stand – awake in prayer'

The word for 'alert' means 'awake'. What Paul writes here aligns with the Lord's own teachings (see for instance Mat. 26:41). These continual prayers are needed, both personally and together as a church. Both for yourself and for the whole church. Especially also for the progress of the Gospel.

- What strikes you, or what do you learn, or what do you want to ask about these verses?

3. Apply and end with prayer. 15 minutes to make it personal and to pray

It is inevitable that the church and the Christian face spiritual warfare. Take a few moments of silence to think of what in particular was helpful for you in what you learnt from the passage of today. Share and end with prayer.

4. Digging deeper

Everything the apostle writes about the spiritual armor refers deeply to the Lord Jesus. He is the truth. He is our righteousness. He is our peace. We are saved by faith of Jesus Christ. The Lord is our salvation. He himself defeated Satan with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Everything the apostle writes about the spiritual armor has deep Old Testament roots. See for instance: Isaiah 11:5, Isaiah 59:17, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 52:7, Genesis 15:1, Psalm 84:9, Psalm 140:7, Isaiah 11:4