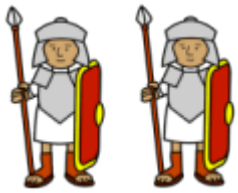
The Christian Armour



Scripture Reference: Ephesians 6:10-18

Suggested Theme: God helps us fight Satan. We can ask for God's help and put on the Armour of God to stand against Satan's attacks.

Memory Verse: "Wear the full armor of God. Wear God's armor so that you can fight against the devil's evil tricks." Ephesians 6:11, ICB

Story Overview:

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus to help them understand God's power and how He wants Christians to behave. To help them be "strong in the Lord" Paul uses the example of a soldier's battle armour to explain that God gives Christians spiritual weapons of strength to fight Satan.

Background Study:

Soldiers wear armour on battlefields. This lesson is sobering. Using a military metaphor denotes a serious matter of life and death.

There are so many beautiful and peaceful parts of the Christian life that we might be tempted to overlook or ignore the spiritual battle around us and even within us. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ was a sound ultimate defeat of Satan and the powers of darkness. Despite this defeat, Satan refuses to leave the battlefield. As we all await the final coming of Christ, Satan pitifully continues to cause hurt and pain.

> God defeated the spiritual rulers and powers. With the cross God won the victory and defeated them. He showed the world that they were powerless. Colossians 2:15, ICB

Children can and should be confident that God is stronger than Satan. They do not have to live in fear. Yet even as they stand confident, we need to make them aware that Satan is their enemy. He wants boys and girls to turn away from God; we cannot let them be taken off guard.

This battle is a spiritual one, and God provides the perfect spiritual weapons to use against the enemy. We cannot see the enemy, but God can. He knows what we need, and the weapons are outlined well in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The people of Ephesus would have understood what Paul was referring to when they read the letter. This was a city known for its idol worship, and during his third missionary journey, Paul confronted the magicians and sorcerers there. Some of the most unusual miracles in the Book of Acts occurred during Paul's stay in Ephesus. You can read more about this in the lesson Paul and the Dark Powers at Ephesus.

Helpful verses are:

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- Ephesians 1:18-23 Christ rules above every power.
- Colossians 2:15 Christ disarmed all powers at the cross.
- Romans 8:37-39 Nothing is stronger than the love of God.
- 1 Peter 5:8-9 Be alert. Satan is waiting for an opportunity to attack.
- James 4:7 Submit to God, and Satan will flee
- Psalm 23:4 God is with me even in scary places.
- Psalm 27:1 With God, there is no need to fear.

Special Note to the Teacher:

The Bible is clear about God's supremacy, but even in the same family or church, there may be different interpretations of how that applies to various literature, television shows or movies that children are exposed to. What one family might allow as a "harmless fantasy" another might steer their children away from as actually spiritually harmful or wrong. So be respectful of this and apply discernment and diplomacy.

But, wherever one places boundaries, it would be wrong to deny or avoid the important subject of spiritual warfare. I would suggest becoming familiar with the subject through articles like this one at http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-occult.html, especially if you are teaching older or very curious children. And remember that we do not have to live in fear. God is above all powers and gives us what we need to fight any trick Satan throws.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Sing "I'm in the Lord's Army" with the children. "Who wants to explain what that song means? Are you really in an army? What does it mean to be in the Lord's army? When a soldier in an army goes into battle he fights an enemy. Who do you think is the enemy of the Christian? That's right; Satan- or sometimes he is called the Devil. He is our enemy because he wants us to do bad things and make God unhappy. He doesn't even want us to be with God forever! When a soldier goes to battle he wears special gear (show some if you are able to obtain army gear). The gear that a soldier used to wear in the time that our New Testaments were written was called armour. Armour helped soldiers win battles. Do you think a regular soldier's armour would help fight Satan? No, Satan is an invisible enemy. To fight Satan, a person has to be in God's special kind of army and be God's soldier. God's soldier wears special kind of armour."

The Story:

Have you ever heard of a soldier? If an enemy tried to harm you or your country, a soldier might come and keep the enemy away. A soldier who fights a battle carries weapons and special clothes and gear for protection.

Soldiers, when the New Testament was written, wore special gear, too. The special gear was called ARMOUR.

In the Bible book of Ephesians, we can read about a kind of armour that is very different from every other. This is called the ARMOUR OF GOD. In chapter 6 and verses 10 through 11, we read, "Be strong in the Lord and in his great power. Wear the full armour of God."

In the next verses, we read why we need a different kind of armour. "Our fight is not against people. Wear God's armour to fight against the devil's evil tricks. You need to get God's full armour. Then you will be able to stand strong."

The devil is an enemy full of evil tricks. He is sometimes called "the Satan" (accuser) or "the Devil" (slanderer). The devil is a terrible enemy because he hates everyone. He never wants to do good. He is so

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evil that he only wants to hurt people and get them in trouble.

The devil is so tricky that he is even invisible. He does not want people to think he is there. But God is not fooled by the devil. He has armour that always works against the devil.

If you were a soldier, would you go into a dangerous battle without armour? Of course not! In this battle against the devil, we are like soldiers. God has the perfect armour for us to wear, unlike any armour you have seen.

Our first piece of armour is the BELT OF TRUTH tied around our waist. The devil is a liar and wants us to believe his lies. If we trust God and know His words are always true, we will be protected from our enemies.

A soldier's armour on his chest protects his heart, lungs, and other very important parts of his body. It is called a breastplate. When the devil tries to get people to do bad things, he is trying to attack their hearts. God knows that our good behaviour will protect us from the enemy. This piece of armour is called the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A soldier has to be ready for a battle to start. God says that just like a soldier wears shoes to be ready to fight, we should put on the GOOD NEWS OF PEACE. When we understand God's peace, the enemy cannot make us worry and lose our confidence. We can stand firm with God.

The next piece of God's armour is the SHIELD OF FAITH. Faith in God is like a shield that protects us against all the bad things our enemy tries to destroy us with. Do you have faith in God? Faith in God means that you don't have to be afraid of anything the enemy tries to do to trick you.

God's salvation is like a helmet a soldier wears into battle. Trusting in God's salvation is knowing He will save us from every battle. Our enemy wants to play tricks with our minds, but God's salvation keeps him away from our heads. This piece of God's armour is the HELMET OF SALVATION.

Finally, the last part of the armour that God says we need is the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.
The Sword of the Spirit is God's word. If the enemy tries to trick us or attack us, we can always remember God's powerful words.

Even Jesus used the sword of the Spirit. A long time ago, the devil tried to trick Jesus and get him to do bad things. But guess what Jesus did? He said God's powerful words to the devil, and the devil left him.

If you have a Bible, then you have a sword. In the book of Hebrews, in chapter 4 and verse 12, we can read, *"God's word is alive and working. It is sharper than a sword sharpened on both sides."* If we learn from the Bible and apply God's word to our lives, the enemy will never win.

The devil is our enemy, but God has given us all the special armour that we need to fight him. Put on God's full armour; you will never have to worry or be afraid. Can you remember all the pieces of armour?
• Belt of Truth
• Breastplate of Righteousness
• Shoes, the Good News of Peace
• Shield of Faith
• Helmet of Salvation
• Sword of the Spirit

God's word says we should pray and ask for what we need. Let's pray today that we will never forget to wear God's armour.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

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Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Who is the enemy of Christians? (Satan)
- Who are God's soldiers? (Christians)
- Who has already won the battle between God and Satan? (God. Satan is no match for God)
- How did God defeat Satan? (By Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and then coming back to life)
- What is the Armour of God? (name any or all of these) Belt of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness, Readiness of the Gospel on the Feet, Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, Sword of the Spirit (Word of God).
- What does the Armour of God protect us from? (Satan and his lies)
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?

Reflection:

- How do you feel, knowing that God has already defeated Satan?
- What lies might Satan try to make you believe- lies about God, yourself, or other people?
- What is *actually* true about yourself, God and other people?
- Have you ever felt like something was trying to tempt you or make you believe a lie? What happened?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you believed God was fighting for you?
- Which of the parts of God's Armour is most interesting to you?
- What can we do to 'put on' the Armour of God? (Learn about God's truth, read the Bible, pray and have a relationship with God, live in ways that please God, etc.)
- What is something you wonder about in this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with

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God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- I'm in the Lord's Army Song
- Shake the Devil Off Song
- Cast Your Burdens
- He's Still Working on Me Song
- Goodbye World Song
- Our God is an Awesome God Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Look up "armour" (American spelling "armor") in a concordance or bible dictionary.
- Look up songs in the church songbook about the "Christian Battle."
- Have a "sword drill" where the teacher calls out a scripture reference, and the children race to see who can find the scripture in their bible first.
- When the children have learned about the armour, how about an army march outside the building? Perhaps you could march to a certain place and have part of your lesson for a change.
- If you or someone you know and trust is familiar with some video games children play, you might find these useful parallels for describing spiritual warfare. Many games involve "other worlds" or "alternative universes". If children in your group play these games, they might connect these situations to an invisible spiritual battle being fought while we are going about the daily lives that we see with our eyes. Again, get mature advice before discussing it with the children. You want to clarify and not cause confusion or misconceptions.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Make shields from cardboard.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Visual Aids: A good selection of illustrations and slideshows to download from http://www.freebibleimages.org
- Colouring page and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring pages (churchhousecollection.com)
- Colouring pages (Calvary Curriculum)
- Craft, Shield: Cute idea for making a shield from a hub-cap (bibleclasscreations.blogspot.co.nz)
- Printable poster/page (number 1) with soldier picture and descriptions of the armour (terryartworxstudio.com)
- Lesson: Elaborate lesson with lots of visuals and reproducible available. You may have to be creative in finding “armor.” You could maybe use pictures of armour that the military of the region uses or even actual uniform pieces, if those are available, just to have something physical that the children can relate to (kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz)
- Various activities and crafts-1 (churchhousecollection.com)
- Various activities and crafts-2 (churchhousecollection.com)

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