Small Group Guide: Recognizing the Battle & Standing in Christ's Strength

Stand Firm: Week 1

Ephesians 6:10-13

BEFORE YOU MEET

Encourage group members to read Ephesians 6:10-13 before gathering. Ask them to come prepared to share one area of life where they currently feel spiritual pressure or opposition.

OPENING QUESTION

Think of a time when you tried to handle something difficult entirely on your own and it did not go well. What did that experience teach you about your own limitations?

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SERMON

Use these points to briefly recap the sermon before moving into discussion. You do not need to read every word aloud -- summarize as needed and allow the group to fill in their own recollections.

1. We are to depend on the Lord's strength, not our own. Paul's command in Ephesians 6:10 is not a call to grit our teeth and try harder. The word translated "be strong" carries the ongoing meaning of continuing to receive strength from the Lord. Spiritual warfare begins with dependence, not self-confidence.

2. We are to put on God's armor. God provides the armor, but we must deliberately put it on. Selective obedience leaves us vulnerable. We do not get to choose only the pieces of God's provision that fit the life we want to live.

3. We must recognize who the real enemy is. Our struggle is not against people. When we forget Ephesians 6:12, we begin treating people as the enemy -- fighting against our spouse instead of fighting for our marriage, or treating unbelievers as opponents instead of people who need the gospel.

4. We are called to stand our ground. Standing firm does not mean doing nothing. It means remaining faithful to Christ under pressure -- refusing to be moved away from His truth, His character, His people, or His calling. We do not stand to earn Christ's victory. We stand because He has already won.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Work through as many of these questions as time allows. Do not feel pressured to cover every question -- depth of conversation is more valuable than quantity.

Getting Into the Text

1. Read Ephesians 6:10-13 aloud together as a group. What word, phrase, or idea stands out to you most, and why?
2. The sermon explained that Paul's order in this passage is intentional -- identity before enemy, Jesus' authority before the battle, and the Lord's strength before the command to stand. Why do you think that order matters? What happens when we reverse it and focus on the enemy before anchoring ourselves in who Christ is?
3. Spiritual warfare was defined in the sermon as the ongoing conflict in which Satan and his forces oppose God's purposes, God's truth, and God's people through deception, temptation, accusation, division, discouragement, and resistance to the gospel. Does that definition match how you have typically thought about spiritual warfare? What surprises you or challenges you about it?

Going Deeper

4. The sermon identified three sources of spiritual opposition: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Why is it important to distinguish between these three? What are the dangers of blaming the devil for everything, or alternatively, of ignoring spiritual evil altogether?
5. The pastor said that some believers are exhausted because they are fighting a spiritual battle in their own strength -- relying on willpower to overcome temptation, using reasoned arguments to change hearts, or depending on programs to produce spiritual life. Where do you see this pattern in your own life or in the church more broadly?
6. Ephesians 6:11 calls us to put on the full armor of God. The sermon made clear that this is not a mystical ritual but a daily, intentional practice of living in what God has provided through Christ. In practical terms, what does it look like to put on the armor in the middle of a normal week? What does it look like when we neglect to do so?
7. The sermon said that when we forget Ephesians 6:12, we begin making people the enemy -- fighting against our spouse instead of for our marriage, treating unbelievers as opponents instead of people who need the gospel. Can you think of a conflict in your own life, past or present, where this happened? How might recognizing the spiritual battle beneath the surface have changed your response?

8. Paul says the evil day will come -- not if, but when. The sermon noted that the evil day may arrive through a dramatic crisis or quietly through hidden compromise, unresolved resentment, or a lie repeated until it sounds true. Which of those quieter forms of opposition do you think is most dangerous, and why?
9. The pastor described standing firm in these terms: resisting temptation when compromise would be easier, continuing to pray when heaven seems silent, choosing forgiveness when bitterness feels justified, staying connected to the church when isolation feels safer. Which of these forms of standing feels most difficult to you personally right now?

Bringing It Home

10. The sermon closed with four reflection questions. Take time to work through at least one or two of them together as a group:
    - Where am I relying on my own strength instead of depending on the Lord?
    - Is there someone in my life that I am treating as the enemy instead of recognizing the spiritual battle?
    - What lie, temptation, fear, resentment, or discouragement is trying to cause me to move away from Jesus?
    - Where is God calling me to stand firm in faithful obedience?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The sermon offered four action words for the week ahead. Use these as a framework for personal and group accountability.

Depend Begin each day this week by acknowledging your weakness and asking the Lord for His strength before you attempt to handle the pressures of the day on your own. Consider making this a brief, honest prayer each morning rather than a formal exercise.

Discern Identify one specific area of conflict, pressure, or struggle in your life. Ask yourself honestly: What lie, temptation, fear, or resentment might be operating beneath the surface here? Write it down if that helps you think clearly about it.

Prepare Return to one spiritual practice you have allowed to become inconsistent or neglected. This might be regular Bible reading, prayer, corporate worship, confession to a trusted believer, or consistent fellowship with your church community. Choose one and commit to it this week.

Stand Take the next faithful step God has already made clear to you -- even if the pressure has not let up yet. Do not wait for circumstances to improve before you obey. Standing firm sometimes means simply refusing to move.

GROUP CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

As a group, agree to check in with one another midweek -- through a text, a phone call, or however your group communicates -- and answer this one question:

Where did you have to choose to stand firm this week, and what did that look like?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time by praying together. Consider praying specifically over the areas of struggle that were shared during discussion. If your group is comfortable doing so, invite two or three members to pray aloud before the leader closes.

Ask God for:

- Strength that comes from Him alone, not from your own effort or ability
- Eyes to see the spiritual battle beneath the surface of your daily conflicts
- Courage to stand firm in faithfulness, especially where obedience is costly
- Awareness of those around you who do not yet know Christ, and boldness to share the gospel with them

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LOOKING AHEAD

Next week the series continues with a closer look at the specific pieces of the armor of God found in Ephesians 6:14-18. Before you meet again, read that passage and consider which piece of the armor feels most unfamiliar or least developed in your own life.