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This week, we are stepping into a new series called “Stand Your Ground,” which addresses the reality that daily life is a battle with a real and present enemy who wants to separate us from God. We are body and spirit; we exist on both a physical *and* spiritual plane. There is a constant conflict between the spiritual powers of heaven and hell over our choices that shape the direction of our lives, and we need to defend ourselves from the attacks of the enemy. While the Bible affirms that we *will* have final victory in Jesus, it also affirms we *will* be engaged in spiritual combat until the end of our lives.

:: discussion

Our post-modern society rejects the notion of good and evil in its dismissal of absolute Truth and the existence of God and the devil. In 1836, John Wilkinson in his book *Quakerism Examined* said, “One of the artifices of Satan is, to induce men to believe that he does not exist: another, perhaps equally fatal, is to make them fancy that he is obliged to stand quietly by, and not to meddle with them...”

As you consider your own worldview, how would you describe your understanding of the spiritual forces at work around you?

Read Matthew 4:1-11

The gospel of Matthew tells us that *even Jesus* faced temptation from the devil in his life on earth as he responded with God’s commands and promises. The 3 temptations he faced in the wilderness represent timeless temptations of the human condition, which are: the physical desires of our bodies, questioning God’s love and purpose for our lives, and control by placing ourselves on the throne of our lives.

What can we learn from the devil’s temptations and Jesus’ responses?

Read Romans 7:19-25

Paul so honestly describes the internal tug-of-war followers of Jesus experience trying to live God’s way as a new creation in a broken, sinful body. It is the conflict between the soul longing for obedience that leads to heaven and the body longing for rebellion that leads to death.

What has your experience of this internal conflict been like?

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

In this passage, Paul uses common imagery from the Roman Empire familiar to people who saw Roman soldiers everywhere. Just like it was for Roman soldiers, every piece of equipment Paul describes has a purpose – the belt of truth is the integral piece of your protective armor holding it all together, the breastplate of righteousness protects the vital parts of you, fitting your feet with the gospel of peace is for sure footing, the shield of faith covers you in hopeful assurance, the helmet of salvation is having the mind of Christ and the sword of the Spirit provides the only weapon you need, which is God’s Word.

As you consider Paul’s description, ask yourself: Are you stepping into the battle of everyday life wearing the full armor of God? If not, what would it look like to put on any missing pieces?

The point here is that you should take every weapon you can get from the Word of God and prayer so that you are properly equipped and armed to stand your ground against the daily spiritual attacks from your real and present enemy.

