

## KEEP YOUR HELMET ON 03: THE BRONZE AGE Study Guide

Everything comes back to what you think. If you have not realized that yet, I think you must be immune to the Word of God! If you think you are going to fail in 2021, you most likely will. If you think you are going to get totally beat in 2021, you most likely will. Every thought you have is a seed for your future, and tomorrow they will start to blossom. Your thoughts are magnetic – think good and good will come your way, think bad and bad will be attracted to you!

So be glad God has given you such a powerful helmet, and praise God you are starting to through this series realize what that helmet does for you. Every thought you have must be brought into captive to the truth that God is coming through for you.

I watched Gladiator last week, in the first scene, the Romans are fighting the Germanians, and the Roman army launch a storm of flaming arrows at them. The fiery darts that Paul mentions in Ephesians 6. Without helmets, those arrows would leave giant flaming wounds in their heads. Satan is throwing these flaming darts in your mind and wipe out your ability to think! I meet so many Christians with giant flaming holes in their mind and they cannot think in a godly or Biblical way.

And the solution is to put on the helmet of salvation, the helmet of hope of salvation. In other words, you protect your mind by keeping your hopes up. One of the best ways we can start to see ourselves on the other side of the problem. We can start to dream of winning! Start to see yourself as being the head and not the tail. Resist the thoughts of you being the tail and start seeing yourself as the wagging not the wagged! You control your mind. And you must take control of your thoughts.

Read Judges 12:5-6. The Gileadites took the land that God gave and them and enjoyed the benefits of it. They did not want the Ephraimites moving into their land, so they set up an extraordinarily strong border control. And before the days of passports, their border control was remarkably simple: can you speak like us. Can you say what we say the way we say? If not, you are not from around here and you are not allowed in. And if they tried to sneak in, the Gileadites took them and killed them. And they killed 42,000 people trying to sneak into their country!

That is some border control. You know things might change in the current circumstances and we might need all sorts of visas and health checks to travel, but you need your passport. To enter another nation, you need to go through border control. Border control prevents unwanted people entering a nation.

Now, your mind needs border control. Hope is the border control of your mind! When a thought comes into your mind, you must ask that thought, do you sound like me, do you speak like me, do you dream like me, do you pronounce Shibboleth like me? If not, you do not have a valid passport and I am not going to let it into my mind!

I do not want to start a discussion on national border control and engender any strife, but whatever your politics on border control, you must not let illegal immigrants into your mind! Your mind needs border control! You need to check every thought at the port! Do you speak hope? Do you have the accent of hope? The tone of hope?

Does a thought sound like “Ben, we are going to win”, or does it sound like a whining “well, I hope so”? You do not have to let every thought into your mind. If it has the wrong accent and is not from around love and hope and faith, kick it back where it came from!

Read Proverbs 23.7. The Hebrew word translated thinks here is “sha’ar” and it means a door or gate or port. It literally means a way in. The thoughts you allow into your heart, they determine how you see yourself and what you manifest on the planet! (If you are dealing with critics throwing thoughts at you, please listen to my session on dealing with critics from Gates of the City).

But whatever is happening you must learn to scrutinize your thoughts. A thought comes from abroad, from far far away, and it starts travelling to your mind. It then arrives at the port “You are not going to make it, you are rubbish, you have always been rubbish, no one from this family runs their own business, no one born in this street has become a millionaire, you always lose your temper, you are never going to change”. When that thought reaches port, you have to stop the thought at the port! You look at that thought and think “you are going to damage my country”, you think “I am the Home Secretary of my heart, I am the border police of my heart, and thought you are banned from my nation!” You deport the thought.

If you do not do this, it will come into your heart, your identity. It will move into the heart of your soul. It will walk right up to the front gate – and knock on the gate. Hello, can I come in?

You must check that thought. You must examine the thought and see if it speaks your language, or it is just trying to and just does not. You must, and if it cannot speak like you, take that thought into a nice walk to the fords and add it to the body count. And if you must do it 42000 times over, do it. It is that important!

Now the Gileadites said “Shibboleth”, but the Ephraimites could only say “Sibboleth”. They could not pronounce the “H”, they missed out the breath. The “H” sound in Hebrew represented the breath of life, the spirit of the life. Sarai was a princess with no kingdom, Sarah was the queen with multitudes of children. Abram was a father without a son, Abraham was the father of nations. When the “HA” is added to their names, there is life and breath and God. No wonder the “H” is found twice in the name of God, “YHWH”.

The Ephraimites had no breath in them, no life. You should only let thoughts into your mind that have a breath of life in them, that have the Spirit of God in them, that have the “H”, the life of God. And if that sound is not in that thought, take it out and kill it. And if you must do it 42000 times over, do it. It is that important!

Do not even let a nice, little, good looking thought in if they do not have that life. Do not think – oh it is just a small thought, just a little dream of failure, just a little lust for that person, just a little mental movie of smacking that person on the nose, just a little idea of doing something against the Word of God. Those thoughts have no “H” in them – no breath, no life, no Spirit. You must reject them, because once they get inside your borders, there is no telling what they will do!

And we are what we think! Your thoughts right now are the prophetic word that will determine where we end up tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, next decade. If I want to go to Nuneaton, and I get on the A3, I will end up in Guildford. No matter what I want that is where I will end up.

Your thinking is the road you are travelling along. You may desire to be out of debt, but if you are thinking of debt and defeat, you will never arrive at that destination.

I may want to be healthy, but if I am thinking sick, I am heading the wrong way.

How can I change the way I think? How can I build a helmet of hope inside my mind? There is one way – what you say. You must speak words. There is no keyboard for the computer that is inside your head!

It is better than a keyboard – it is voice activated. Your computer in your head has speech recognition. You programme your brain with speaking. If you just realized that, everything would be better for you. You would stop saying dumb things. You would not say “I am weak” ever again, you would speak the Word and let the weak say “I am strong”.

When you say I am strong, you are programming your mind to be strong. And when you do that images of strong start to manifest. Your arms get strong, your heart gets strong, your body fights off disease, your mind gets resilient. It is wonderful!

If you open a Word document on your computer, it will accept whatever you type. You could type “all bananas are bright blue with red stripes” and it will let you type it. Word will never try and check what you say with reality. You can open Word and type a sermon, a cooking recipe, anything! And Word just takes it all!

Your mind is the same. It does not check what you say with reality, it just accepts what you say as its input and starts to do it. You start saying “I am dying”, your mind starts you on the road to dying! Your mind does not care about reality, it only accepts what you tell it.

As a child my favourite TV show was Doctor Who. I watched one where the Master was dying, and it was cheap nasty silly special effects, but to me aged 5 or 6 it was terrifying. I woke up in the middle of the night convinced I was about to be attacked by the Master, there was no Master in my bedroom. But because I thought – my heart did not care my room was peaceful and quiet, it was racing. My sweat glands did not care it wasn't real, I was sweating. My pupils did not care it wasn't real, they dilated. I almost had a panic attack that night, I still can remember it. But absolutely nothing was there. Your mind is that powerful. You must feed it good information and stop any intruder thoughts getting in!

Your words control your thoughts and emotions. I know the prevailing thought of our generation is that thoughts and emotions are like wild horses that are totally out of control. But to quote Andrew Wommack, you can harness your emotions!

Paul tells us we can choose what to think. Read Phil. 4.8. You can control your thoughts. You can choose what to think, you can set up a border control on your mind. The best way to do it is to invest yourself into the Word of God.

Read Psalm 19.7-8. We have four powerful benefits that the Word of God brings us when we feed on it. Firstly, it converts our soul. You need your soul converted! You need to change the way you think and feel, and the Word of God will do that for you. It will build a helmet of hope inside your mind that keeps all bad thoughts out, and develop healthy, strong, optimistic, hopeful thoughts. The word for convert here means to completely reverse direction

Some of you have a mind that is a mess. People have bruised you, battered your mind, damaged your mind. Some people have pain every day in their mind. You did not have your helmet on, and some axe of a thought went into your skull and you now have painful, difficult thoughts. Some of you have been abused and it has affected your mind, and you have scars in your soul. But praise God, the Lord restores our soul!

Now in the natural you cannot restore a soul –but the Lord can. Words are what damaged your soul, and the Lord knows the right words to repair it. You see God is not just giving you the strength to cope with life, He is converting your soul, and taking your mind back to what it should be.

Some of you have been imagining things you should not be. You have imagined beating people up, getting revenge, imagining people hurt and pain, you have imagined sexual scenes, images of immorality. Things that should not be in your soul are there. You did not have good border control and just let those thoughts into your mind! That needs to change.

Today is conversion day. Today we change directions. We might not get all the way to our destination in a day, but we can do a U-turn in minutes!

Some of you are carrying around things you should not be – baggage, hurts, and more. Today is ballast today, and you are going to let go of those burdens and start to soar!

Secondly, God's Word will make you wise. Read Psalm 19.7-8 again. God's Word will make the simple wise. God's Word will make you wise no matter how foolish, gullible, and immoral you have been. Read Proverbs 14.15. The simple believe anything! The simple believe that stealing, that gossiping, that scheming, that being bitter, that committing adultery is ok. That is simple. But God's Word can make you wise! God's Word can make the dumbest people wise! I have met so many people doing stupid things and thinking all will turn out ok! People throw their Bible in the bin and walk down the aisle with a non-Christian, they chuck their Bible away and start bad-mouthing ministers and ministries, they don't tithe, don't go to church, don't live for Jesus.

But the good news is the Word of God will make you wise! It can change your thoughts and help you have great, big, good thoughts that change the world.

Thirdly, God's Word will make you joyful. Read Psalm 19.7-8 again. I have a vested interest in you walking in joy because the hardest people to pastor are sad, mopey people! But the Word of God will rejoice your heart – it will make you happy. You should be happy. Hope makes you happy! Knowing you are going to go over, knowing you are going to walk in the promises of God should make you happier. Knowing you are going to be richer tomorrow should make you happy. If nothing else, today is one day closer to you going to Heaven, one day closer to the rapture!

You need to rejoice by faith. You need to just start praising and cheering and giving God some glory. If you are not full of joy, you are not full of peace, you are not praising God, you have taken your helmet off, you are not feeding on the Word, you have a naked, unprotected head! You not praising is you in a vulnerable place. You being sad has zero to do with what is going on around you, and everything to do with what is going on inside your mind!

So put your helmet on, start declaring the promises of God to yourself, and start imagining yourself in victory. Are you facing sickness? See yourself healed. Are you facing poverty? See yourself with money in the bank. Are you facing pressure? See yourself as a winner! That is putting your helmet on. If you are not happy, that is a massive clue you have taken your helmet off and need to urgently put it back on.

Finally, God's Word will make you perceptive. Read Psalm 19.7-8 again. It will enlighten your eyes. This means it will firstly make your eyes bright – hope makes you bright and

full of life. Secondly, it means that God's Word will enlighten you, it will help you see things that you have never seen before. This word "enlighten" is also, in Hebrew, the word for dawn. What happens is that when you walk in the Word, things will dawn on you. The problem with most of us is that things have not dawned on us yet. Most people have no idea how powerful they are, how blessed they are, how anointed they are. It just has not dawned on them. When you get in the Word and the truths of the Word dawn on you, it will give you a powerful hope.

It is always worth spending time in the Word, it will make you wise, it will make you happy and it will make you more perceptive. It will truly convert your soul. You will stop being full of despair and start being full of hope. You will have a hope of salvation that will protect your mind from all negative news.

Now the Roman helmet is made from bronze. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin. Adding tin to copper makes it stronger. It is an interesting thing, copper is exceptionally soft, it is easy to shape, and tin is incredibly soft too, and remarkably shiny.

But when you mix about 85% copper with about 15% tin, you get bronze, that is a strong metal, and can do things neither of them can do on their own.

To me, copper represents our ability to dream. Our dreams are incredibly soft, they are changeable, you need to take charge and shape your dreams. Tin is reflective, our ability to think about things and reflect on them.

You need to dream. You need to have good, solid, positive, hopeful dreams of the future. I love dreaming big, I love dreaming of preaching to thousands, I love dreaming of ministering to others, planting new churches, I love dreaming of blind eyes opening and people getting out of wheelchairs, I love dreaming of loving the unlovely, of helping those who need help. I love dreaming. And right now, I am walking in a lot of my dreams. I am surrounded by a remarkable dream team. I am invited to speak at some remarkable places. I have friends who are just exceptional people. Closer to home, I love my wife, my children are turning out awesome, our house is filled with good things. I am healthy, I am on the right direction in fitness – it's glorious. I sleep at night. I rest like a baby. And I am going to Heaven! What a life! All of it came from dreams!

God loves it so much when we start to shape our dreams with His Word, and let the Word bring you joyful, happy, peaceful dreams. Then your faith can add substance to those great big dreams and make it happen!

I dream all the time. I dream of being in a huge building, I dream of welcoming people to the church, shaking hands, giving an altar call for salvation and dozens of people streaming forward. I dream of doing one service and then immediately doing another one because there are so many people – man, then you see me go to Cambridge for 6 people – and you go – Ben is losing his mind, what foolish dreams he has. No, the copper is ours to shape.

The helmet is ours to cast –dream your dreams people! Satan wants to shape the dream – put visions in your heart of fantasies that are illicit, angry pictures of conflict, visions of car crashes, stealing, killing, destroying are his three blockbusters and he wants to play them in your mind!

Anxious thoughts will stress you out! Satan has a trilogy of movies he wants to play in your imagination: Stealing, Killing and Destroying. Stop those films at the border, do not

let someone smuggle them into your country. Play God's movie – you are the star in that movie, and His hands will shape your hands and you will shape the copper into a glorious future. Dream big! Dream life!

Set aside time to dream and just dream! Replace every imagination of you failing with one of you succeeding. Dream of you being who God sees you to be! Count the stars! Count the paperclips! Keep dreaming until the hope makes you shine! Until it makes you happy, until you shine, until it dawns on you!

Abraham dreamed until Sarah had a bump. All dreams start to manifest as a bump! They take time to grow and develop. When you start dreaming, you start having children! Count the sand, and when it is too dark to count the sand, count the stars, and when the stars go back in, it gets light, count the sand again! Never stop dreaming, never stop counting. Hope is powerful enough – and one day the bump will appear!

In the first sermon ever given to the church, Peter says “dream dreams”. A church dies if you do not dream. When churches are not growing, when people are not being healed, it is because the people stopped dreaming!

Read Habakkuk 2.1-2. Habakkuk says he will climb into the watchtower – he is getting alone and giving himself space to dream. He then says he will see what the Lord says. It is not enough to hear what the Lord says, you must see what the Lord says. You must see what the Lord says! You have to see yourself healed, see yourself with all your needs met, see yourself doing what He says you are going to do.

Then after he saw it, Habakkuk wrote it – you must write down your dreams.

Dreaming, copper, is the biggest part of your hope. You need to dream!

But there is also a place for tin. Tin is reflective, and we need to reflect. Now this is not a 50/50 split remember, more 85/15. You need a little bit of tin though. I have seen people embrace a dream with zero reflection. They never count the cost!

Do not throw all your life and death medicine in the bin if you have never even managed to get free from a headache without Panadol. Do not put your whole months' salary in the offering if you have never tithed, never walked in faith for finances, never trusted God. Do not quit your job and live by faith just because you got one invite to preach.

We need that 10% reason. Now your hope does not depend on reason! God loves doing unreasonable things – it was not reasonable or logical that Abraham would have a baby. Logic would have said that they would never have a baby, but they had a dream.

Now if you put too much tin into your helmet, you end up like Thomas. You will never believe the Word until you see something! The UK church is largely like that – if they do not see it, they cannot accept it. They largely have too much tin in the mix!

We need to, with most people, take most of the tin out of their thought process. Now tin has a very unusual quality. It cries if you cut into it. It screams, and people call it the tin cry. It has to do with the crystals in the metal. You can always tell when you preach the Word and you mess with someone's logic and reasoning with the Word, they make a noise – they cry!

So, most of us need less tin, but we do need some reflection. Not the cynical reflection of the flesh, but a hopeful, godly reflection. Believing for the full corn tomorrow is foolish,

but you can have the blade tomorrow, and you will get the full head of corn. You need to take charge of your reason and make sure it leads to hope.

People who dream with no reason take the process out of their dream. Their lack of reflectiveness means they dream for things without process or timing. These are the Christians who buy lottery tickets, the Christians expecting a million pounds to fall out of the sky, who expect to suddenly be invited to preach in churches and do not even go to church. They expect oak trees to grow in ten minutes! And when the oak tree does not grow in ten minutes, they are soft and weak because they have no tin, and they fall apart.

People who have too much reason are soft too – they reflect on every promise and action and rip everything to pieces until their dreams are in tatters. It is like taking a watch to pieces to find out how it works and now it suddenly does not work!

But 85% copper and 15% tin – that will make a strong hope!

Now here is an interesting fact from history, copper and tin are almost never found together in the same place. There is a place in Cornwall where they are found naturally, and a town in Thailand, but that is it – across the whole planet. If you want copper and tin, if you want to enter the bronze age, you need to learn to trade with others.

You might be a natural dreamer. The eternal optimist. Just make sure you are plugged into a church with some people who can say – look this is not going to happen overnight, take another step, keep advancing. Abraham and Sarah had to go through nine months of pregnancy, they did not have a baby in two weeks. You need a little bit of tin to accept that and work with the process. You need a lot of copper to receive the power to have a miracle baby. Together, you get a bronze helmet that against hope believes in hope!

You might be a rational person. So, you go and find someone who has some copper, some dreams and use that to help you develop a strong helmet. You find a dreamer and learn how to dream from them. You put your Terri CDs on until you cannot listen to her anymore! We all need each other.

Some people joined us for Gates of the City as guests, and they have been blessed, most definitely. There was so much remarkable teaching. But it is those of you who are part of the Tree Family, listening to all the messages, still listening at the weekend, being in a small group like this – you will get the right mix of copper and tin, you will be strong, you will have a strong helmet of hope, and you will have a glorious future!

My last challenge for today is that within hope, especially in the setting of community, you have to not just hope for yourself, you need to not just hope for your life, your health, your money, your business, your ministry. You need to get beyond the end of your nose and start dreaming of a better church, a better community, a better nation.

Gregory of Nyssa lived in Cappadocia (a region in modern Turkey) in the fourth century, and he had a passion to be a great preacher. His older brother was the bishop of the area, and so he was extremely excited, hoping for a great church so he could be a great preacher. His brother saw his selfish ambition and decided to add some tin to his helmet – and arranged for him to be appointed bishop of the small, obscure and unimportant town of Nyssa.

Gregory objected; he did not want to be stuck in such an out-of-the-way place. But his brother told him that he did not want Gregory to obtain distinction from his church but rather to confer distinction upon it.

Gregory went to where he was placed and stayed there. His lifetime of work in that place, a backwater community, continues to be a major invigorating influence in the Christian church worldwide. Do not hope to gain distinction, hope to confer distinction on others. Selah!



## QUESTIONS

- I. What was the word the Gileadites used to see if someone was a Gileadite or an Ephraimite?
2. What does it mean to set up border control in our minds?
3. How can we set up border control in our minds?
4. What kind of thoughts try and get into your mind that do not belong there?
5. What are the four benefits of the Word of God found in Psalm 19.7-8?
6. What does it mean to have your soul converted? What kind of areas do you need a conversion in your thinking?
7. God's Word will make you wise! What areas have you been simple and God's Word has made you wise?
8. Tell us a time where the Word of God brought you joy and peace in the middle of a storm.
9. Describe an occasion where a truth or promise from the Word of God dawned on you and you suddenly got it. What happened then?
- IO. When and where do you set aside time to dream?
- II. Do you need more copper or more tin in your helmet of hope? Explain.
- I2. What about this message inspired, challenged or encouraged you the most?