



Ephesians Week 16 - Ephesians 6:10-20

December 31, 2023 - Pastor Jason Carter

21.40 Fast and Prayer/Being Challenge:

- Give up something that is costly to you for the purpose of drawing near to God in prayer and the word (not improving your diet)
- Be intentional with your time
- Be mindful of the effects of the fast
- Prepare ahead of time if you are changing your food choices or social media habits
- If you mess up, continue on

Two tools we will use:

- 21 day prayer focus on mission with Good News using our pillars: Connect, Disciple, Empower
- 40 day Being Challenge: 5 habits of Jesus. It is simple but we want to **establish habits** going into 2024. The author will be here with us next week.

> 80% of people do not follow through with their **resolutions**.

Today we will discuss how to set ourselves up for follow through in our spiritual pursuits. **If we take care of the spiritual it will manifest in the natural.**

- How have you seen this before? How do you need to see this in your life?

Ephesians 6:10-20 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the

mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Paul is in prison so he looks at a Roman soldier to help us understand that we are part of a larger spiritual battle. How do we daily engage in this battle?

Every piece of Roman battle attire had a purpose. We too must be intentional in our engagement
Military Mottos:

Dropping off Navy SEALs from classified locations around the world: *"On Time, On Target, Never Quit."*

"He who sweats more in training bleeds less in battle." -George Patton

"Always Faithful." (Semper Fidelis) -Marine Corp

"All it takes is all you have." - The TV show *Alone*

- If we are going to live our lives for Jesus, what will we commit to, give, become?

V. 10,11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Paul tells us there are hierarchies in the kingdom of darkness just like in the natural world. Rulers, powers, authorities and spiritual forces.

Don't become "enemy-focused". Be aware that there is a spiritual world, but we have victory in Jesus. In the context of Ephesians 6:

1. We live with a real enemy satan and a demonic forces that hinder and influence
2. We have a sin nature; a desire to sin, do our own thing, choose not to believe God or obey, give up, quit and sin in any number of ways
3. We live in a fallen world. The noise, the fear, the direct undermining of biblical values, the opposition of right from wrong, the redefining of right and wrong. People get sick, people sin
 - We live in this world YET God has also called us to this world.
 - **As Christians, live your life in such a way that you intentionally and willfully prepare and engage the day to day battle.** What would this look like in your life?
 - God is saying: "Prioritize Me." Establish Jesus as the center of your world. Not 'as close to the edge as I can get and still not be "sinning", not as a task to check off.

Ephesians 6:13 NIV "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Don't be passive, don't go through the motions, engage your spiritual walk with God in our world

- What do you need to do daily for these spiritual truths and practices to become part of you?

V. 14a "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist..."

The belt held all the armor together. Our lives and our fight must be centered on God's truth.

V. 14b "with the breastplate of righteousness in place..."

The center of our will and our being must remain under and protected by the righteousness of Jesus. Guard your heart and the center of who you are with His life and what He has done for us. Don't fall apart if you mess up. He has overcome and will help you walk it out.

V. 15 "...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

In sports, cleats are used for grip, to not slip, to stand your ground and to push forward.

- Where do you have traction in your Christian life, and where do you not?

V. 16 "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

Faith to handle life, difficulty, challenge, and spiritual resistance. Back then, soldiers added layers of strength to their shields. They would come together and combine shields to completely cover the whole group of soldiers. **This is community.**

- Who is helping you stand strong and fight?

V. 17 "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Protect your mind. This will be one of the major ways the enemy attacks and tempts you. You are God's child, saved by grace through Jesus. We all experience doubt, fatigue, thinking ungodly thoughts, but we have to remember that **we have His word, the sword, to help us fight.**

- The sword: do you know how to fight with the word of God?

- How have you used God's word to fight against the enemy?

Put the word of God in your mouth and say it aloud. Use it as a weapon. It is NOT ENOUGH to have the sword on your hip yet not know how to use it!

Our phrase for 2024: Find Your Courage: Believe

Mark 5:36 NKJV³⁶ "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only (merely) believe.'"

- Not passive but an active sense that God will answer. You don't always get to choose what happens to you, but you CAN choose how you respond, how you fight, how you move forward.

- What examples do you have of good vs. not-so-good responses to things that happen in life?

As we approach this new year, let us be intentional about what to fight to establish in our faith and walk with God in this year. Not just trying to get things from God, but who you are wanting to become in God.

- Who are you looking to become in 2024?

It takes courage to believe. It takes courage to stand. It takes courage to change. It takes courage to not give up or give in. It takes courage to engage. It takes courage to participate. It takes courage to not become the skeptic, the pessimist, or the person who sits on the sideline in life.

Your "maybe one day" has now become today. Find Your Courage: Believe

Belief is more than a mental assent or an idea we conceptually agree with. It is something we fully align ourselves to and fully give ourselves over to.

- What do you believe? When we say we believe, what does that mean?
- Is our belief centered in scripture?
- What do our lives, our actions, behaviors and words say we believe? Do we give up easily? Do we follow through? Do our hearts, minds, words, and action align?
- Do we fight for what we find in scripture in areas of our lives? Do we hold fast?
- Are we tenacious in faith? Or are we timid? Do we have excuses ready? Do we tend to disengage in our walk with God? Do we drift?
- Do we engage God in the areas of our life that need transforming? Are we inconsistent? Do we believe God can and will do the impossible?
- What holds you back from courage?

Pastor Jason has been walking around the church 7 times a day for 7 months now. God told him to. It is an example of obedience when it doesn't really make any sense. But I have the gift of every day which brings the gift of no choice. I don't have a choice. My schedule revolves around what God told me to do. This simple obedience is building a practical bridge through relationship with the children living around our building while believing for spiritual fruit to come from it, more than I can imagine or dream of.

- What has He told you to do?
- What practical bridge may He be asking you to build to produce spiritual fruit?

When Paul commands us to stand, we have to know what we are standing for, what we believe in, and what we believe for. For some, finding your courage to believe means continuing to be faithful even when the miracle has not happened yet. For others, it may mean to re-engage. For some, it may mean really applying your faith to a situation; getting granular in your follow-through, meaning you break it down to the smallest details; putting clear, concise steps to your faith.

- You believe God heals so you pray for every need you come across.
 - You know you need to read the Bible, so you determine the time, place and the way you will best approach the Bible--will you listen to it through an app, read it? How much? What version?
 - For others, there are issues that must be dealt with. Who will you speak to? What does the Bible say about it? What will you do?
- What is Holy Spirit saying to you now about discovering your courage, making decisions to believe in an area?

How do I find my courage and engage in believing God for things?

1. Position: Choose to bring yourself and your need before the Lord

- Do you consistently bring yourself and your need before the Lord?
- Position yourself in relationship—He is Father; we are sons and daughters.
- Position yourself through promise- Know them. Find them in His Word.
- You are not trying to extract something from God but to position yourself in truth through the word of God. (Daniel is an example)

2. Petition- Engage the Lord in prayer and meditate on His truth through the word of God We must determine what we believe. The Bible is filled with God's character and His promises. We are not trying to pry God's hand off an answer. We are aligning ourselves to Him in confidence.

Phil 4:4-8 NIV ⁴ "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. **The Lord is near.** ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things

This takes work. We have to put our trust and confidence in God even when things don't turn out the way we had hoped. We can choose to think and **trust the way of God**, the thoughts and **ways of the gutter**, or the thoughts and **ways of the government. The Lord is near** no matter what we are going through.

Ephesians 6:18-20 NIV ¹⁸ "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. ¹⁸ With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Pray in tongues and with the understanding of God. Speak mysteries to God (1 Cor. 14-You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious) and for the building up of faith (Jude 20). We must believe our prayers avail much (James 5:16).

3. Practice: predetermined decisions (action steps) that are repeatable and followed through.

Philippians 4:9 "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—**put it into practice.** And the God of peace will be with you."

Small things done well become big things well done.

- What will you consistently do that reflects belief?

- How will you put what God is saying to you into practice?

3 pictures to help us to stay faithful, to help Find Your Courage: Believe

1. Daniel: How he responded to trial of being forced to worship the king
2. The woman with chronic illness: she had a scriptural promise that she held on to.
3. David and King Saul's armor: David couldn't use some one else's battle practice.

There are certain practices you emulate and some you need to innovate. Meaning some you can copy/follow, and for others you will need to create what works for you in order to succeed. For example, early mornings vs. late evenings to spend time with God. We must make our spiritual practices work for us or they won't work. **We have to put in the work to figure out what does work for us.**

You will hear this theme all year: What do you believe? Find your courage: Believe.

Maybe God is saying He wants to know you; wants you to be free; to follow Him; to become who He says you are; to be persistent and tenacious; to follow through? Maybe He wants to bring dead things in your life, dead dreams, etc back to life? Maybe He wants to prune things in your life? Wants you to believe for the impossible, awaken dormant promises? Wants to light a fire in you? Build endurance in you? Wants you to give your life to Him to do bigger things than you can do on your own?

- What if 2024 is the year of "no other option anymore"? The year God says you HAVE to engage, do it, obey, step out, stand firm... What is He asking of you in 2024?

More Questions:

- What are your hopes for 2024?

- How will you participate in the 21.40 Challenge? What habits will you put into place to become more like Jesus in 2024?

- What part of God's armor do you most need in your life? How can you implement it through the 21.40 Challenge?