

A Christian's Survival Guide: Wearing God's Armor Every Day

Discussion Guide

The questions in this brief study were written to be discussed after reading through each of the sections of *A Christian's Survival Guide*. You can go through the discussion guide by yourself, but it works best to discuss the questions with at least one other Christian. *God bless your study of his Word!*

Introduction

1. What is our primary goal as Christians living in this world? How does the devil try to prevent us from reaching that goal?
2. French poet Charles Baudelaire was reputed to have written the famous quote, "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." How does that quote apply to Paul's reminder to the Christians in Ephesus? How does it apply to your daily life?
3. Does reading Peter's warning to early Christians (1 Peter 5:8) as though he were speaking directly to you change how you think of his warning? If so, how?

"True evil hides behind the allure of something enticing, pleasing to the eye, that my sinful nature says is good—must be good." (*page 4*)

4. Do you agree with that statement? Why/why not?
5. Discuss: What might it look like in your life to have the mindset that you are living in the middle of a spiritual war? Come up with at least three applications.

6. Agree/Disagree and then explain your position: *A Christian's Survival Guide* was written to help equip Christians to take their stand against the spiritual forces of darkness, empower them to resist temptation, and comfort them with the confidence that their victory is assured.

Know Your Enemy

"The devil knows full well how to tempt God's people; to hit us with exactly what our sinful ears want to hear. He's been doing it ever since the Fall into sin." (*page 11*)

1. What are some examples from the Bible, and what are some modern-day examples of temptations that God's people face—what our sinful ears want to hear? Come up with at least three of each.

"God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill" (Numbers 23:19)?

2. What comfort is there for you in that irrefutable truth about your God and what he says to you in his Word?
3. Agree/Disagree: Guilt and shame over our sins are not inherently bad feelings to experience. Defend your answer.

"By way of his incessant, deadly accusations, the devil would have us believe that God will not and cannot forgive us for the sins we've committed. That God will not and cannot love us after we've disobeyed him and his Word." (*page 17*)

4. What are some ways that God show us again and again that this is a lie?
5. The book lists three different verses about God's love for us. Rewrite one of those verses (or another of your choosing) in your own words and explain what that means for you.

6. Discuss: The devil's temptations and accusations may take different shapes and forms throughout the years of your life, but at their heart, they're all the same—and they are all of them lies.

Know Yourself

1. Defend/refute this statement: Because I know what Jesus has done for me, I don't need to think of myself as sinful anymore.

"What might not be much of a temptation for you is your brother or sister's worst and most frequent bad decision that they struggle with daily. And vice versa. Never forget that we're all struggling with something." (*page 21*)

2. What might the application of this statement look like in your life and relationships? Come up with at least three examples.

"I would argue that avoiding temptation is not running from our problems or ducking the issues. Avoidance is not passive. Taking steps to avoid temptation in life is an active and conscious decision. It's taking action. And that action is often difficult." (*page 23*)

3. Do you agree with that argument? Why/why not?
4. Personal exercise: Thinking of a sin you struggle with, what are some concrete ways that you can take steps to avoid that temptation? Come up with at least three to try to implement in your daily struggle against sin.

"From conception, we were slaves to sin—powerless to resist its seductive, siren's song. And once sin had us in its grip, it wasn't about to let us go. Its chains held us fast. We couldn't save ourselves. We were dead in our sins. Powerless. Helpless. Hopeless." (*page 25*)

5. What comfort is there for you in the statement above?

6. Discuss: What are some tangible, visible ways that God reminds us that we are his dearly loved children?

7. Reflect on this question: How do you think of yourself, first and foremost? Is it as a dearly loved child of God, redeemed from slavery to sin by the blood of your Savior Jesus? How does that impact your life? If it isn't, how might it change the way you live?

Know Your Savior

"If we don't know our Savior and what he has done for us, all the other knowledge we might possess is meaningless. Worthless. Empty. Void." (*page 29*)

1. Explain that statement.

2. How might you use this section of the book to respond to someone who says that God doesn't really care about justice if he lets sinners into heaven.

3. How would you respond to a fellow Christian who says something along the lines of, "Because Jesus won the spiritual war against the devil, I don't really need to struggle against sin anymore. If I sin, it's already been forgiven."

4. How does reflecting on Jesus' perfect life in our place change the way we view our struggles against sin? How might we share such comfort with fellow Christians of all ages? Come up with an applicable situation for sharing that comfort with Christians who are in grade school, high school, college, 20s-30s, middle-aged, 60s-70s, 80s-90s.

"Yes, knowing our Savior and knowing that he has decisively and decidedly won the war—that he has crushed the serpent's head and ripped out the fangs of death—changes everything for us." (*page 34*)

5. How so? Come up with an explanation that would be helpful for sharing with others.

"Sin doesn't rule in our hearts anymore. Christ does. But sin still tries to grab a foothold wherever and whenever it can in our lives. Like a terrible weed, it roots itself deep in our hearts and incessantly tries to choke out light and life." (*page 35*)

6. How does this quote relate to the struggle that all Christians face?

Wearing God's Armor

"You don't have to look too hard in the Bible to find out what happens when sinful humankind puts their trust in themselves and other fallible human beings instead of in the almighty God." (*page 38*)

1. Come up with at least three examples and how that turned out. Additionally, come up with three examples where humankind put their trust in God instead of in themselves and other fallible human beings and how that turned out.

"The problem is, wearing God's armor doesn't feel natural to us. It's uncomfortable, we're not used to it, and our sinful nature chafes against it. We're used to wearing our own armor and relying on ourselves. So, we often go without wearing God's armor. Other times, when we do wear it, we can start to think that the armor is actually ours. Our truth, our righteousness, our peace, our faith, our salvation, our word . . . All of that is dangerous." (*page 42*)

2. Explain why that mindset is dangerous, as the author suggests.

"It takes commitment, intentionality, and perseverance, with the strength given to us by our Lord and his mighty power, to wear God's armor until it becomes a second skin, and we feel vulnerable and uncomfortable without it." (*page 42-43*)

3. What does this constant training look like in our lives as Christians?

"Our thoughts and feelings are often so subjective and internalized, and they're often fueled by the devil's whispered lies. We need truth that is objective and outside of ourselves." *(page 44)*

4. How does God provide us with that objective, external truth? Are there any other ways we receive it?

5. As human beings, we often look to ourselves for comfort and security—in the things we have or haven't done. How does living with Christ's righteousness in place of our own change that mindset? How might you use that to comfort a fellow believer who is afraid that they haven't done enough to earn God's love, or are haunted by the things they've done?

"What Jesus has done for us can't be taken away by the devil. Satan's lies cannot move us to fall to our knees when we're standing with the sure and certain knowledge that we are at peace with God because of our Savior Jesus." *(page 47)*

6. When our feet are fitted with the sandals of the gospel of peace, we're equipped. How might the words of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) relate?

7. React to this statement: Because I have Jesus' perfect faith in God for me, I don't need to have a strong faith in God.

"Christ lived for you and me. Christ died for you and me. Christ rose again for you and me. Salvation—eternal life—has been won by him and freely given to us. That is a sure and certain fact." *(page 51)*

8. What Bible verses reflect this truth, and which one is most meaningful to you?

9. React to this quote: "Will there be times when we mishandle the sword of the Spirit? Of course. We don't want to, but we will undoubtedly hurt ourselves and others throughout life. That doesn't mean we should stop wielding the sword altogether, it just means that we must take great care in how we use it." *(page 54)*

Prayer and Aid

1. React to this statement: "I keep asking God to take away this temptation that I'm struggling with, but he never does. Am I not asking him the right way?"

"Jesus knows that our spirit—the new life created in us by the work of the Holy Spirit through his means of grace—is willing to fight temptation. But our flesh is weak. The battle is long and fierce. We're weary and overburdened. He reminds us that we should not carry such things on our own." (*page 58*)

2. Look up 1 Peter 5:7. What does this verse reveal about our God?

"Prayer is a powerful means of communication with our heavenly Father. You and I have an always open, direct line of communication with the Creator of all things. It's something I don't make use of often enough. Maybe you struggle with that too." (*page 58*)

3. Discuss: What advice might you give to another Christian about establishing a prayer routine? If you struggle with prayer, which piece of advice speaks the most to you?
4. How does being part of a family of believers aid us in our struggle against sin? Come up with at least three actionable ways you can help support your larger community of believers.

"God's army is made up of Christians from all walks of life and experiences. Our ranks are filled with young and old, veteran soldiers and new recruits. Since we're fighting together, we want to know each other's strengths and weaknesses so we can support each other to the best of our ability." (*page 60*)

5. How would you respond to a fellow Christian who says, "I believe in God, and that's enough. I don't really need to be in church every week."

Conclusion

"Wear the full armor of God. Wear it every day. Train in its use, and that of the sword of the Spirit, unceasingly. Pray for yourself, your family, your friends, and your fellow believers. Take your stand against the devil and his schemes. Remember what your Savior has done for you. Remind others of what he has done for them as well." (*page 65*)

1. This last section contains one activity. Individually or as a group, come up with a plan for what it might look like to wear the full armor of God and train in its use every day. Include things you're already doing and things you'd like to do. If you're not doing a lot, start small and build towards what you'd like to do. If you experience setbacks and failures, look to your Savior Jesus and what he has done for you. Your sins are all forgiven, you're God's dearly loved child, you have a home in heaven waiting for you. Encourage and pray for one another, pointing one another to the cross and the empty tomb. *God bless!*