

Sermon Study Guide - 2.28.2010

ACCESS – Week 2



ACCESS

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 28, 2010

DISCUSSION: TOGETHER AS A GROUP

1. Open your time together by sharing some experiences when you were facing a formidable opponent. Perhaps it was an intense rivalry from your high school sports days, a very difficult test you faced in college, or a serious illness that you or someone in your family has had to battle.
 - How did you and/or your team prepare for the situation?
 - Is there anything you would do differently in preparation if you could do it over again?
 - How did it turn out for you? If it is a current battle, how is it going for you?

- In this week's teaching, Shane talked about Daniel's experience with prayer during an intense time in his life. His experience illustrates the reality of the spiritual forces that are constantly at work to *delay* or even *undercut* the answers to our prayers. As believers we are promised **access** to God's very presence, yet sometimes it seems as though our prayers are not as productive as they should be.
- We are going to focus primarily on what the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the 1st Century Christians in Ephesus which Shane referenced in his teaching time.

SCRIPTURE READING: EPHESIANS 6:10-12

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For 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.

FOR DISCUSSION

2. The angel dispatched to Daniel reported that he was hindered for 3 weeks by a spiritual being referred to as the “prince of Persia.” Paul talks about a battle that we fight against rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces in “heavenly realms.” How does it affect your view of prayer to know that there are *two, opposing forces* active in the spiritual realm?
3. These verses (Eph. 6:10-12) tell us, in essence, to “suit up.” Why does a person put on body armor?

READ EPHESIANS 6:13-18

¹³Therefore 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. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And 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 saints.

- Verse 13 gives the rationale for putting on our armor—that we might be able to stand our ground. Sometimes standing our ground takes everything we have—even when we are fully equipped. Perhaps we often think of our spiritual walk in terms of growth and progress, but this passage presents our battle from an entirely defensive posture. Our Enemy is aggressive!
4. Can you identify some “flaming arrows” that have come your way? Perhaps it is temptation, or discouragement, or deep disappointment over something that has happened in life—things we didn’t necessarily invite upon ourselves but came to us anyhow.
 5. Were you prepared to face these attacks?
 - If we find ourselves lacking any piece of our armor we can be assured that a “flaming arrow” is going to find that spot. Every Christian that has engaged in this spiritual battle has a scar that may serve as a constant reminder of the need to be prepared—perhaps someone could share theirs with the group as a helpful encouragement.
 - Verse 18 instructs us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Prayer is an expression of our dependence on God. Even the best armor is of little use to a soldier who doesn’t know who his enemy is or how to fight him. Through prayer—our access to God—God empowers us with abilities to

overcome things that would otherwise be insurmountable.

6. In closing, allow your group to pray for you individually by sharing an area where Satan has successfully attacked you. This transparency will be good for you and the prayers of your fellow believers will assist you with additional spiritual *oomph* to stand against his attacks!

THIS WEEK

Specific episodes of real people facing spiritual warfare are recorded throughout Scripture. As a resource for your personal devotional time we have outlined some of these below. You may take one of these Bible texts each day, put yourself in the Bible character's shoes, and ask yourself some questions:

- What weaknesses is Satan trying to manipulate in this episode?
- What does this teach me about how Satan operates?
- How might I face a similar attack?
- Some of these characters withstood Satan's attack while others stumbled, and in some cases with devastating consequences. What does it matter if temptation, doubt, discouragement, or some other attack gets the best of me? What might happen within my relationships if I lose ground in one of these areas?
- How might these thoughts affect the way I pray? It may be of particular interest to note the role of prayer in the episodes where the biblical character was able to withstand the spiritual attack.
- By the way, if any of these stories create any questions for you, get in touch with your Community Group leader. He or she will be glad to work through the questions with you!

Day 1: Read Matthew 4:1-11—Jesus' fasting and temptation in the desert.

Day 2: Luke 22:31-62—Peter on the night before Jesus' crucifixion.

Day 3: Matthew 11:1-6—John the Baptist in prison struggling with doubt.

Day 4: 2 Samuel 24:1-25—King David, moved to take an illegal census of his Kingdom.

Day 5: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10—Paul and his 'thorn in the flesh'.