

THE BATTLE IS REAL

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THE BATTLE IS REAL

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The battle IS real.

I want to welcome you to this church-wide study on spiritual warfare. You may wonder why we are talking about this at this time. We are doing this study as a congregation right here at Christ Church right now in the fall of 2023 because, though Jesus Christ already won the war, we are still locked in a battle with the spiritual forces of the Enemy.

The purpose of this study is not to give the enemy of our souls any more attention than he deserves. No, the purpose is to declare and learn to live into the power and authority that God has given us through saving work of His Son, Jesus, and through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

The fact is that we need to know what to do when the enemy is pressing against us so that we won't get taken down neither individually nor as the body of Christ. We can stand firm in the midst of this present darkness as Light Bearers and Image Bearers of God Himself as we punch holes in the darkness with the power of Jesus' holy light.

We are not a defeated people. In Revelation 12:11, the Bible tells us that "they triumphed over him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." We will be knocked down, but we will not ever be declared "out for the count," because God has provided us with the strength and power to stand as overcomers.

As Paul said in Romans 8:37, "No, in all these things (v. 35-trouble, hardships, persecutions, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword) we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

It is our hope that during these eight weeks, we will all cast off the filthy rags that were sewn together with lies and were hemmed together with stiches from the enemy of our souls. We will learn how to dress daily in the very Armor that our Lord Himself wore – the Armor of God. In the end, we will stand firm against all that threatens to hinder us from delivering the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Let's Arm Up!

Blessings,

Jana House

THE BATTLE IS REAL

HOST TRAINING INFORMATION

Thanks for hosting this series on Spiritual Warfare. You are going to discover that the Bible has a lot more to say about this topic than one might think. Whether you are brand new at leading a small group or a seasoned veteran, God is going to use you. In fact, God has a long history of using ordinary people to get His work done. (*not that you are ordinary, of course*)

What follows are some thoughts and suggestions we would like to share with you as you prepare to host your group.

- If your group doesn't know each other well, be sure that you spend some time getting acquainted. Don't rush right into the content on the first gathering. *Remember, small groups are not just about a study or a meeting, they are about relationships.*
- Be sure to capture everyone's contact information and make sure what we gave you is correct. It is a good idea to send out an email with everybody's contact information so that the group can stay in touch with one another.
- Before you start the first group discussion, go over the *Small Group Agreement* with the group
- When you are ready to start the first session, be sure that each person in your group has a copy of the study book, *Equipped*. This book is vital to this study.
 - The weekly sermons will be posted quickly so that those who have missed it can catch up. They are also vital to the discussions. This year we will have two different sermons delivered each week on the topic of the week.
 - There will also be an 8 minute recap video from the preaching Pastors to view as a group. These will be accessible through the Churchwide Study Page on our website as well as on our church's YouTube channel.

- Lastly, please remind the group that God has given us the amount of information and descriptive language about Spiritual Warfare that He intends for us to have. We will stand firmly on what is shared in the Bible about the topic. There will be times during this study when people may disagree with what is said because of differences of perspective, experience, and approach to interpreting the Bible. We need to be respectful of each other. We are all in this together!

**What follows are some specific touchpoints
that we want to talk about in our training...**

- **Don't panic about not having a list of people in your group. People are still signing up. However, the best way to fill your group is by inviting people to join. You can invite neighbors, coworkers, folks who sit near you at church, social media friends (yes, someone filled a group this way).**
- **How do you respond to people who struggle with some theological concepts they will be wrestling with for the first time?**

Some concepts we will talk about...

Satan

Spiritual forces that are at work in and around us

The dark night of the soul

Personal failings and how they relate to our identity in Christ

Salvation and how our salvation impacts our daily lives

Scriptural authority

Strongholds

If you don't know how to respond to a person's struggle, make sure all in the group that none of us are experts, so we read and discuss the Bible together and pray through the hard things. IT IS OKAY TO SAY, "I DON'T KNOW, LET'S PRAY ABOUT IT."

- **How do you respond to people who disagree with some of the positions in the material?**

LISTEN

- **How do you respond to someone who has a deeply emotional reaction to the material?**

LOVE...

LISTEN SOME MORE...

Remember there are Stephen Ministers and counselors at our church that could be an option to suggest outside the meeting

Small Group Covenant Agreement

Because we believe that the Christian life is better experienced in circles rather than rows, we agree to the following priorities for our small group:

- **Take the Bible Seriously** – To seek to understand and apply God’s truth in the Bible
- **Pray** – To regularly pray with and for each other. Consider assigning a person in the group to be responsible for communicating prayer needs to the group.
- **Group Attendance** – To give priority to the group meeting. I will make every effort to attend each group meeting.
- **Safe Environment** – To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. There are no snap judgments or simple fixes.
- **Respectful Discussion** – To speak in a respectful and honoring way to others in the group.
- **Be Confidential** – To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.
- **Spiritual Health** – To give group members permission to help me live a Godly and healthy spiritual life that is pleasing to God.
- **Building Relationships** – To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.
- **Keep the Right Things the Right Things** – To encourage and challenge each other to go before God daily, to do life together as a community, and to be used by God as His hands, feet, and voice at all times.
- **Other** - _____

SAMPLE SMALL GROUP SESSION

- 6:30 Gathering & Refreshments
- 6:45 Pray & Welcome
- 6:50 Watch 8 Minute Sermon Recap Video
- 7:00 Go through Discussion Questions in your Leader's Folder (note:
each person will have the same questions in their Study Binder)
- 7:50 Wrap up Discussion & Ask for Prayer Concerns, Needs, and
Celebrations
- 8:00 Closing Prayer (Unless your group goes until 8:30 – *childcare at
the church on Wednesdays concludes at 8:00*)

SAMPLE EMAIL TO SEND TO PEOPLE YOU'D LIKE TO INVITE TO ATTEND YOUR SMALL GROUP

_____,

I will be hosting a small group for our upcoming church-wide spiritual growth journey. My small group will meet weekly over an 8-week period beginning the week of September 10th. I want to personally invite you to be a part of my group.

The theme of our church-wide study is *“The Battle is Real: How to Stand Triumphant in the Invisible War.”*

If you are interested in being a part of my small group, please click on the following link and sign-up for my group: https://christ-church-444474.churchcenter.com/groups/cws-the-battle-is-real-small-groups?enrollment=open_signup%2Crequest_to_join&filter=enrollment (*it might be easier for you to go to this link and then copy it and paste it into your email invitation – you can get to it by accessing the church-wide study page from our website and then click on the “FIND A GROUP HERE” button*)

I know it will be an unforgettable 8 weeks, and I hope you'll be a part of it with me.

Sincerely,

THE BATTLE IS REAL

STUDY RESOURCES

- ❖ Weekly Video (Jerry & Kris will participate in an 8-minute weekly video that recaps their sermons. This will be available on our website each Sunday afternoon)

- ❖ Weekly Sermon Notes (You will be able to pick up these notes prior to each worship service. They will also be accessible from the church-wide study page of our website)

- ❖ This Study Binder which includes
 - Weekly Prayer Targets

 - Weekly Discussion Questions for small groups

 - Weekly Notes Pages

 - Weekly Prayer Request Pages

- ❖ Bibliography

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRAYER TARGET

THE MEANING OF THE CROSSHAIRS SYMBOL

THE CROSS IN THE MIDDLE - Reminds us that successful prayer begins with a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and faith in His shed blood on the cross. (John 14:6; Eph. 3:12; Col. 1:15-20)

THE VERTICAL LINES IN THE CROSS – (As well as those above and below it) – Remind us to stay vertically aligned with God and His Word in prayer. (John 14:13; John 15:7; 1 John 5:14)

THE HORIZONTAL LINES IN THE CROSS – (And on both sides) – Remind us to stay right with others. This includes forgiving, apologizing, and also praying in agreement with others. (Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 18:19-20; Mark 11:25)

THE INNER CIRCLE – Means to maintain a pure heart in prayer. When you pray, you should keep no unconfessed sin or bitterness in your heart and you should approach God humbly, repentantly, submissively, and in faith. (Psalm 66:18; Mark 11:24; James 5:16)

THE CROSSHAIRS – Remind us to aim our intercession and to pray specifically, strategically, and persistently. (Matthew 7:7-8; John 15:7; James 5:16)

The Targeted Strategy Battle Plan for Prayer comes from the book, “The Battle Plan for Prayer, Inspired by the feature film, “The War Room.” The book is written by Stephen and Alex Kendrick.

Please Note: If you want to read and study a good book on prayer – this is one of the best I’ve ever read, studied, or facilitated. It would be well worth your while to have one in your library – Sonia McDowell

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Battle is Real and I Will Stand Victoriously

1. Why is it important that we talk about spiritual warfare?
2. When you hear the phrase “spiritual warfare,” what comes to mind?
3. What have you heard in the sermon or read over the past week that has really spoken to you about spiritual warfare?
4. How do you feel, knowing that there is a battle raging, and you are the prize?
5. How did the chapter from *Equipped* confirm, challenge, or reshape your views of the devil?
6. Jesus said, “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*” (Luke 10:18). The devil’s pride was his downfall. In which area of your life are you most tempted toward pride?
7. Jesus called the devil “*the father of lies*” (John 8:44). Where do you feel the devil is most active in spreading lies right now?

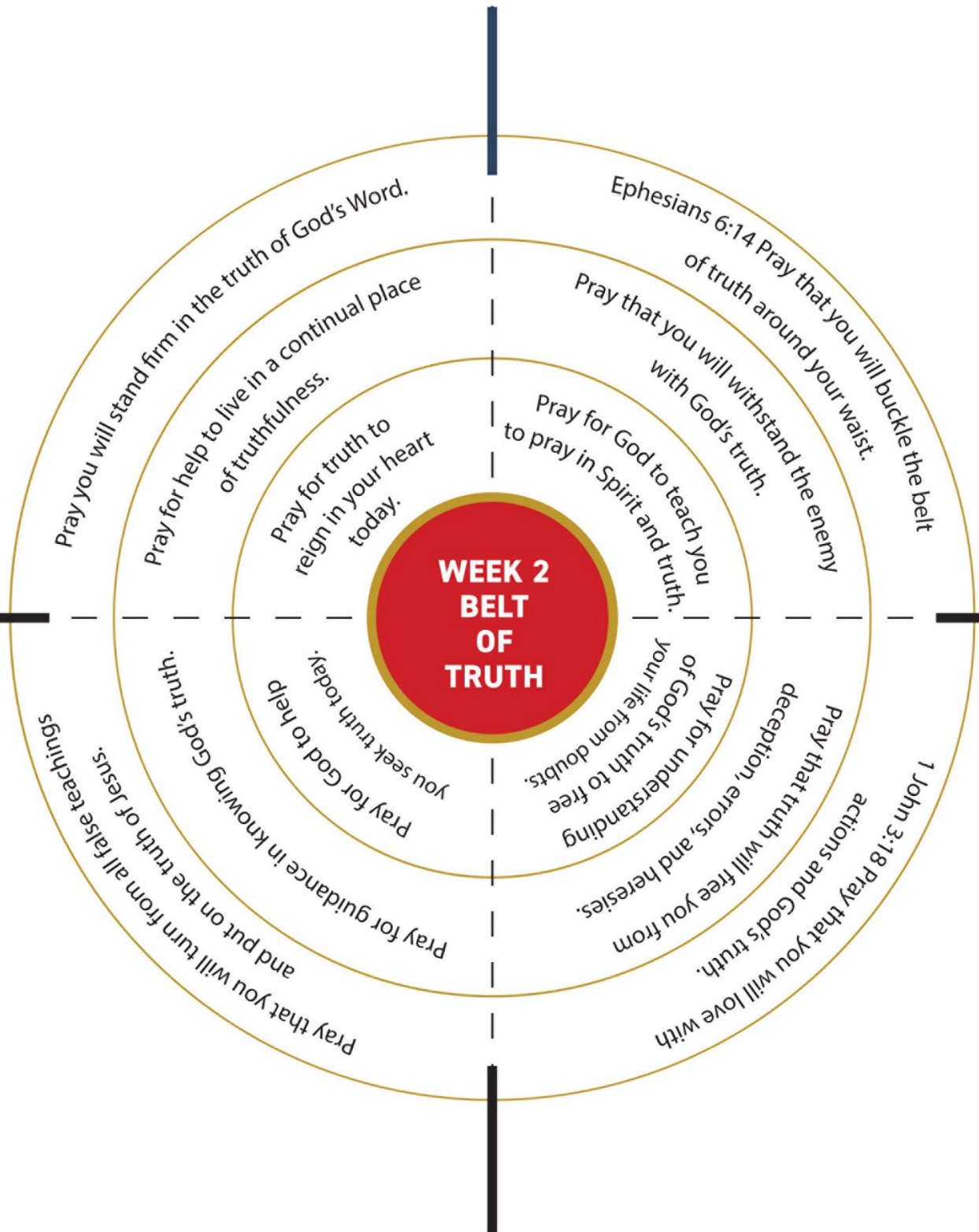
In the book *Equipped*, Christopher Kennedy writes: “*The devil chooses to deceive because he is out to crush our spirits and pull us away from God. As a created being limited in power, the devil is not directly responsible for every bad thing that happens to you. He doesn’t have that kind of authority. But he does leverage every misfortune for his purposes. If you contract an illness, it’s not verifiable to say that the devil made you ill. But the devil will use your illness to prey upon your spirit. He’ll introduce thoughts into your mind – doubts about your worth, despair that you’ll never fully recover. He’ll mislead you to think you’ve done something wrong and your illness is God’s punishment. In spiritual warfare, the battle is over your spirit. Physical hardship, financial misfortune, relational difficulties – none of these are Satan’s end goal. He capitalizes on these struggles, distorting the way you view your problems, seeking to crush your spirit.*” (Christopher Kennedy, *Equipped*, p. 5)

8. Satan knows where we are most vulnerable, and it is at our points of vulnerability that he most often attacks. If you are willing, name a struggle in your life that Satan has used as a point of attack. How did he attack you? What was your reaction and response to that attack?
9. What is Jesus’ role in the spiritual warfare that we face?
 - a. What does it look like for us to resist when we engage in battle?

- b. What do you need in order to help you stand and resist when you face a spiritual attack?
10. How has today's discussion affected your understanding of who Jesus is for you and what He wants to do in you and through you each day?
 11. Write down goals that you hope to achieve by going through this Church-Wide Study. What about spiritual warfare do you want to understand better?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On the Truth

1. What have you heard in the sermon or read this past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *belt of truth*?
2. Why do you think truth is represented by a belt in our spiritual armor?
3. Why is it so hard these days to “wear” that belt of truth – or to put the question differently, why are people reluctant to stand on truth in today’s culture?
4. What makes it difficult for you to recognize truth? Have your emotions ever clouded your ability to recognize truth? Explain.
5. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. The truth will set you free*” (John 8:31-32)? How does truth liberate people?

Christopher Kennedy, in *Equipped*, writes: “*With hearts hardened by sin, we deceive ourselves. We deceive ourselves when we think that bad things shouldn’t happen to us because we’re good people. We deceive ourselves when we continue destructive behavior by saying, ‘A little more won’t hurt,’ or, ‘One more time won’t do any harm. No one will know.’ We deceive ourselves when we think that we’re always right and everyone else is wrong. Most critically, from 1 John 1:8, ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ The devil may be the father of lies, but we can be our own worst enemies when we live in self-deception and denial of our problems.*” (Kennedy p. 12)

6. How have you experienced the power of self-deception in your life, and why is this something that Satan really likes to use to his advantage?

Kennedy writes: “*Speaking through His holy, inspired Word, Jesus tells us that though we are sinners, He has rescued us by His death on the cross. ‘He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed’ (1 Peter 2:24). More than anything else, God wants us to believe the truth of salvation in Jesus. Because of His sacrifice, we are eternally secure. Along with His resurrection on the third day, Jesus’ work on the cross is the greatest truth of all.*” (Kennedy, p. 12)

7. "Along with His resurrection on the third day, Jesus' work on the cross is the greatest truth of all." How would you explain the significance of this statement to someone who knows very little about Christ?
8. Read Philippians 4:8. The verse tells us what kinds of things to think about. Choose two or three words from the list and give concrete examples to match those words.
9. Worry frequently chips away at our hold on truth. What worries you? What does God want you to do with your worry?

10. Name three truths about who you are in God's eyes.
11. How has today's discussion drawn you closer to Jesus?
12. How can the group pray for you this week with respect to your putting on the belt of truth?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK THREE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On the Righteousness of God

1. What did you hear in the sermon or read during the past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *breastplate of righteousness*?

Many important Christian leaders, through the years, have gone through deep spiritual struggles. St. John of the Cross experienced a “dark night of the soul.” Mother Theresa endured her own version of the dark night of the soul. John Wesley struggled with his faith. Charles Haddon Spurgeon frequently battled depression.

In the book *Equipped*, Christopher Kennedy tells about the spiritual struggles of Martin Luther. He writes: “*Before Luther was hammering theological statements on a door, he was pounding himself. Literally. It would be an understatement to say Luther was hard on himself during his years as a monk. He was known to flog himself to try to overcome his carnal impulses, as if he could beat sin out of himself. He would spend hours a day confessing his sins to a priest until the priest could handle no more. Luther, a former law school student, envisioned God as a harsh judge waiting to catch people sinning so He could punish them. Luther figured that if he could reduce his sins, or at least confess all of them adequately, he could avoid harsher divine punishment.*” (Kennedy, *Equipped*, p. 18)

2. What do you know about Martin Luther? How does it feel to know that Christian leaders like Luther, Wesley, and Mother Theresa faced deep spiritual struggles?
3. Why do we have trouble showing ourselves grace?
 - a. How can we make the shift from guilt to grace?
4. Share your understanding of the word righteousness. Does it mean that we have to be perfect before we can be protected (*this idea of being perfect before we can be protected comes from Chip Ingram’s book, The Invisible War*)?
 - a. There are two different kinds of righteousness to consider here - “imputed righteousness” and “imparted righteousness”? In Romans 4:20-23, we read: “²⁰Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. ²² And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous. ²³ And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit. It was recorded ²⁴ for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him... (the NKJV translates verses 23-24 as – ²³ Now it was not written for His sake alone that it was imputed to Him, ²⁴ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him...)” Imputed righteousness, therefore, describes the work of Jesus on the cross to forgive our sins once and for all. Yet the fact of God’s imputed righteousness does not excuse us from actively pursuing Jesus in this life. This is where “imparted righteousness” enters the picture. Imparted righteousness

describes the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who has taken up residence in us from the moment of our acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- b. How does the doctrine of imputed and imparted righteousness bring you comfort?
5. The danger of any discussion of righteousness is that it can lead a person to think that the righteousness they experience is self-generated. Hence, the term “self-righteousness.” When people call Christians self-righteous or judgmental, what words or behaviors do they point to as evidence? What can we do to prove these labels inaccurate?
6. On page 21 in the book *Equipped*, there is a Barna study referenced that compares the pharisaical attitudes and actions to Christ-like attitudes and actions. How have you seen both pharisaical and Christ-like attitudes and actions over the past week?
7. Which do you think is a bigger problem for Christians: guilt or self-righteousness? How about for you? Explain your answers.
8. Pride lurks in every human heart. How do we guard our hearts against pride?

In the book *Equipped*, Christopher Kennedy writes this:

“Instead of the filth of our sin, God covers us in the breastplate of righteousness. God protects us from Satan’s attacks by arming us with the assurance that He declares us righteous in His sight because of Jesus. God’s gracious gift is at the heart of the Christian faith: ‘the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe’ (Romans 3:22). God places this gift over our hearts with His armor.

I served my seminary internship, called a vicarage, at a wonderful congregation called Christ the King Lutheran Church in Kingwood, Texas, in the Houston area. One of the memories etched in my mind from that year was the Good Friday service. The associate pastor, Doyle Theimer, had spent hours the day before constructing an apparatus to illustrate his sermon. He had a giant wooden cross with a scale hanging from each side, like the scales of justice.

At the end of the sermon, he placed a giant rock on one of the scales, dropping the scale as low as it could go. Then he invited the congregation to come forward and take a pebble from the tray. We each came forward, took a pebble, and placed it on the other scale. Pebble after pebble filled the scale – not with a loud BANG BANG BANG, but with a light CLINK CLINK CLINK – as person after person added their pebbles.

Even with all of the pebbles on the scale, it never budged. The rock was much heavier than the combined weight of the pebbles.

The rock represented Christ’s righteousness. The pebbles represented our sinfulness, or unrighteousness. The point was stunningly clear: no matter how much we

sinned, our unrighteousness could never outweigh Christ's righteousness. This is how the Bible says it: 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Romans 5:20)." (Kennedy, p. 23-24)

9. How might it change people if they saw their sins as pebbles and Christ's righteousness as an immovable rock that outweighs all sins?
10. How has today's discussion affected your understanding of who Jesus is for you and what He has done for you?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On the Gospel of Peace

1. What did you hear in the sermon or read during the past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *Shoes that come from the Gospel of Peace*?
2. When you say to somebody, “*I am at peace right now*,” what do you mean by that? In other words, what does it mean for you to *be at peace*?
3. Where do you usually experience peace? (a favorite place, a relaxing activity, something else?)
4. What are some of the things that rob you of your peace? And how have you experienced being robbed of that peace recently?

In *Equipped*, Christopher Kennedy writes, “*God’s peace is different from what the world offers. The world offers a fleeting peace based on circumstances. Temporary peace. Peace when things are going well. A relaxed heart and mind when life is intact and manageable. The problem is that life is rarely intact and manageable. Too often, life feels out of control and unmanageable. In those times, we feel stress, not peace.*”

Our adversary, the devil, offers peace too. But he’s a false peacemaker. The deceiver wants us to believe that welcomed relief comes through numbing methods like abusing alcohol, binge eating, watching addictive images, or impulsive spending. He woos people into religions and cults that promise escape from the stresses of life through spiritual solutions apart from the one true God. Satan tricks us into thinking we’ve achieved peace when we avoid conflict or compromise our values for the sake of ‘getting along’...

Jesus says His peace is different from what we could find anywhere else... His peace is based on eternal truth: God is for you.” (Kennedy, pp 29-30)

5. Kennedy describes 3 different kinds of peace offered to us in the quote above – how have you experienced each?

Ephesians 6 talks about arming ourselves with shoes that represent our “readiness given by the gospel of peace.” When the people of Paul’s day heard this, they must have thought about the shoes that Roman soldiers wore. Chip Ingram writes, “*Roman sandals were strapped up to the knee and tightly fastened to the soldier’s leg. The soles had knobs and sometimes nails protruding from them – an ancient version of athletic cleats. Alexander the Great is said to have invented these or at least championed them. He gave credit for many of the Greek army’s impressive victories to the firm footing of its forces. When soldiers have a solid foundation, they can stand unmoved against their opposition. They don’t slip or lose their balance very often if their feet are gripping the ground. That’s the picture Paul wants us to have of ourselves: soldiers with feet solidly planted in certainty.*” (Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, p. 112-113)

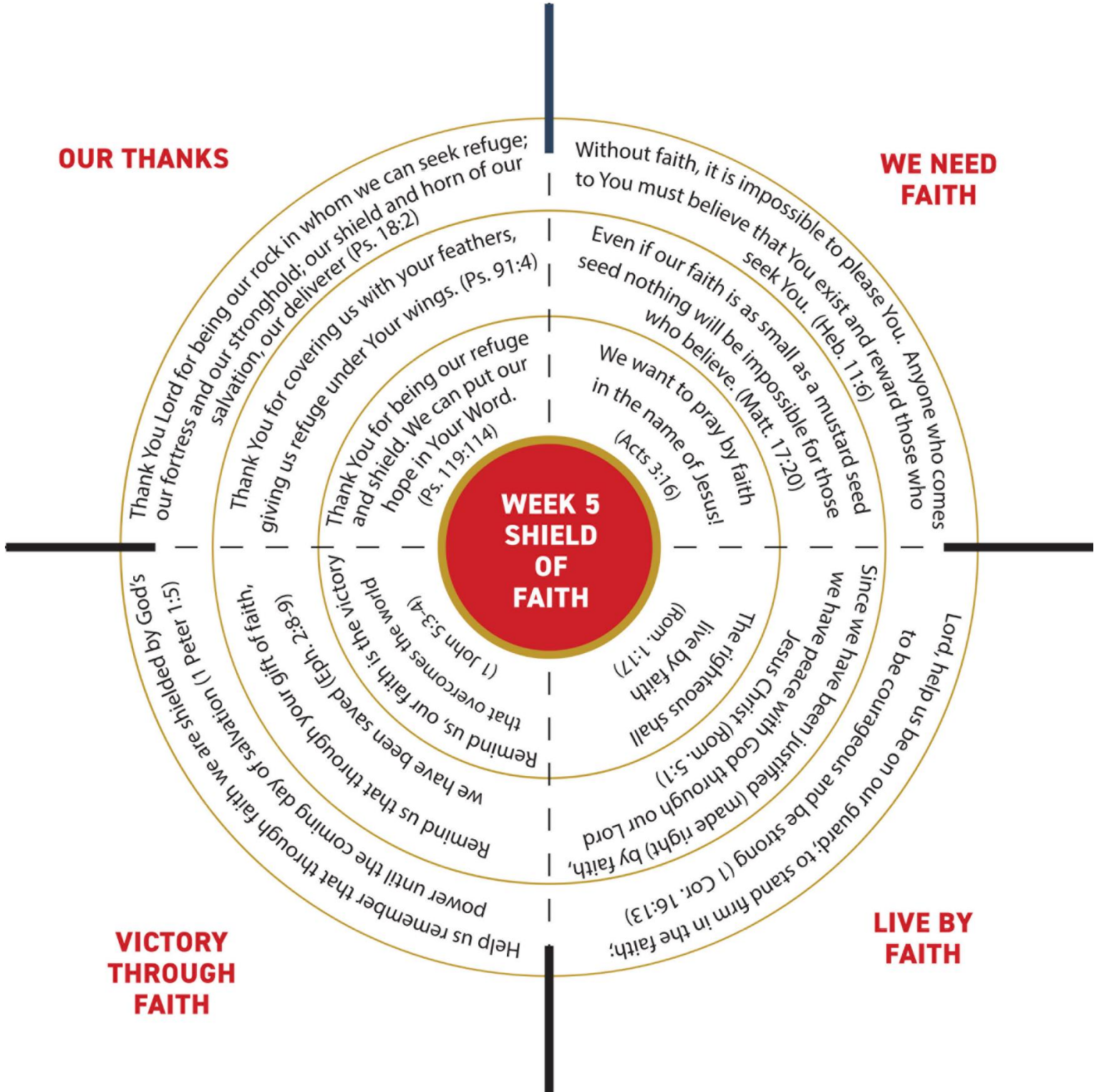
6. Why is important that the shoes that are a part of our spiritual armor represent our “readiness given by the gospel of peace”?
7. In Ephesians 2:13-14, Paul wrote, “*Now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.*” How have you experienced Jesus being YOUR peace?
8. Earlier in our discussion (question #4) we talked about some of the things that rob us of our peace. Name some truths that restore peace.
9. How can those truths lead to your “readiness” to face anything that comes against you that threatens to take you down or, at the very least, cause you to stumble?

Kennedy writes, “*For the record, being at peace doesn’t mean we won’t feel angry or remorseful or anxious at times. Being a Christian doesn’t turn off your feelings. Being a Christian puts your faith ahead of your feelings. The peace of Christ transcends circumstances. It resides deep within us. The bottom-line, bedrock, foundational, immovable fact of your life is that God is for you.*” (Kennedy, p. 32)

10. What does the above quote say to you about what Jesus offers you today and every day whenever you face spiritual attacks or personal struggles?
11. How has this discussion today shaped your understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done and will do for you each day?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On My Faith

1. What did you hear in the sermon or read during the past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *Shield of Faith*?
2. Today we're talking about the importance of the "shield of faith" in our lives. Hebrews 11:1-3 says: "*Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.*" (NLT) How do you define faith in your own words?
3. Do you believe the world and our culture is becoming more dangerous? If so, then how is it becoming more dangerous?
 - a. How does the state of our culture and world affect the daily choices and decisions you make?
4. What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel unsafe?

In Equipped, Christopher Kennedy writes, "Perhaps you've wrestled with your own doubts about God or about your faith. You may have doubted God's goodness or His sovereignty or His compassion or that He really cares about you. Often, we experience doubts because of a hardship in life. Pain often leads to doubts. Jesus' death likely had traumatized Thomas and caused him to shut the door to his heart.

Your own traumatic moments may have affected you similarly. In fear, you've barred the door to your heart, determined to prevent anyone from getting close enough to hurt you again. Or you've fantasized about hiding behind a locked door, safe from the potential pain of the outside world. When we've been wounded, we may doubt that God will protect us from future harm. We forget that He is our true shield.

This is spiritual warfare. As discussed earlier..., Satan isn't omnipotent. He doesn't have power to do whatever he wants. He's a limited, created being. But he's incredibly resourceful. While he can't cause every kind of calamity, he does leverage our hardships to his advantage. When bad things happen to us, Satan uses those events to introduce doubt in our hearts.

The devil puts forth thoughts like this: If God really loved you, He wouldn't have allowed that to happen. He has forsaken you. You're at the bottom of His priority list. You might as well give up. No use hanging onto futile beliefs." (Kennedy, p. 37)

5. What are some spiritual doubts you've wrestled with?
6. Describe a time when Satan leveraged a hardship in your life to attack your faith.
7. What are some other examples of "flaming arrow's" that Satan shoots at you?

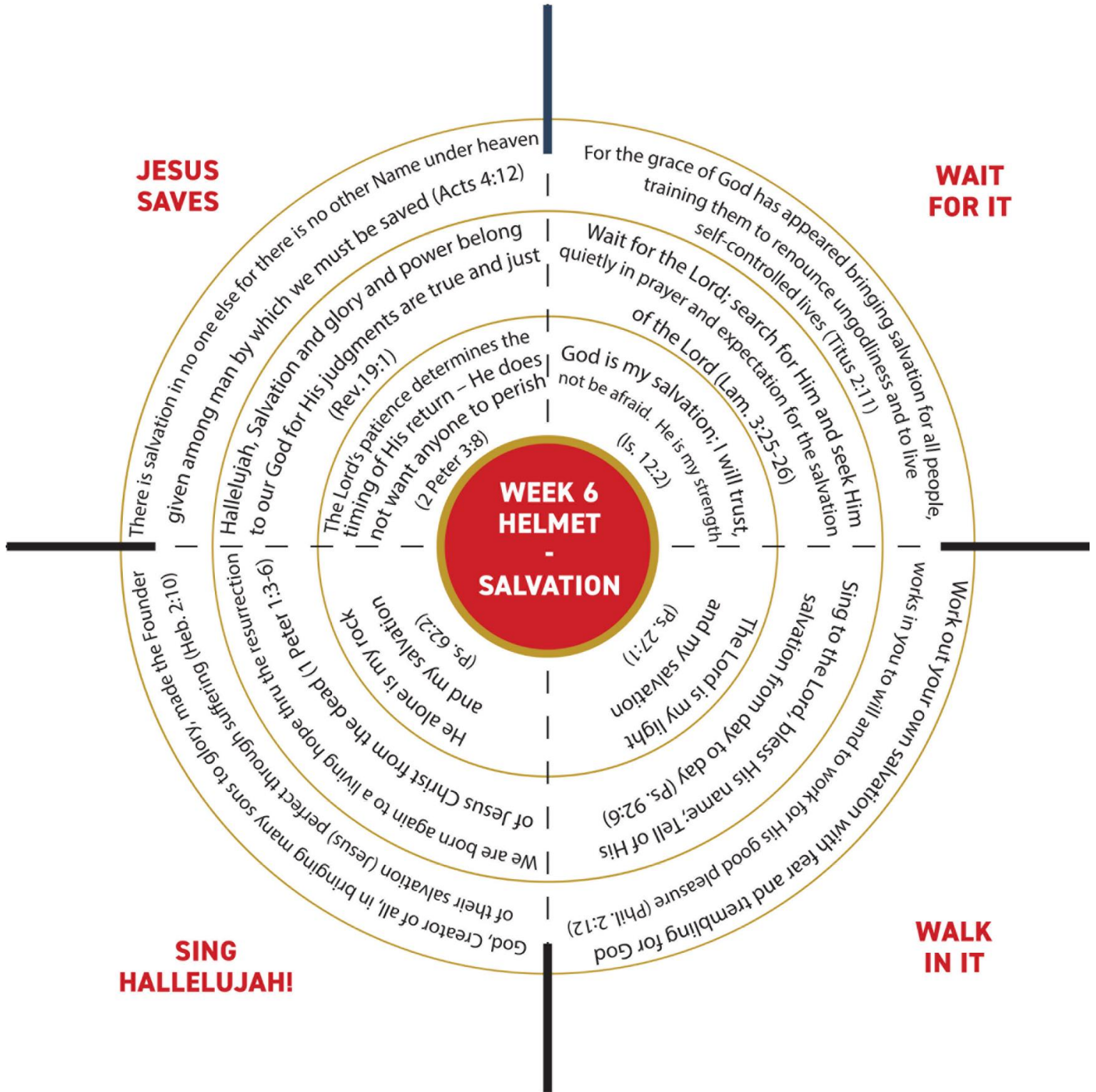
8. In several places, God is described as a shield. Genesis 15:1 says, *“The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’* 2 Samuel 22:2-3 says, *“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation.”* What does it mean to you that God is your shield?
9. How has your shield of faith protected you against the attacks of the Enemy?

Not only does the shield of faith that we personally carry help us in the spiritual battles we face, but when we stand shield-to-shield with other believers, the level of protection becomes even greater. The kind of shield described in Ephesians 6 was a door-sized shield that was made of leather and sometimes metal-covered wood. It also had hooks on the sides so that it could link with other shields. Charles Stanley describes what it was like when soldiers linked their shields together like this: *“When a line of soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder with these shields in front of them, they created a wall of defense. Soldiers crouching behind their linked-together shields could move forward in relative safety and advance to the front line of battle in unison. The critical factor was that they stay linked together without any breaks in the wall created by their shields. How important this concept is for us as believers in Christ Jesus! When we band together, uniting our faith to believe God for a great advance of the gospel into a nation or among a tribal group or culture, we see tremendous results. The devil is forced to retreat!”* (Charles Stanley, *When the Enemy Strikes*, p. 161)

10. Tell about a time when other believers stood shoulder to shoulder with you and helped you through a struggle.
11. How has today’s discussion increased your faith? How has our time together deepened your relationship with Jesus?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On My Salvation

1. What did you hear in the sermon or read during the past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *Helmet of Salvation*?

Tony Evans writes: “*With the helmet, Paul has once again used a physical example to illustrate a spiritual truth. He demonstrates that just as the brain is the control center for the rest of the body, the mind is the control center for the will and emotions. The mind must be protected with a helmet that’s able to absorb the shocks of being hit by the enemy and even knocked to the ground in the spiritual realm... When our mind no longer functions as it was designed to, it impedes our will and emotions from doing what they should. This, then, influences the body as it responds to the will and emotions. So it’s no surprise that one of Satan’s primary strategies is to attack our mind. In fact, this is such a critical area that each of the different pieces of spiritual armor relates to our mind.*” (Tony Evans, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, p. 105-106)

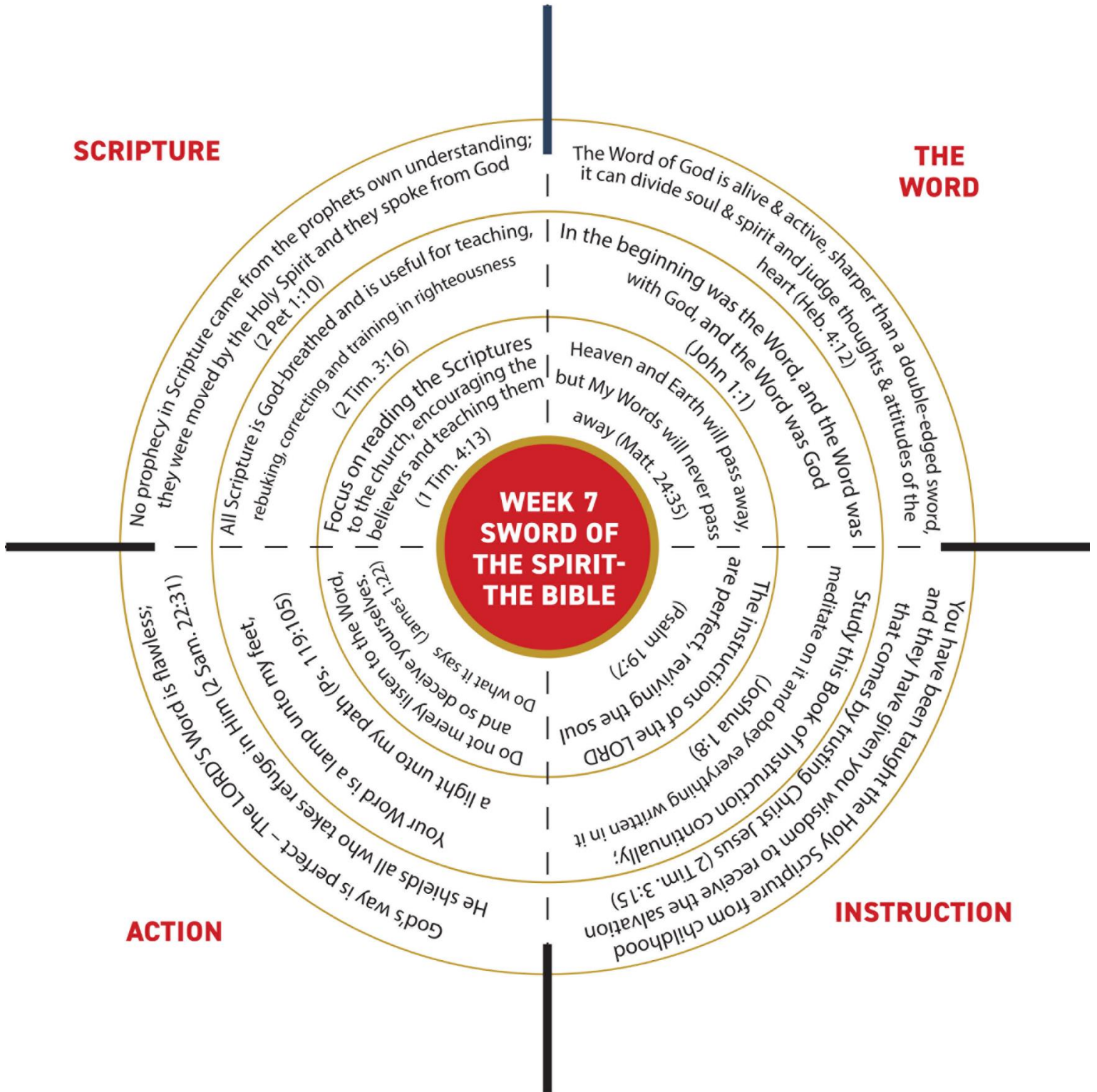
Christopher Kennedy writes that “*we have a cunning adversary. Satan knows he can’t have your mind. It belongs to God. So the devil tries instead to take a piece of your mind. Not the whole thing. Just a piece. Just a corner. Just a small compartment where he can set up shop. James 1:8 describes a ‘double-minded man’ as ‘unstable in all his ways.’ Double-mindedness is the devil’s goal; his strategy is that part of you may find security in God, but another part of you is restless, doubting, insecure, anxious, fearful. Call it spiritual schizophrenia. One part believes truth; the other part believes Satan’s lies.*” (Kennedy, p. 44)

2. Since the mind is one of Satan’s favorite places to attack, what do you think is a favorite corner of people's minds where he tends to set up shop?
 - a. Where are you most vulnerable to deception and misdirection?
 - b. Why do you think “double-mindedness is the devil’s goal”? And how have you experienced it in your life recently?
3. How does the helmet of salvation help us fight against Satan’s warfare against our minds?
 - a. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9 – “*But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.*” How can your salvation be a source of hope for you?
4. What are some ways you have battled Satan when he has attacked your mind?
5. Charles Stanley says that “*the most important thought to keep at the forefront of your thinking... is the truth that ‘Jesus is my Savior’*” (Stanley, *When the Enemy Strikes*, p. 163). Talk amongst the group about how we can keep that truth at the forefront of our minds.

6. Another way to engage in the battle when Satan attacks your mind is reciting God's Word – the Bible. In the book *Equipped*, Christopher Kennedy shares several scripture passages that are helpful to remind us of the hope and power of our salvation. Take a look at these as a group: Psalm 46:10; Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Romans 8:28; Matthew 6:9-13; Psalm 23. What do these scripture passages say to you, and how do they function as your helmet of salvation?
7. How can we help each other keep our helmets on at all times, so that we can be ready whenever the Enemy attacks?
8. How has this conversation today drawn you closer to Jesus?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK SEVEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand On the Bible

1. What did you hear in the sermon or read during the past week that spoke profoundly to you about the *Sword of the Spirit*?

Matthew 4:1-11 says:

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But He answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You,' and 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'"

¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.

2. Does it surprise you that Jesus was tempted? Hebrews 4:15 states, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin." What comfort do you find in knowing that Jesus faced temptation just as we do?
3. Why is it important to know that Satan used scripture in his efforts to tempt Jesus?
 - a. Christopher Kennedy writes, "Not that in Jesus' temptation, even the devil quoted Scripture. The devil tried to grab the sword from Jesus' hand and stab our Lord with it" (Kennedy, p. 55). When have you seen scripture improperly used as a weapon?
 - b. How can you tell whether a Bible verse is being used correctly or is being taken out of context? Can you think of a time when you had to make that distinction?

The Sword of the Spirit is the one part of our spiritual armor that is actually an offensive weapon. It is not to be kept in its sheath, but actually unsheathed so that we can wage hand-to-hand combat with our spiritual adversary, like Jesus did. Chip Ingram writes about this sword, which is the Word of God:

*“Paul defines the Christian’s sword for us in Ephesians 6:17: it is the Word of God. Most times in New Testament Greek, ‘word’ is a translation of ‘logos.’ Not here. In this case, it’s a translation of ‘rhema’ - the specific, spoken word (or words) given to us by the Spirit of God to do close, hand-to-hand combat with the lies and deceptions of the enemy. God applies His Word (rhema) by making the Word (logos) alive and active in our specific situations. It comes to us so we can take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The difference between the ‘logos’ and the ‘rhema’ is the difference between a stockpile of weapons and a sword in a highly skilled hand. One is the invaluable arsenal; the other is a specific well-timed deployment. The ‘rhema’ is the sword of the Spirit.” (Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, 159)*

4. The statement above points out the fact that we have in our arsenal a powerful offensive weapon – the *rhema* of God – our Sword of the Spirit. What are some scripture passages you have used – or could use – as weapon against the Enemy? (spend some time with this question)
5. Do you normally consider yourself a fighter? What makes that term feel natural or unnatural based on your personality?
 - a. Talk about or write in your notes about an area in your life in which you need to exhibit more of a fighting spirit today in relation to your Christian walk.
6. You are never alone in the battle. God is always with you. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that *“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*
 - a. What does this verse say to you?
 - b. How can these words help you when you are being tempted or attacked?

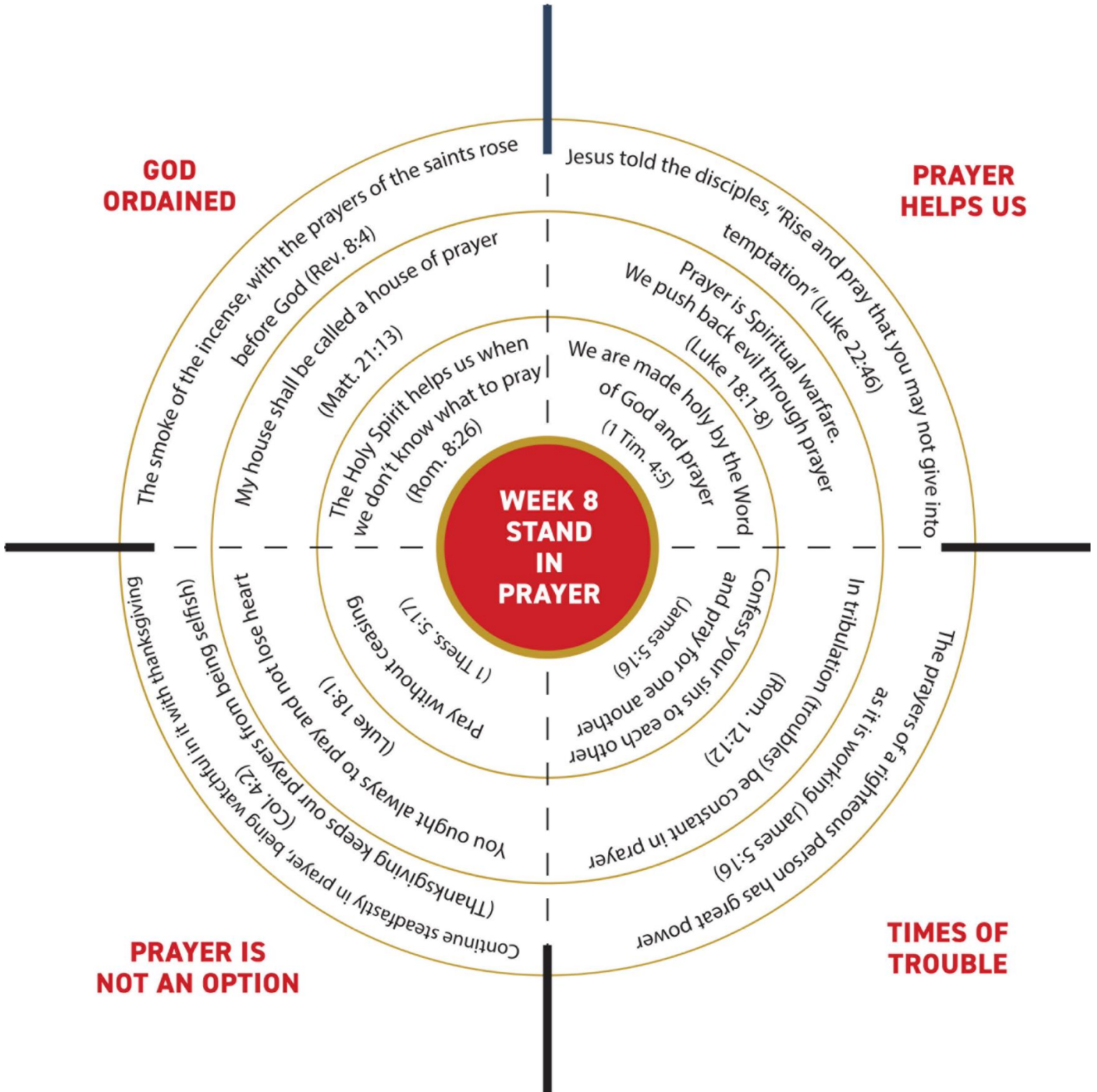
Chip Ingram writes: *“You are a child of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Your badge is your position in Christ, and you have on your side the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Whether they like it or not, dark powers must believe, respond to, and obey the authority of every child of God who wields the Word of God against specific issues. Luke 10:19 is a promise given to all believers: ‘Behold, I have given you authority... over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.’ Authority trumps power, even all the power of the enemy. You don’t have to be strong, super spiritual, or seminary-educated. You do, however, have to claim who you are and act on what is true. You also have to know the Word well enough that the possibility of your using it won’t be considered an empty threat. Study the Word, be ready in and out of season, and act decisively when attacked.” (Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, p. 163)*

7. Jesus encountered temptation armed with the truth that He is God’s Son. How can your status as God’s child help you withstand temptation?

8. We have studied the six pieces that constitute the armor of God. Which piece of the armor do you need most right now? Explain why.
9. How has today's discussion increased your faith and confidence when you are engaged in spiritual warfare?
10. How has our time together deepened your relationship with Jesus?

BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

PRAYER STRATEGY TARGET



WEEK EIGHT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I Will Stand In Prayer

Charles Stanley writes, “One of the main reasons that so many believers in Christ are weak is that they do not pray when the devil attacks them. Prayer is not a piece of spiritual armor against the devil. Prayer is what we do once we are clothed in the armor that is the identity of Jesus” (Charles Stanley, *When the Enemy Strikes*, p. 176) We are talking today about prayer.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being "weak" and 10 being "strong"), how would you rate your prayer life?

1. When do you normally pray during the day? Describe any routines or disciplines you have related to prayer.
2. What do you think are the most common excuses not to pray?

Christopher Kennedy, in *Equipped*, writes: “Satan does not like prayer. He’d rather God’s people be anxious, disillusioned, worried, fearful, burdened, burned out, and overwhelmed, trying to do things on our own without God’s help. Satan wants us to drift from God. Satan wants us to give up. Prayer is a direct attack on everything the devil desires.

And so Satan does everything in his power to keep us from praying. He convinces us that prayer is futile, or it’s awkward, or we’re too busy to pray, or we’re unqualified to pray. When we get past his first line of defense, when we do pray, he tries to distract us in prayer. He doesn’t want us to pray because it interferes with his purposes.

*Prayer is spiritual warfare. The armor-of-God passage concludes by saying that we should pray ‘at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication’ (Ephesians 6:18). All occasions. All kinds of prayers and requests. The word ALL takes away the excuses Satan forces upon us. Any time is a good time to pray. Anything on our minds has a place in our prayers. Jesus is always there, ready to listen to our prayers” (Kennedy, *Equipped*, p. 60).*

3. Why does Satan want to keep us from praying?

In Luke 22, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane located on the Mount of Olives. This is how Luke tells what happened there: “³⁹ And He came out and went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. ⁴⁰ And when He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ ⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.’ ⁴³ And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶

and He said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’” (Luke 22:39-46 – ESV)

4. Jesus prayed so earnestly that His sweat “became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (v. 44). Tell about a time when you’ve prayed earnestly for something.
5. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples failed to pray because they were exhausted from sorrow. Can you relate? What exhausts you? What replenishes you?
6. In the Garden of Gethsemane, angels attended Jesus to strengthen Him. Tell about a time when God strengthened you when you were overwhelmed by all that was coming against you.
7. What expectations do we place on God when we pray to Him? Which of our expectations are fair, and which are unfair?
8. The Bible instructs us to *“rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). What do these words mean to you, particularly the command to *pray without ceasing*?
 - a. What makes it difficult to pray without ceasing?
9. Tell about a time when you have experienced victory in a spiritual battle that came about as a result of prayer.
10. It’s time to pray for each other. Take some time for each person in the group (if they are comfortable) to share about an area in their lives for which they need prayer. Then as a group, pray over each other.
11. If you have time, talk about how this church-wide study has drawn you closer to Jesus and to one another. Also, talk about how this has shaped your approach to spiritual warfare.

THE BATTLE IS REAL

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