

ARMOR



GROUP STUDY



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Week 6: The Breastplate of Righteousness

14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,
and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

1. PRAY

This past week we celebrated the Lord's supper together. Let's open up our time by thanking Jesus for the cross. Righteousness has been provided by Jesus because he sacrificed it all for us. As we prepare to talk about our work for Christ, let's first thank Jesus for his work for us.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

2. SHARE

True righteousness happens when everything around you gets harder, when you are under attack, when the conditions aren't great, when you are tired, when you don't feel like it...and yet you remain faithful to God and represent him the most. Spend some time sharing some times in your life when you have truly cultivated the breastplate of righteousness (becoming more like Christ) during times like this.

3. STUDY

The breastplate of righteousness is such an important piece of armor. As we learned, this breastplate can only operate properly when it rests upon a solid belt. It is impossible for righteousness to be experienced in your life without the foundation of absolute truth. Right thinking will always precede right living. Go back and read Psalm 119: 9-16 together.

- Based upon this Psalm, how can we keep our way pure? (or how can we grow in righteousness?)

- What are some ways that you are storing up the word in your heart over the years? (vgroups, bible studies, ministries, books, etc) If we are called to store up the word in our heart, challenge your group to memorize this section of Psalm 119:9-6 this week.

The righteousness of God has been given to us because of the work of God. When we surrender to Jesus, he clothes us in his righteousness. This moment of salvation seals us with a new identity and eternal life. This moment also begins a process of growing daily to become more and more like Christ. On this side of heaven we will never be perfect or follow Jesus perfectly but we are called to keep pursuing Jesus with the hope of reflecting Jesus in our lives to this world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, this takes hard work and discipline. Let's spend some time gaining a biblical understanding of discipline.

Let's read two passages of Scripture about working hard: Proverbs 6:6-11; Colossians 3:17.

- What are some reasons why you or others have lacked personal discipline, especially when it comes to growing in the ways of the Lord? (examples: pride, fear of others, laziness, lack of desire, pleasure seeking, too hard, etc)

If we are to become more like Christ, let's consider the example of Christ. Jesus was always on mission proclaiming the good news but he also retreated in order to spend time with His Father in Heaven. Read Mark 1:29-39.

Right after Jesus heals many, he retreats to pray and get filled up, and then he returns to the mission field preaching. What can we learn from Jesus as we hope to grow in righteousness through a commitment to greater spiritual discipline.

- What are some ways that you retreat in order to rest and recharge for the sake of returning to the mission field? What fills you up in the Lord and what drains you?

A lot of times, people lose focus or discipline in their life because they lose purpose. One of the most important things that you can do is to know the answer to these two important questions:

1. Purpose: What am I called to accomplish in this life?
2. Passion: Is there a sense of enthusiasm about my purpose and direction?

Grow in Righteousness Challenge

With a desire to grow in righteousness, take some time together and make a plan to accomplish this very important goal. You could discuss the following as one big group, but we would encourage each group to break up into smaller groups of 2-3 people with the purpose of getting specific with each challenge.

1. Make a list of your spiritual growth goals. (examples: scripture memory, defeating temptation, being a consistent witness with co-workers, intentional prayer, practicing Sabbath, studying theology, forming an accountability group, mentoring or finding a mentor, faithful financial giving to the church, etc.)

2. Schedule a game plan for accomplishing these goals.

- a) Where do I want to go?
- b) How will I arrange my plans to get there?
- c) When will I actually do it?

3. Evaluate how you did, celebrate how you did, and determine how you can continue to improve. No one will ever become exactly like Christ and we need to fall more in love with the journey than the destination. Keep seeking, keep growing. Enjoy the blessing of growing in the righteousness of the Lord.

4. RESPOND

We began this weeks discussion thanking Jesus for paying it all. Let's close out our time by reminding ourselves of the love that Christ has for us and our love for him. At the end of the day, most people will live out of the overflow of their heart. The righteousness of God in our life will never be cultivated from a motivation of religious duty. To become more like a Christ is to experience more of Christ.

Read Jeremiah 29:11-13: 11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Close out our time together by not only making a commitment to seek and find the Lord with a time of prayer, but ask for Spirit of God to help us fall more and more in love with the pursuit and presence of God. Jesus we want to fall more in love with you and your ways!