



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:11-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5

- “*Put on the full armor of God* so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh & blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. ¹³ For this reason *take up the full armor of God*, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. ¹⁴ Stand, therefore, *with truth like a belt around your waist*, righteousness like armor on your chest, ¹⁵ & your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In every situation 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 & the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer & request, & stay alert with all perseverance & intercession for all the saints.” (Eph. 6:11-18 CSB)
- “Although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, ⁴ since *the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds*. We demolish arguments ⁵ & every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, & we take every thought captive to obey Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:3-5 CSB)
- **SUMMARY:** This letter alerts us that we’re under satanic attack. We need weapons to survive and prevail. The good news is that God—the Divine Warrior—provides his own battle-tested armor. The Armor of God is given us to complete the Mission of God. The first piece is the ‘belt of truth;’ a ‘belt’ restricts, stabilizes, and fortifies us. ‘Truth’ here is not ‘my truth,’ or yours; it’s God’s truth embodied in Christ, witnessed by the Spirit, attested in God’s Word. Truth becomes our ‘weapon,’ not merely by affirming doctrines, but by being applied—Paul calls it “truth-ing”—so that it governs our personal life & church-life. So let’s ask: will we as a church be fortified & restricted by God’s truth as we ‘fight the good fight’? Popular spiritual warfare strategies—‘territorial spirits/defilement,’ ‘spiritual mapping,’ ‘interrogating demons,’ ‘generational curses,’ etc.—should be subjected to the ‘truth-test’ prior to implementation.

1. Armor Needed to Resist Satanic Attacks (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 12:17; 13:7 cf. Rev. 20:2)

- a. The Predator, Satan, is at War with God's People (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 12:17; 13:7)
 - a. "Be sober-minded, be alert. *Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion*, looking for anyone he can devour. *Resist him*, firm in the faith..." (1 Pet. 5:8-9)
 - b. "The 'dragon'...is the devil & Satan" (Rev. 20:2) "*The dragon was furious...& went off to wage war against...those who... hold firmly to the testimony of Jesus.*" (Rev. 12:17) "The Beast was permitted to *wage war against the saints*" (Rev. 13:7)
 - c. "The metaphor...is of *warfare*, not of a school debate or of a business enterprise." [J. Barton, *Oxford Bible Comm.*, p. 1177]
 - d. "Our God is a God of peace...except where Satan is concerned. Ever since the garden, the Evil One...attempt[s] to undermine God's will & wage war against his...children. No one has more hatred for the church than...Satan. In order for there to be peace...Satan himself must be...end[ed]...Why do believers face conflict & hardship?...Because we are at peace with God but in warfare with Satan...[who] continue[s] to...assault the church...To experience...hardship [in]...this spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12) is...a blessing—we're the Lord's warriors to fight for his cause" [Peter Y. Lee, *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 40]
- b. Believers called to Stand, resist Satanic Attack (Eph. 6:11, 13-14)
 - a. "Put on God's full armor so...you can *stand against the devil's schemes*...¹³ For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be *able to resist* in the evil day, & having prepared everything, to *take your stand*.¹⁴ .." (Eph. 6:11-4)
 - b. "In Eph. 6...[Paul] recognizes [that]...although the victory is sure, believers *must still defend the position* that Christ has won for them against the last desperate attacks of the devil and his [evil] allies." [Frank Thielman, "*Ephesians*," in G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson (eds.) *Commentary of the NT Use of the OT*, 832]
 - c. "The main point, goal, or purpose of Eph. 6:10–13 is that Christians would have the ability to stand in the midst of battle. The *significance of standing* is clear...from its repetition in Eph. 6:11–13 [and] also from its reappearance in Eph. 6:14 as the dominant imperative in the rest of the passage. What follows in Eph. 6:14–20 is a string of...adverbial participles, which...elaborate [on] the main verb...providing more specific explanation of what's meant by ['stand']. Hence, putting on the specific components of the armor...is an *elaboration* of what it means to 'stand.'...The [items] of the armor are the *necessary means* by which Christians will [be able] to stand in battle." [J. Greever "*Armor of God*," JBTS, V. 5.1, pp. 78-79]
 - d. "Even now Christians are 'more than conquerors' (Rom. 8:37). However, they have to continue fighting spiritual battles against 'principalities & powers' for which they must put on armor, such as God himself wore in Is. 59:17-18 and now provides for them (Eph. 6; cf. Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:8). True, *for God it involved offensive warfare*, whereas *for the Christian a cameo of defensive warfare* against...evil is presented ('stand')." [Leslie T. Allen, *Theol...Approach to OT*, p.]

2. The 'Armor of God' is God's own Armor in Isaiah (Isaiah. 11:5; 52:7; 59:17)

- a. "[The LORD] put on *righteousness as body armor*, & a *helmet of salvation on his head*; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, & he wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak." (Is. 59:17 CSB)
- b. "...A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, & a branch from his roots. *Righteousness will be a belt* around his hips; *faithfulness will be a belt* around his waist." (Is. 11:1, 5 CSB) "Paul gets many of the parts of 'the armor of God' (Eph. 6:11-17) from Isaiah here he gets 'the belt of truth' (or faithfulness). To 'put on' the armor is to put on...Messiah himself. [ESV]
- c. "Paul's use of the 'armor' imagery differs from Isaiah's use...in significant ways...Paul speaks not of God or the Messiah, but of *God's people wearing the armor*...Paul transfers the 'whole armor of God' from God himself, or from his Messiah, to God's people...because...he knows that the victory of God's people over the devil is not yet complete." [Frank Thielman, "*Ephesians*," in G. K. Beale & D. A. Carson (eds.) *Commentary of the NT Use of the OT*, p. 832]
- d. "Between...Christ's victory & the consummation of God's purposes...believers...themselves must imitate God is his role as divine warrior...[Paul] depicts this imitation of God in terms of the final [end-time] battle in a war that has largely already been won...[So,] *God's people must strap on the armor that in the OT belongs to Yahweh and his Messiah*, and, taking their stand on what God has already done for them...they must act as God would act..." [Frank Thielman, "*Ephesians*," in G. Beale & D. A. Carson (eds.) *Commentary of the NT Use of the OT*, pp. 832-833]
- e. "The 'armor of God'...is not merely armor from God or given by God, but...we are dealing with *God's own armor*, which he puts on as the divine warrior. In putting on the 'breastplate of righteousness' & the 'helmet of salvation,' [etc] & thus putting on the armor...[we] are following in God's own footsteps." [Roy E. Ciampa, "*Missio Dei...in Ephesians*," C. Laasma (ed.) *NT Theology in the Light of the Church's Mission*, p. 241]

- f. “The genitive [‘armor of God’ (Eph. 6:11, 13)] should be read as indicating that the believers are called upon to *put on God’s own armor*...not simply one that God supplies.” [Thomas Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armor of God: Divine Warrior*, p. 118]
- g. In Isaiah 59 “Israel’s only hope for salvation was if God fought for them, &...he did: (Is. 59:16b–17)...This passage is of obvious relevance to Eph. 6:10–20, because it lists the armor of God...similar to Paul (breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation)...The key...is...that *the armor belongs to God and to God alone. The armor does not belong to Israel or any particular subset of individuals within Israel*, for Is. 59:15b–16 is clear that ‘there was no man’ & ‘there was no one to intercede.’ Only God was able to save Israel...His armor is described in terms of God’s attributes (righteousness, zeal) & actions (salvation, vengeance)...In Eph. 6:10–20... Paul calls [it]...‘*the armor of God*’ because it belongs to God in Christ ...By virtue of their union with Christ, *Christians benefit from his armor, but the armor does not derive from or belong to them in any sense apart from Christ.*” [Joshua M. Greever “*Armor of God...(Eph. 6:10–20)*,” JBTS, V. 5.1 (2020) pp. 85–6]

3. Given God’s Armor to carry out God’s Mission

- a. *Eph. 6:15–19 call believers to actively participate in...the missio Dei [mission of God].*—Mark Simon
- b. “The armor...is...meant to highlight the missional vocation of the church...living out the mission of God.”—John Frederick
- c. “All commentators acknowledge...Paul is alluding to the OT divine warrior motif...in Isaiah...Reading with these...texts in mind...transforms the way the metaphor functions...in Ephesians...*Instead of communicating a...set of ethical values* for believers to cultivate...the Ephesians are called to be corporately clothed in God’s divine armor in order to [be]...the *embodiment of the person, [and] mission...of Jesus Christ. The armor...is primarily meant to highlight the missional vocation of the church...through living out the mission of God.*” [John Frederick, “*Eph...& Activism*,” JBTS, V. 5.1 p. 104]
- d. In Eph. 6:10–20 “Paul subtly sums up what the readers of the letter must do in order to *fulfill their role in God’s plan to unite all things in Christ.*” [Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, 414]
- e. “Vocabulary from the root...‘*stand*’ occurs four times...The words collectively reinforce the primary sense of *resisting, prevailing against, or withstanding* an enemy in battle...More than resisting evil, Eph. 6:15–19 call believers to actively participate in...the *missio Dei* [mission of God].” [Mark A. Simon, *Living to the Praise of God’s Glory*, p. 199]
- f. Note: God gives his own personal armor [Is. 59:7] to the church [Eph. 6:13–17] & says “now you finish the job!” The Church takes over God’s role as divine warrior to finish the war vs. Satan—the ‘mission of God.’

4. The Church: a Corporate Warrior composed of Individual Warriors

- a. Spiritual warfare in Eph. 6 “primarily focuses on the...church before it focuses on the individual believers... Most... treatments of spiritual warfare center on the battles faced by individual believers...Christ...calls [on the church] to face the principalities & powers together (Eph 6:10–17). By the Spirit, he pours out spiritual gifts for the building up of the body & the defeat of the enemy. Warfare against the principalities & powers...begins... with the church...[Yet] the church’s warfare is [also] personal...[This] demonstrates itself in...spiritual warfare [that] assault[s] individuals. For e.g., the [Evil One & Co.] successfully defeat[ed] individuals like Adam (Gen 3:1–6) & Judas (Luke 22:3), but they are unable to overcome Peter(Luke 22:31–32) or Jesus (Matt 4:1–11).” [Phillip R. Bethancourt, *Christ the Warrior King*, SBTS (2011) pp. 183–185]
- b. “Eph. 6...is commonly read as an exhortation to individual Christians to put on various virtues...to engage in the daily battle of the Christian life...[But,] Paul is *not merely addressing individuals but the entire gathered church*...The Church now battles...the powers & authorities arrayed against God’s purposes in the world.” [T. Gombis, *Drama Of Eph*, pp 156–7]

5. Items of Armor—God’s Attributes

- a. “[The LORD] put on *righteousness as body armor, & a helmet of salvation on his head*; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, & he wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.” (Is. 59:17 CSB)
- b. In Is. 59 “Israel...was corrupt & its leaders debased...God himself responds by donning *his armor, in essence his own character & virtues*, to bring judgment & justice.” [Priscilla Shirer, *Armor of God*, 65]
- c. “Christians must ‘put on the whole armor of God,’ weapons that have the divine power to destroy strongholds, *such as the divine attributes of truth, honesty, integrity, justice, holiness, righteousness, & faithfulness.* The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to engage in this battle & supplies the necessary weapons.” [David Limbaugh, *Jesus is Risen*, p.]
- d. “The elements of the believers’ armor are:

- [1.] belt = truth (6:14),
- [2.] breastplate = righteousness (6:14),
- [3.] shoes = prepared...to proclaim the gospel of peace (6:15),
- [4.] shield = faith (6:16),
- [5.] helmet = salvation (6:17),
- [6.] sword [of the Spirit] = the word of God (6:17),
- {[7.] by prayer (6:18)}" [Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, pp. 606-7]

6. "Belt of Truth" (Eph. 6:14a; Is. 11:5)

- a. "Truth"—the First Item of Armor—foundational, fortifying, stabilizing
 - a. "Drawing from Is. 11:4-5 and 59:17, *Paul exhorts the church to adopt and use Yahweh's own armor for warfare. What is fitting for the head is also fitting for the body in the new creation...What is the first piece of the armor to be mentioned? It is the belt of truth!*" [Peter J. Gentry, "Speaking the Truth in Love (Eph 4:15)," SBJT (2006) p. 75]
 - b. "In historic times the belt was...very important because it held every other piece of the soldier's [equipment] in place. If the [belt] was lost...everything would fly open!...We must know the Word of God..." [Peggy Britt, *Abiding...*, 87]
 - c. A Roman soldier's belt "was a strategic, primary focal point of his attire. Think of the] wide lumbar braces that UPS & FedEx workers wear around their waist when carrying heavy packages...Truth is your core support. It provides essential backing [during] spiritual war...Truth...God's opinion on any matter—is our standard." [Priscilla Shirer, *Armor of God*, p]
 - d. "How...are you supposed to put on this 'belt of Truth'?"
 - a. You uphold & affirm...the truth & boundaries set by God in Scripture. You commit yourself to them...
 - b. You daily, systematically, repeatedly begin letting God help you align your decisions & responses, even your attitudes & ambitions, alongside his benchmark of truth.
 - c. You continually learn about the character & purposes of God – both from the Bible & from his Spirit. Then you unapologetically synchronize your convictions, even when you find it hard or unpopular to do so.
 - d. You filter every circumstance, personally & culturally, through the prism of his Word instead of merely leaning on your feelings, political correctness, or the opinions of others." [Priscilla Shirer, *Armor of God*, 44-45]
- b. Jesus' defeated Satan using the 'Word of Truth' (Mt. 4; Lk. 4)
 - a. "Paul's spiritual armor wasn't new imagery, but originated chiefly in Isaiah...In Is. 11:5, the coming Messiah is described as wearing a belt of 'faithfulness,' [Heb.] translated in the Greek Septuagint as *aletheia*, truth. It was *this belt of truth that equipped Jesus to answer Satan's temptations* in the desert, and the same enables us to face our spiritual battles with a biblically-saturated knowledge of God as our loving, forgiving Father." [Iain M. Duguid, *Whole Armor of God*, p. 33]
 - b. Jesus rebutted Satan with the truth of Scripture; but Jesus wasn't merely 'proof-texting': "No human boxing with Satan is likely to be as successful as Jesus in that fight. If Satan would try to twist Scripture and [try] to twist the Lord's heart and mind, then...he will try it with us. So resisting temptation cannot be merely a matter of [telling Satan:] 'take two Bible verses and call me in the morning' [!]." [Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*,]
 - c. Jesus not only quoted God's word (Dt. 8:3), he also lived it—his living matched the word he quoted (Mt. 4:4)
 - a. Jesus replied, "It's written: *Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from God's mouth.*" (4:4)
 - b. "Jesus refused [Satan's suggestion]...for his daily bread Jesus lived 'not on bread alone;' Jesus truly lived & served by 'every word that comes from God's mouth,' giving himself completely to God's mission." [Grant R. Osborne, *Matt.*, p.]
- c. Is 'Truth' here Objective or Subjective?
 - Truth is "an objective standard by which reality is measured." [Tony Evans, *Prayers for Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, p. 11]
 - "Just knowing what the Bible teaches is not enough...we must also believe the truth and love the truth." [Jack Cottrell, *Faith Once for All*,]
 - "Do the pieces of armor in Eph. 6:14-17 represent gifts from God or our obedience to God? [Are they objective attributes imputed or subjective attributes experienced & lived out?...]...For e.g., do we 'belt on the truth' or [is it our] practice of truth? Both are true, but which did Paul have in mind?...The separation of gift & task shouldn't be made so starkly...All the terms mentioned here are relational...Each one points to a reality about God that determines human action. A decision about the 'belt of truth' is the most difficult, but the other three items in Eph. 6:14-16 ('righteousness,' 'readiness,' 'faith') emphasize human response to God's saving work. This passage is an appeal for human action." [K. Snodgrass, , p. 341]

- “Do the pieces of armor in Eph. 6:14-17 represent gifts from God or our obedience to God...For e.g., do we ‘belt on the truth’ or [is it our] practice of truth? Both are true, but which did Paul have in mind?...A decision about the ‘belt of truth’ is the most difficult...A decision about the ‘belt [of truth]’ depends which previous uses of ‘truth’ are determinative...If...Isaiah is determinative, focus is on doing what is right & keeping faith with covenant promises. More likely Eph. is determinative, but truth is used in [Eph.] both with reference to God’s truth in the gospel (Eph. 1:13; 4:21) & to truth as right living & speaking of the new [humanity] (Eph. 4:15, 24-25; 5:9). I seriously doubt whether Paul would separate these 2 aspects...*To ‘belt on truth’ means to be strengthened by God’s truth in the gospel & to resolve to live it.*” [K. Snodgrass, *Eph.*, pp. 341-2]

d. Truth in the NT—Key Texts:

- “You have redeemed me, Lord, **God of truth.**” (Ps. 31:5)
- “**Jesus** told him, “*I am* the way, *the truth*, and the life...” (Jn. 14:6)
- “When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all the *truth*.” (Jn. 16:13)
- Father “Sanctify them by the *truth*; your **word is truth.**” (Jn. 17:17)
- “You heard the *word of truth*, **the gospel** of your salvation, &...believed.” (Eph. 1:13)
- “God’s household, which is *the church* of the living God, the **pillar & foundation of the truth.**” (1 Tim. 3:15)
- Some “believers came & testified to **your** (fidelity to) the **truth**—how you are walking in *truth*.” (3 Jn. 1:3)
- “*Truth-ing*”—“That we may no longer be children, tossed to & fro by the waves & carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the *truth* [lit.: ‘*truth-ing*’] in love” (Eph. 4:14-15) Take up/put on’—Addressed to the church—*Can we, at CIT, take up the ‘Belt of Truth’?*”
- “An important point...about this passage. It is very easy to read [about]...the armor of God & then to assume...this is a *set of instructions for individual believers to take up the armor of God. That’s not... the way the text reads.* Rather, the command to take up the armor of God is a communal practice *integrally tied to the unity of the church & the church’s witness to the powers.*” [Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians*, 200-201]
- “Eph 6:10-20 is a summary exhortation that *calls the church to engage corporately in spiritual warfare* to protect its oneness against the divisive attacks of the powers with the resources of God...The armor of God passage in Eph 6...is often ...disconnected from the letter’s central theme of unity...*Spiritual warfare is [typically] treated as a personal battle* of faith & obedience *against the spiritual powers.* This is surprising in light of [Ephesians]...emphasis on the church’s new corporate identity in Christ...[&] evidence that the church’s unity may be the object of the powers’ attack.” [Michael Postell, *Body of Christ Corporately Engaging in Spiritual Warfare...Eph. 6:10-20 & the Purpose of Ephesians*, (2020) pp. v., 1]
- “The divine armor...refer[s] to the corporate...clothing of the church. The church...rather than the individual believer are [is] clothed with the singular armor of God himself. The armor is not merely from God, mass produced...& then extended to individuals as solo spiritual warriors apart from the church... Rather, the armor is God’s own singular divine armor & believers are communally clothed in it as the... Body of Christ, the church...The plural form of the [Greek] verb *enduo* (‘you[plural] put on’) in Eph. 6:11 followed by...singular...pieces of armor lends weight to this interpretation.” [John Frederick, “*Ephesians & Evangelical Activism*,” JBTS, Vol. 5.1 (2020) pp. 102-103]

7. New Notions of Spiritual Warfare, ‘Territorial Spirits,’ ‘Spiritual Mapping,’ Interrogating Demons

- “If spiritual warfare were really [about]...*‘taking back’ territory*...stolen by the devil, in terms of *‘naming & claiming’* the salvation of loved ones [etc]...we would be the saviors...Furthermore, there is nothing here [in Eph. 6] about *‘territorial spirits’* whose activity can actually be *‘mapped’* by specially-gifted prophets—that has more to do with superstition & magic than with Christianity...Nor is this passage [about] *‘generational curses’* i.e., the attribution of demonic activity to genetic or hereditary problems. *There is not the slightest hint of such superstitious practices in this key passage* [i.e., Eph. 6] on spiritual warfare.” [Michael Horton, *In the Face of God*, pp.]

a. Territorial Spirits & Territorial Defilement

- The doctrine of *territorial spirits*...entails the belief that powerful demons control specific geographical territories & its human inhabitants. Through a variety of spiritual warfare techniques such demons can be overcome. The doctrine of *territorial defilement*. The assumption here is that a territorial spirit can only hold people in a location in bondage if it has obtained the 'legal right' to do so because of sins & evils committed in that locality in the past. Identification-al repentance on behalf of the people living in such territories removes the legal right of the territorial spirits." [Erwin van der Meer, *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theol. of C. Peter Wagner*, U. of South Africa, (2008) p.]
- "Many Christians believe...[Daniel 10] reveals the existence of regional demons & *territorial spirits*. According to this belief there are different geographical regions of the earth have specific demons...evil spirits assigned to them. So there might be an evil spirit assigned to [city of] Grand Rapids, [MI], &... [another] evil spirit assigned to Lansing [MI]... If Christians really want their work to be effective they have to discover & *name these territorial spirits* before they try to do ministry in these places. It's a belief popularized by Peter Wagner... professor of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary [CA, US.]" [Peter Jonker, "*Regional Spirits? Contending with the King of Persia*," Aug. 26, 2018]
- "Daniel simply prays & trusts God for the unseen things. [His] prayer...does not depend on any... 'map' of such [unseen] realities...his prayer is not that of binding a territorial spirit...In Dan. 10...*Daniel does not 'discern,' 'map,' 'bind,' or 'pray against' a territorial spirit.*" [Robert J. Priest, Thomas Campbell, & Bradford A. Mullen, "*Missiological Syncretism: The New Animistic Paradigm*," in Edward Rommen (ed.) *Spiritual Power & Missions: Raising the Issues*, (1995) p. 73]

b. 'Spiritual Mapping'

- "Spiritual mapping [involves] researching a city to discover any inroads Satan has made... *These elements, or demonic entrances, need to be discovered & mapped out, through historical, cultural & sociological research, charismatic inspiration, & at times by questioning demons* who are in the process of being cast out from individuals." [Erwin van der Meer, "*Reflections on Spiritual Mapping*," Africa J. of Evangel. Theol., V. 20.1 (2001) p. 50]

c. Interrogating Demons:

- "God is a God of truth. We may trust his revelation...But...these...authors suggest...there's another source of revelation...— the revelation of demons...They claim...God's power...allows them to force the 'father of lies' to tell the truth. [Still] the source...is demonic. It is not God speaking, but Satan...The Bible tells us...ideas from Satan shouldn't be trusted...That Jesus, on a single occasion...asked a demon to give its name (['Legion'] Mk. 5:9) shouldn't be used to justify...interrogating demons to discover new truths about demons." [Robert J. Priest, T. Campbell, & B. A. Mullen, "*Missiological Syncretism: The New Animistic Paradigm*," in E. Rommen (ed.) *Spiritual Power & Missions: Raising the Issues*, (1995) p. 73]

d. Discerning the Spirits

- "Nothing can ever guarantee that one has correctly 'discerned the spirits': as one Nigerian believer told me, 'people think they are speaking to God in the air, but they are really speaking to another power'. The believer must constantly struggle with doubt & uncertainty that no institutional authority or scriptural hermeneutics can resolve." [Ruth Marshall, "*Destroying arguments & captivating thoughts: Spiritual warfare prayer as global praxis*, Journal of Religious & Political Practice (2016) pp. 92-113]

e. 'Strategic level spiritual warfare' (SLSW) refers to the practice of 'territorial exorcism' through identification-al repentance, prayer walks, proclamation & other means...

- "Strategic level spiritual warfare has been an emerging trend...since C. Peter Wagner published his *Spiritual Power & Church Growth* (1986). The distinctive doctrines of Wagner's SLSW are
- The doctrine of *territorial spirits*, which entails the belief that powerful demons control specific geographical territories & its human inhabitants. Through a variety of spiritual warfare techniques such demons can be overcome.
- The doctrine of *territorial defilement*. The assumption here is that a territorial spirit can only hold people in a location in bondage if it has obtained the legal right to do so because of sins and evils committed in that locality in the past. Identification-al repentance on behalf of the people living in such territories removes the legal right of the territorial spirits.
- The doctrine of *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare prayer*. The underlying assumption is that territorial spirits can only be removed by means of aggressive spiritual warfare [using] prayer & exorcism methods for dealing with territorial spirits.

- The doctrine of *territorial commitment*. This doctrine justifies the exercise of spiritual power & authority by modern apostles in their communities.
- “A thorough biblical study demonstrates that *SLSW is mostly unbiblical*. A study of... Church history demonstrates that *SLSW was never accepted in orthodox Christianity*... SLSW turns out to be a North American missiology with nationalist & political biases.” [E. van der Meer, *SLSW Theology of C. Peter Wagner*, (2008) p.]

f. Power encounters

- Some people promote the use of ‘power encounters’ to battle hostile spiritual powers. But, care is needed: “Whenever we seek to coerce God into doing our bidding through the use of a religious formula... we are in danger of yielding to that residue of fallen-ness in us that desires to control, rather than submit to God’s will. The central thrust of biblical faith is ... that we are to worship God & to identify with God’s purposes & will.” [Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom... God’s Mission in the Bible*, p. 342]

QUESTIONS:

1. The phrase “Armor of God” could mean either ‘Armor supplied/provided by God’ or it could mean ‘God’s own personal armor (which has been worn/used by him).’ Based on the OT descriptions of Isaiah 59:17 & Isaiah 11:1, 5 which of these meanings do you think Paul had in mind? What difference (if any) might this meaning of “God’s armor” imply?
2. The first item of armor is the “belt of truth” implied in the phrase: “having girded your loins with truth” (Eph. 6:14 KJV) or having “truth like a belt around your waist” (Eph. 6:14 CSB). What implications could be drawn from the facts that:
 - a. the “belt of truth” is the first item of armor?
 - b. “truth” is depicted like a “belt” (as opposed to some other item)?
3. Jesus talked about God’s Word being the truth, when he said: Father, “*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17). How did Jesus use the ‘truth as a weapon’ when he was tempted by Satan (Matt. 4; Luke 4)? Discuss. What lessons can we learn from this example? (Discuss)
4. In today’s society we hear phrases such as “my truth,” “your truth,” “his/her/their truth.” How would you compare “truth” in Eph. 6:14 with those contemporary concepts of “truth”? (Discuss) How would you define “truth” in Eph. 6:14?
5. Prior to Eph. 6:14 the term “truth” appears in Ephesians:
 - a. 1:13;
 - b. 4:15;
 - c. 4:21;
 - d. 4:24-25. Read these verses; what does each of them tell you (or imply) about “truth”?
6. We could understand “truth” in either of two ways– either:
 - a. In an *objective sense* as ‘propositions/doctrinal statements about God, Christ, Spirit, salvation, etc. which we affirm.’ Or in a *subjective sense* as our being truthful in our words, actions, etc.
 - b. Which of these meanings do you think is most important in the context of the “belt of truth”? Why?