

This Great Mystery

Ephesians and the Secret God Kept for Ages

Session 11. Stand Therefore

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-24

Part One

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers that every piece of the armor is Old Testament language for God's own equipment, worn first by the Lord and his Messiah in Isaiah and Wisdom, and now handed to them.

Catholic Touchstone

The Christian life is a real combat against a real personal enemy, fought not in our own strength but in God's, with weapons he shares: truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, his word, and unceasing prayer in the company of all the saints.

This is the last session, and Paul saves the letter's most famous image for the end. Eleven weeks of walking (4:1, 4:17, 5:2, 5:8, 5:15) resolve into a single new posture: stand. The group's job tonight is to discover two things. First, that the enemy is finally named, and it is not any human being; the powers the letter has been tracking since 1:21 step into the open at 6:12. Second, and this is the heart of the session, that the armor is not generic military kit. Piece by piece, it is language the Old Testament uses for God's own armor and the Messiah's own equipment. Isaiah 59 has the Lord himself putting on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. Isaiah 11 girds the Messiah with righteousness and faithfulness. Isaiah 52 shoes the herald of peace. Wisdom 5 has the Lord taking his *panoplia*, the exact Greek word Paul uses for 'whole armor.' Paul is not telling the Ephesians to gear up like soldiers. He is telling them God has handed them his own armor, which the Fathers read, rightly, as handing them Christ. End warm: the letter closes with Tychicus, a request for prayer, one last appearance of the word 'mystery,' and a blessing on all who love the Lord Jesus 'with love undying.'

What You Need to Know

Walk becomes stand

Ephesians has been structured around the verb 'walk' since 2:2 ('in which you once walked') and 2:10 ('that we should walk in them'). Chapters 4 and 5 issued five walk commands. Now, in the space of four verses (6:11-14), Paul says 'stand' or 'withstand' four times, and never once says advance, attack, or conquer. The military objective is ground-holding. That only makes sense in light of chapter 1: Christ is already enthroned 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion' (1:21), and the decisive battle is already won. Our part is to hold ground he took. Let the group find the repeated verb themselves in question 1; it lands harder discovered than announced.

The powers step into the open

Tonight resolves the thread planted in session 2. Track the sequence with your group when it surfaces: 1:21, Christ is seated far above the powers; 2:2, we once walked under 'the prince of the

power of the air'; 3:10, the Church displays God's wisdom to the powers; 6:12, we wrestle them. Notice the pastoral genius of the order. Before Paul ever tells his readers they are at war with principalities, he has told them three times that Christ outranks those principalities. The letter never lets the enemy on stage until the victory is already established.

Whose armor this is

This is the session's discovery, so know the sources cold before the group splits up.

- Isaiah 59:16-17: the Lord, finding no man to intervene, arms himself: 'He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head.' Two of Paul's pieces, worn by God.
- Isaiah 11:4-5: the messianic shoot of Jesse, girded with righteousness and faithfulness, who slays the wicked 'with the breath of his lips,' the word as weapon.
- Isaiah 52:7: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace.' Paul's shod feet and 'gospel of peace' both come from here.
- Wisdom 5:17-20: 'The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor... he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield.' The Greek of Wisdom 5:17 uses *panoplia*, the same word Paul uses in 6:11 for 'whole armor.' A deuterocanonical book supplies Paul's headline word, which is worth savoring in a Catholic room.

One weapon, and it is spoken

Every piece is defensive except the sword. Paul calls it 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,' and the Greek term is *rhēma*, which leans toward a word spoken aloud rather than a text considered in the abstract. Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11) fought exactly this way: three temptations, three spoken lines of Deuteronomy. The practical takeaway for your group is not a theory of Scripture but a habit: memorized Scripture said out loud is the Christian's one offensive weapon, which is part of why this study has ended every session with a memory verse.

Prayer is not a seventh piece

Verse 18 does not add prayer to the armor list; grammatically it hangs off 'stand' as the manner in which the whole kit is worn: 'praying at all times in the Spirit.' And it is relentlessly plural: 'with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.' The soldier in this passage does not stand alone; he stands in a line. Even Paul, apostle and 'ambassador in chains,' asks the Ephesians to pray for him, and what he wants prayer for is boldness to declare 'the mystery of the gospel.' The letter's great word makes its final appearance on the lips of a prisoner. Interpreters differ on whether 'the evil day' (6:13) means a final eschatological crisis or any day of concentrated trial; the Church has not defined the point, and the practical force is the same either way, so present the range honestly if it comes up.

The last lines

Tychicus (6:21-22) is the letter's mail carrier; he appears in the same role in Colossians 4:7. The letter ends where it began, with grace and peace (compare 1:2), and its final phrase blesses all who love the Lord Jesus 'with love undying,' literally 'in incorruptibility' (*en aphtharsia*). A letter that opened before the foundation of the world (1:4) closes with a love that does not decay. Since this is

the last night, leave time at the end for people to say what the study has meant. Do not rush the landing.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

God's armor, handed over

The deepest Old Testament root tonight is not any single verse but a pattern. In Isaiah 59, the arm of the Lord goes to war precisely because no human champion can be found: God arms himself to do what man cannot. In Isaiah 11, the equipment passes to the Messiah, the shoot of Jesse. In Ephesians 6, it passes to the baptized. That is the whole gospel of this letter in miniature: what belongs to God by nature is given to us by grace, 'in Christ,' the phrase the group has been tracking since week one. The Fathers pressed this to its natural conclusion: the armor of God is finally Christ himself, which is why Paul can say elsewhere, 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 13:14). The command of 6:11 is the command of 4:24 in military dress: put on the new man. What the group put on in baptism is what they are told to fasten tight tonight.

The herald's feet and the servant's mouth

Isaiah 52:7 pictures a runner crossing the mountains to announce to besieged Jerusalem that the war is over and God reigns. Paul shoes the Christian with 'the equipment of the gospel of peace': the soldier in this armor is, strangely, a herald of peace, standing against spirits, not people, on behalf of people. And Isaiah 49:2 says of the Servant, 'He made my mouth like a sharp sword,' which stands behind both Paul's sword of the Spirit and the sharp two-edged sword from the mouth of the risen Christ in Revelation 19:15. In the whole biblical arsenal, the word does the cutting.

Voices of the Church

Read these aloud where they land. Each is either a direct citation or an honest summary, labelled as such.

St. John Chrysostom, d. 407

Preaching on this passage, Chrysostom insists that no human being is ever the Christian's enemy. The people who wound us, oppose us, even persecute us, are not the foe; they are captives of the foe, and the fitting response to a captive is pity and rescue, not hatred. The war is real, he says, but it is aimed entirely past flesh and blood, at the powers who hold flesh and blood hostage.

Homilies on Ephesians, on 6:10-13. Summary of St. John Chrysostom's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. For a generation trained by the internet to treat disagreement as combat, this reframes every hostile person in their life as someone to fight for, not against.

St. Athanasius, d. 373

In his life of the desert father St. Anthony, Athanasius records Anthony's teaching that the demons are defeated enemies: real, malicious, and busy, but stripped of their power by Christ, so that their chief weapons are noise, illusion, and fear. A life anchored in prayer, fasting, and the sign of the cross gives them nothing to grip, and the Christian who knows Christ's victory can treat their terrors with something close to contempt.

Life of Antony. Summary of St. Athanasius' teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This is the balance the session needs: the enemy is real enough to arm against and defeated enough that fear of him is never Christian.

St. Alphonsus Liguori, d. 1787

Alphonsus teaches, in substance, that prayer is the one weapon no Christian can survive without: God has attached the grace to conquer temptation to the act of asking for it, so that the one who prays will certainly stand and the one who abandons prayer will certainly fall. His famous maxim runs to the effect that the saved are those who prayed and the lost are those who did not.

The Great Means of Prayer. Summary of St. Alphonsus Liguori's teaching, not a direct quotation.

For the group. This lands directly on 6:18: the armor is worn 'praying at all times,' and Alphonsus explains why Paul refuses to separate the two.

Catechism Connection

The Catechism says

CCC 409. The whole of human life, individual and collective, is a hard battle against the powers of evil and darkness, lasting from the beginning of history until the last day; the Catechism is here quoting the Second Vatican Council.

CCC 391-395. Satan and the demons are angels created good who became evil by their own free and irrevocable choice; their power is real but not infinite, and it cannot prevent the building up of God's kingdom.

CCC 2851. In the Our Father, the 'evil' we ask deliverance from is not an abstraction but a person: Satan, the evil one, the angel who opposes God.

CCC 2725. Prayer is a battle, against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter, and we pray as we live because we live as we pray.

CCC 1237. Baptism itself includes an explicit renunciation of Satan; every baptized person in the room has already declared this war.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch

The powers (resolve). Planted in session 2 at 1:21, this thread resolves tonight at 6:12. Walk the group back through 1:21, 2:2, and 3:10 when the enemy list surfaces, and let them see that Christ was seated above the powers three chapters before we were told to wrestle them.

The walk (resolve). The five walk commands end in 'stand.' Question 1 is built to surface this. The Christian walk arrives somewhere: at a soldier holding ground already won.

In Christ, in him, in the Beloved (resolve). 'Be strong in the Lord' (6:10) is the thread's last note. The armor is God's own; the strength is his; the phrase the group has tracked for eleven weeks turns out to be the location of the whole battle.

Inheritance and possession (resolve). The seal of 1:13-14 guaranteed the inheritance 'until we acquire possession of it.' The helmet of salvation and the call to 'keep alert with all perseverance' are what guarding the deposit looks like between now and the acquiring. Close the loop briefly at question 9.

The mystery (develop). Resolved in session 9, but it makes one final appearance at 6:19: Paul in chains asks for boldness to declare 'the mystery of the gospel.' Point it out; do not re-explain it. The room already knows what it is, which is its own quiet payoff.

Head and body (develop). Prayer 'for all the saints' and Paul's request for their prayers show the body fighting as a body. Light touch; one sentence at question 9 is enough.

Objection Bench

Leader only. Do not raise these unless someone in the room does.

Belief in a literal devil is superstitious and pre-modern; educated Christians should quietly retire it.

The Church cannot retire it without retiring the Gospels: Jesus is tempted by a personal adversary, casts out demons, and teaches us to pray for deliverance from the evil one. The Catechism is explicit that Satan is a fallen angel, a person, not a symbol (CCC 391-395, 2851). What the Church does retire is fear: the same paragraphs insist his power is limited and his defeat certain.

If the armor is Scripture, faith, and prayer, then spiritual warfare needs no Church and no sacraments.

Every piece of the armor names something this letter has already located in the one body: one faith and one baptism (4:5), truth spoken among members of one another (4:25), righteousness as the garment of the baptismal new man (4:24), salvation sealed by the Spirit (1:13). The verbs of 6:10-18 are plural, the praying is 'for all the saints,' and the man giving the orders begs for the Church's prayers two verses later. This soldier was never pictured alone.

Session Goals

1. Discover that the letter's walk commands resolve into 'stand,' and that the posture is ground-holding because Christ has already won the ground.
2. Resolve the powers thread: the enemy is finally named, it is never flesh and blood, and it was outranked by the enthroned Christ before we were ever told to fight it.
3. Discover through the team exercise that each piece of the armor is Old Testament language for God's own equipment, now handed to the baptized.
4. Face the demythologizing objection at full strength and answer it from the text and the Catechism, without surrendering the truth that evil also works through structures.
5. Land the letter: prayer as the posture of the whole armor, the mystery's final appearance in chains, and the closing blessing on love undying.

Time Note

Planned for 75 to 90 minutes

90 minutes runs tight tonight because the discovery exercise needs a full 15 minutes with four teams and because the last session deserves an unhurried ending. Rough shape: Win 10, reading 5, questions 1 to 3 about 15, discovery exercise 15, questions 5 to 6 about 12, steelman 12, questions 8 to 9 about 12, question 10 and Send and closing 12 to 15. Protect the discovery exercise and the ending above everything else.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Cut first: question 6 (the flaming darts) as a standalone; fold its one key line into the answer for question 5.
2. Cut second: the Dig Deeper boxes; mention they exist on the Take-Home instead.
3. Cut third: compress question 10 to a single observation about 'love undying' delivered by you rather than discussed.

Part Two

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Pray together

Father, you have blessed us in your beloved Son with every spiritual blessing, and for eleven weeks you have let us read the letter that says so. Tonight, as we come to its end, be strong in us, because we are not strong in ourselves. Open our eyes to see the real battle and the real victory, clothe us in what you have already given us, and teach us to stand. We ask this through Christ our Lord, who is seated far above every power, and who loves the Church as his own body. Amen.

Win

Open questions. No wrong answers. Let everyone speak before you move on.

W1. When you hear the phrase 'spiritual warfare,' what image comes to mind, and where do you think you picked that image up?

W2. Tell us about a time you had to hold your ground on something, big or small. What made it hard to stay put?

Both questions are seeding the session's two discoveries, the real enemy and the posture of standing, but do not tip that; just enjoy the answers.

Read

Read aloud

Three readers: verses 10 to 13, verses 14 to 20, verses 21 to 24. Ask the room to listen for one verb that keeps coming back in the first section.

Build

Numbered inductive questions. Ask, wait, let the group work the text. The ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, not before it.

The posture

1. Scan verses 10 to 14. What verb does Paul keep repeating, and what verbs is he noticeably NOT using for people who are dressed for war?

Take it as far as the room wants

Floor. Just count the 'stands' together out loud; the repetition itself makes the point.

Depth. Ask what it does to a person's anxiety level to be told your job in the war is to not lose ground that someone stronger already won.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The verb is 'stand': stand against the devil's wiles (v. 11), withstand in the evil day (v. 13), having done all, to stand (v. 13), stand therefore (v. 14). Four times in four verses. What Paul never says is advance, attack, invade, conquer. And notice what this does to the letter's favorite verb: we have been told to walk worthily (4:1), walk in love (5:2), walk as children of light (5:8), walk carefully (5:15). The walk ends here, in standing firm. That only makes sense because of what we found in week two: Christ is already enthroned far above every power (1:21). The war's decisive battle is over. Our orders are to hold ground he already took, not to win ground he somehow lost.

2. Look closely at verses 10 and 11. Whose strength is this? Whose armor is it? What does the grammar keep insisting on?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The strength is 'in the Lord' and 'of his might'; the armor is 'of God.' Nothing in these verses is generated by the Christian. This is the same grammar of gift we found in 2:8-10: even our fighting equipment arrives as a donation. And 'in the Lord' is the letter's signature phrase making its final appearance; the location we have tracked since 1:3 turns out to be the location of the battle too. You do not fight your way into Christ; you fight from inside him.

Dig Deeper

Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, where Paul hands out a breastplate of faith and love and a helmet that is the hope of salvation. He reuses the armor image freely, which tells you the pieces are illustrations of one reality rather than a fixed code to memorize.

The enemy

3. Verse 12 finally names the enemy. Make two lists: who the enemy is NOT, and who the enemy IS. Then think back through the letter: where have we met these 'powers' before?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Not: flesh and blood. Not the coworker, the ex, the parent, the stranger in the comment section, the politician. No human being is on the enemy list, ever. The enemy is: principalities, powers, world rulers of this present darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. And we have been tracking them all study: in 1:21 Christ is seated far above them; in 2:2 we once walked under 'the prince of the power of the air'; in 3:10 the Church displays God's wisdom TO them. Notice the order the letter chose. Three times we were shown Christ outranking these powers before we were ever told to wrestle them. Paul never lets the enemy on stage until the victory is already established. One more thing: if no human is the enemy, then every human, including the ones who hurt us, is someone the enemy holds, which means someone to fight FOR.

Whose armor this is

Live discovery

Split into four teams. Each team looks up one passage, then reports back on two things: what pieces of Paul's armor do you find in your passage, and, the key question, who is wearing them there?

Let them find it. Isaiah 59:16-17; Isaiah 11:4-5; Isaiah 52:7; Wisdom 5:17-20

4. Paul did not invent this armor. Every piece of it already existed in the Old Testament, and it belonged to someone. Let's find out who.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Team one, Isaiah 59:16-17: the LORD himself, finding no human champion, puts on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation. Two of Paul's pieces, worn by God. Team two, Isaiah 11:4-5: the Messiah, the shoot of Jesse, is girded with righteousness and faithfulness, and slays the wicked with the breath of his lips, the word as weapon. There is Paul's belt, and a preview of his sword. Team three, Isaiah 52:7: the beautiful feet of the herald who publishes peace and brings good tidings; there are Paul's shoes and his exact phrase, the gospel of peace. Team four, Wisdom 5:17-20: the Lord takes his zeal as his whole armor, righteousness as breastplate, impartial justice as helmet, holiness as an invincible shield. And here is the detail worth savoring: the Greek of Wisdom 5:17 uses the word *panoplia*, whole armor, the very word Paul uses in verse 11. A book Catholics kept in the Bible supplies Paul's headline word. So the answer to 'who wears this armor?' is: God does, and his Messiah does. Which makes verse 11 astonishing. Paul is not saying 'gear up like a soldier.' He is saying God has handed you his own armor.

5. Sit with that for a second. What is Paul actually claiming, if the armor God tells you to put on is the armor God himself wears? And where in this letter have we heard 'put on' language before?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

We heard it in 4:24: put on the new man, 'created after the likeness of God,' the baptismal garment we found in week seven. The command of 6:11 is the command of 4:24 in military dress. And the claim underneath both is the claim of the whole letter: what belongs to God by nature is given to us by grace, in Christ. The Fathers pressed this to its natural end and said the armor of God is finally Christ himself, which is why Paul can write elsewhere, 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 13:14). Truth, righteousness, peace, salvation: these are not virtues we forge in our own workshop and strap on. They are his, shared with us. Which means the question 'am I strong enough for this fight?' was always the wrong question. Nobody asks whether the armor's wearer is strong; they ask whether the armor holds. This armor has already been through a crucifixion and a resurrection.

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 49:2 says of the Servant, 'He made my mouth like a sharp sword,' and Revelation 19:15 gives the risen Christ a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth. Trace the image: in the whole biblical arsenal, it is the word that cuts.

6. Verse 16: the shield of faith 'can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.' In real, Tuesday-afternoon life, what does a flaming dart look like? And how does faith, specifically, quench one?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The word for shield here names the big Roman door-shaped shield that covered the whole body, not a small buckler. The darts are sudden and from outside: the intrusive accusation ('God could never forgive that'), the

flash of despair, the spike of lust or envy or comparison that arrives unbidden and burning. The dart is not the sin; what you do next is. And faith quenches it because a dart is almost always a lie about God, and faith is holding what God has actually said up against what the moment is screaming. That is why the shield is faith and not willpower: you do not out-muscle a burning lie, you out-truth it.

But is any of this real?

7. Before we go further, we should face the strongest modern objection to this whole passage, because someone will put it to you eventually, and it deserves a serious answer.

Build then press

The strongest form of the objection. Here it is at full strength. Paul was a first-century man with a first-century cosmos, one populated with spirits at every level. We know better now. The mature way to read 'principalities and powers' is to demythologize them: they name the evils bigger than any individual, the systems that outlive the people inside them. Racism, exploitation, the machinery of addiction, ideologies that grind people up. Read that way, the passage becomes more relevant, not less. Keeping a literal devil, on this view, does real harm: it makes Christians paranoid, and it hands people an excuse ('the devil made me do it') instead of responsibility. Plenty of thoughtful modern Christians read it exactly this way.

Answering from the text. First, grant what this reading gets right, because it gets something right: evil really does organize itself into structures bigger than any individual, the powers really do work through them, and a Christian who fights personal temptation while shrugging at systemic cruelty has not understood this letter. Structural evil is a legitimate application of verse 12. But it cannot be the whole reading, for three reasons from the text and one from the Church. From the text: Paul explicitly distinguishes the enemy from flesh and blood, and systems are made of flesh and blood; if the powers were only systems, the humans staffing them would be the enemy after all, which is precisely what verse 12 forbids. Second, this letter names the devil twice as an individual actor, someone you can give opportunity to (4:27) and someone with *methodeia*, wiles, schemes (6:11), and a strategy implies a strategist. Third, demythologizing has to explain away not just Paul but Jesus, who is personally tempted by a personal adversary and teaches us to pray for deliverance from the evil one. And from the Church: the Catechism is unambiguous that Satan is a fallen angel, a person and not a symbol (CCC 391-395, 2851), while insisting just as firmly that his power is limited and his defeat certain. Notice, finally, that the pastoral worry cuts the other way. It is the personal reading that keeps people human: if evil is only structural, my enemy is the people inside the structure. If the enemy is a spirit, every human being, even the worst, is a hostage I am fighting for.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The steelman is honestly strong, and its core insight, that evil works through structures, is true and biblical. But Ephesians will not let it be the whole truth: the enemy is explicitly not flesh and blood, the devil is named twice as a schemer, and the Church teaches plainly that Satan is a real fallen angel with real but strictly limited power. The Catholic position holds both: fight the structures, and know there is a strategist behind them who has already lost.

The one weapon

8. Run down the whole kit in verses 14 to 17. How many pieces are defensive, and how many are weapons? What is the one weapon, exactly, and where have we seen someone use it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet: all defense. One weapon: 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' The Greek term here for word is *rhēma*, which leans toward a word spoken aloud, a saying on the lips, rather than a text sitting on a shelf. And we have watched the weapon in action: Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11) meets three temptations with three spoken lines of Deuteronomy. He does not argue, negotiate, or explain; he quotes, out loud. This, by the way, is why every session of this study ended with a memory verse. Eleven verses of Ephesians are now stored somewhere your group can draw them. Scripture you cannot remember is a sword you left at home.

How the armor is worn

9. Read verses 18 to 20 carefully. Is prayer a seventh piece of armor? And look at what Paul asks them to pray about for him: what word shows up one last time?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Prayer is not a seventh piece; grammatically it hangs off 'stand' as the manner of the whole thing: you stand 'praying at all times in the Spirit.' Prayer is not part of the armor, it is how the armor is worn; take it away and the rest is a costume. And look how plural it is: 'with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.' This soldier stands in a line, not alone; the head and the body fight as one body. Then the stunner: Paul, apostle, author of this whole letter, asks THEM to pray for HIM. And what for? Boldness 'to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.' There is our word, one last time. You sealed a guess about it in week one and opened it two weeks ago: the mystery is Christ and the Church, Jew and Gentile in one body, the secret God kept for ages. Its final appearance in the letter is on the lips of a man in prison for it, asking his friends to pray he never goes quiet about it. One more thread ties off here too: in 1:13-14 the Spirit sealed us 'until we acquire possession' of the inheritance. The helmet of salvation and the call to 'keep alert with all perseverance' are what guarding that seal looks like between now and possession day.

Dig Deeper

The St. Michael prayer, composed by Pope Leo XIII in 1886, is essentially Ephesians 6 in fifty words: it names the wickedness and snares of the devil, asks for defense, and leaves the fighting to heaven. It is on your Take-Home.

The last word of the letter

10. Read verses 21 to 24. How does the letter end, and how does that ending compare with how it began? Look especially at the very last phrase.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Tychicus carries the letter and the news (he does the same job in Colossians 4:7); real churches, real courier, real chains. Then the blessing: peace, love with faith, and grace, which is exactly where the letter began in 1:2, 'grace to you and peace.' And the final phrase: grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ 'with love undying,' literally 'in incorruptibility' (*en aphtharsia*). A letter that opened before the foundation of the world, with the Father choosing us in the Beloved before time (1:4), closes with a love that time cannot rot. That is the whole arc: from eternity to eternity, and the eleven weeks we just spent were about everything in between: the body, the temple, the grace, the walk, the household, the war, and the mystery at the center of it all.

Send

Open questions. Let these land in silence if they need to.

S1. Which piece of the armor do you most need in this season of your life, and what would it look like to actually ask God for it this week?

S2. After eleven weeks in this letter, what is one thing from Ephesians you want to still be carrying a year from now?

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Pray the armor on each morning as you get dressed: name each piece out loud and ask for it, belt of truth to sword of the Spirit. It takes two minutes and it reframes the whole day as held ground.
2. Name your most recurring flaming dart, the accusation or temptation that lands most often, and choose one memory verse from this study to say out loud when it hits. Write it on a card and keep the card where the dart usually finds you.
3. Pick one person in the line beside you and pray for them by name every day this week, the way Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him. Tell them you are doing it.
4. Read the whole letter of Ephesians in one sitting before Sunday, out loud if you can; it takes about twenty minutes. Watch how differently the word 'mystery' lands now.
5. If it has been a while, go to Confession this week. The sacrament is where ground the enemy took gets handed back.

Scripture Memory

Ephesians 6:11

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Ephesians 6:11

Closing Prayer

Pray together

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Father, thank you for these eleven weeks, for this room, and for the letter that told us who we are: chosen, redeemed, sealed, seated, built together, and armed. Keep us standing when we are tired, praying when we are dry, and loving your Son with love undying. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part Three

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in order. Print this page and keep it in front of you.

Primary text

- **Ephesians 6:10-24** read in three parts: 10-13, 14-20, 21-24

Discovery passages (four teams)

- **Isaiah 59:16-17** the LORD's own breastplate and helmet
- **Isaiah 11:4-5** the Messiah's belt; the breath of his lips
- **Isaiah 52:7** the herald's feet, the gospel of peace
- **Wisdom 5:17-20** the Lord takes his *panoplia*; breastplate, helmet, shield

Echoes within Ephesians

- **Ephesians 1:13-14** sealed until we acquire possession
- **Ephesians 1:21** Christ far above the powers
- **Ephesians 2:2** prince of the power of the air
- **Ephesians 3:10** the Church displays wisdom to the powers
- **Ephesians 4:24** put on the new man
- **Ephesians 4:27** give no opportunity to the devil

Other passages

- **Matthew 4:1-11** Jesus wields spoken Scripture in the desert
- **Romans 13:14** put on the Lord Jesus Christ
- **Isaiah 49:2** the Servant's mouth like a sharp sword (Dig Deeper)
- **Revelation 19:15** the sword from the mouth of the risen Christ (Dig Deeper)
- **1 Thessalonians 5:8** Paul reuses the armor image freely (Dig Deeper)
- **Colossians 4:7** Tychicus the courier

Terms

- ***panoplia***. whole armor, full kit; the word of both Ephesians 6:11 and Wisdom 5:17
- ***rhēma***. a word spoken aloud, a saying on the lips
- ***methodeia***. wiles, scheming, deliberate strategy
- ***en aphtharsia***. in incorruptibility; 'with love undying,' the letter's last phrase

Catechism

- CCC 409. all human life is a battle with the powers of darkness
- CCC 391-395. Satan a fallen angel; real, personal, limited
- CCC 2851. 'evil' in the Our Father is a person, the evil one
- CCC 2725. prayer is a battle

- CCC 1237. baptism includes renouncing Satan