

Rules of Engagement

The Belt of Truth

Small Group Questions

Opening: Name the most honest person you know. Why do you consider them to be honest?

- 1. What are some of the greatest problems that have been created because people have failed to be true to their word?**

You may give personal, cultural, political, religious answers.

- 2. What problems might arise for a person who always tells the truth?**

- 3. Satan seeks to tempt you and attack you. What's the difference between spiritual temptation and spiritual attack? How is our response different according to which strategy Satan uses against us?**

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 & 1 Peter 5:8-9

- 4. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What are some of the arguments and 'lofty opinions' the world uses to reject the truth of God?**

- 5. What truth would you give a believer who is struggling with -**

Immoral thoughts

Resentment

Worry

Guilt

Fear

What Bible verses would you share with them?

- 6. The rules of engagement include**

Know the truth

Obey the truth

Allow the truth to protect you

Which of these three is most challenging for you?

What spiritual, biblical wisdom could you use to help strengthen you in that area?

- 7. What is the most important and practical principle you learned from this teaching on the Belt of Truth?**

Ephesians 6:10-14, (P. 979)

CS Lewis once wrote that we, as believers, are living in enemy territory. The Bible tells us that the prince of this world oversees a kingdom of darkness from which we have been delivered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But until Jesus comes again, his enemy still rages against us. You and I are caught in the cross hairs of a spiritual conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm, Paul calls it the heavenly places but that conflict is simultaneously fleshed out in the visible, physical realm in which you and I operate. And so, Paul gives us these words:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

My challenge to you is simple: memorize the six pieces of armor Paul gives us in this passage. Here's the first one: the Belt of Truth. Now: what does it mean? Well, first, let me give you some preliminary thoughts about the whole armor before we get into the particulars about the belt of truth. One - there are six pieces of armor, five that are defensive in nature, only one that is offensive, which indicates our responsibility in the conflict. Two - Paul tells us to put on the whole armor, not part of it, but all of it. You can't choose which piece to use. Leaving any one of them out leaves you vulnerable. Three - we don't manufacture or in any way produce the armor. The armor doesn't come from us, it doesn't belong to us. Verse 11 - Paul says, put on the whole armor of (who) God. The armor belongs to God. He provides us the armor. We just put it on. And four - what is, in all reality, the armor? What are we actually putting on?

Romans 13:14 (ESV)

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ

Put on: Paul uses the same language. He said a similar thing in Galatians when he said, when you were baptized you 'put on' Christ. In essence you wear Jesus like a suit of clothes or a suit of armor. You do not battle on your own, in your own armor or in your own strength. The armor is the Lord's because the battle is the Lord's. but we still play a part.

1 Peter 1:13 (NKJV)

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Peter is using the same language. But notice, he telling us to gird up the loins. Where are your loins, if you know your anatomy. The loins are the middle part of you. That's where you strap the belt. But Peter tells us to gird up the loins of your mind. When you're girding up anything, what are you doing. This is the word we get girdle from. What do you do with a girdle. A girdle is something that holds things in, holds things down, holds things together. Paul tells us to put on the girdle of truth. Peter tells us to girdle our minds. Why? First, let's talk about why we need it.

Satan's Arsenal: Deception

Satan's number one strategy to defeat God is deception.

Genesis 3:1,4 (P. 2)

Last week I mentioned that Satan's objective is to protect what belongs to him and provoke what does not belong to him. He will deceive you to keep you from receiving eternal life. If he fails at that, he will deceive you from enjoying abundant life. His M-O is deception. A great illustration of this is fishing. Those of you who love to fish know that putting a hook in the water doesn't cut it. It's called a lure. And what does it do? It lures a fish into thinking he's got a pretty good deal in front of him. In our society we use the phrase: what's the catch? It comes from fishing. In our experience we've learned to be a little suspicious when we see a good deal. But think about this: The very first couple never knew deception. Adam and Eve had never experienced being hooked before. How old were you when you realized that people don't always tell the truth? It was probably pretty young, and now you're grown suspicious. John 8:44, Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar, the father of lies. Revelation 20:10, John refers to Satan as the devil who had deceived them. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11 that Satan disguise himself as an angel of light. Why? To lure us into his deception.

Genesis 3:1,4

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You^{la} shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

He just asked a question. But the character of the question planted doubt in the mind.

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

So, here's the deal: Eve knew the truth, she knew what God has said.

But Satan had planted the doubt. And then he lied.

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."

Satan does that to us all the time. It's not that bad. Everyone's doing it. You won't get caught. It won't hurt anyone. This will give you what you want. This will fix things. Doubt and deceit, which go hand in hand is Satan's primary tool in the bag. So how do we counter that? Here's something that you need to understand. Paul says to be aware of his schemes. Spiritual warfare is waged on two fronts: temptation and trial. Satan wants to tempt you and attack you. And your response is determined by his particular scheme. 2 Timothy 2:22 tells us that when we're tempted we are to flee. 2 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that God has provided an escape route for every temptation. So, don't mess around with it. You don't argue or reason with temptation. You cut it off. When it comes to spiritual attack or opposition, 1 Peter 5:9 tells us to resist him. Ephesians 6 tells us to stand firm against him. So, temptation is to be fled, opposition is to be resisted. Example: Your friends invite you to the bar. You know what alcohol does to you. But Satan is deceiving you, telling you, you can handle it this time. So, what do you do? You cut him off, you run for your life. But when you're angry at your spouse and Satan is deceiving you into thinking this marriage was a bad idea from the start. You stand firm. You resist. You see the difference? You got to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em. When he's tempting you to sin - get out. When he's attacking what is good and right in your life - suit up.

The Believer's Armor:

In first century Roman society, you've seen the movies with the free flowing tunics, you needed a belt to tuck in the loose ends to allow you to move quickly, to keep you from

stumbling and to house your sword. The belt is the first piece to put on. It's foundational to the outfit. Paul tells us that the belt represents truth. Truth is foundational to the battle. Truth exists within the person and character of God and wherever the truth of God is present, Satan's ability to deceive is diminished. This piece of armor refers to two foundational principles in the spiritual conflict. The first is the truth of God.

1. The Truth of God

Hebrews 6:17,18

Tells us that it is impossible for God to lie.

Titus 1:2

God cannot lie.

Satan takes the truth and distorts it, tempts us to doubt it, or even uses partial truth to deceive us. The battle over truth has been waging since the garden of Eden. It can be illustrated with the story of three baseball umpires debating their umpire philosophies.

The first one said: "There are balls and there are strikes and I call them what they are."

The second one responded, "Well that's a little arrogant don't you think. There are balls and there are strikes and I call them how I see them." The third umpire said, "That's no better, why beat around the bush. There's balls and there's strikes. And they ain't nothing 'till I call 'em." The first umpire represents the traditional view of truth.

Objective and independent of the mind of the knower. Truth is truth and it's there to be discovered. The second umpire represents modern relativism that says truth is however each person sees it according to their perspective or interpretation. The third umpire represents our post modern culture that says truth is not to be discovered it is to be created. Truth is whatever we determine to be truth. There are balls and there are strikes and they are whatever I call them. We live in a democracy where everyone gets a voice in what happens. That system may work welling in governing, but it's a lousy, destructive way to determine truth. The universe is not a democracy. What is true, is true, and what is not is not, all the time, for all of us. And what's more: there is no truth outside the objective truth of God's Word. Truth isn't about our perception or perspective, it's always about reality. Truth does not bow to us, we bow to truth. Our world subscribes to the International Bureau of Weights and Measures that tells us how much an ounce should weight or how long a kilometer should be. Can you imagine each country deciding for themselves how much a pound should be? It would be chaos. that's what our world is right now. It may be true for you, but it's not true for me. It's either true or it's not. And we don't determine it. We can discover it, but we can't create it. And whether we believe it or not, it's still true. There's a bureau of weights and measures for life and it's called the Bible.

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

Randy Alcorn writes: All truth has a center of gravity. And Jesus Christ who declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life," is the center of gravity for all truth. He didn't say he knew it or he models it, he said, I am the truth. He is the center of truth, the essence of truth, He is the truth, He is truth.

When we put on the armor of God, as Paul says in Romans, to put on Christ, we put on truth. There's a second aspect to the belt of truth. Because the definite article is absent

in this phrase, literally it reads the belt of truth, not the belt of the truth. It could be rendered the belt of truthfulness.

2. The Truth In Us

Or, the truth in us. This is referring to your own possession or demonstration of truth in your own character; in other words, a person of integrity, someone who embraces and lives out truth. So to put on the belt of truth is to wrap yourself in God's truth and then operate in or live out that truth in your behavior.

2 John 1:4 (NKJV)

I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some of your children walking in truth*

Ephesians 5:8,9

Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)

The fruit of walking in the light, light and truth are synonymous. We use the phrase: I saw the light. In other words, I realized what was true.

Psalm 51:6 (NASB)

Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,

To wear the belt of truth is to be a person of truth, a truthful person. A person without pretense. Unlike our enemy who deceives, we are soldiers who battle from the inner character of honesty.

The Rules of Engagement:

So, with the belt of truth girding up the lions of our minds, what are the rules of engagement? Your enemy is the prince of darkness. Here's the deal - to get rid of the dark, you just turn on the light. Here are three things you need to do.

1. Know the Truth

You've got to know it. You can learn what's important to Paul by listening to his prayers. This is what he prays for us: I pray, verse 17

Ephesians 1:15-19

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

Paul's consistent prayer for the church was to know truth. Our deceiver, the culture of our world is telling us everyday - let your conscience be your guide, trust your heart, do what's right for you, create your own truth. You've got to decide what your standard of weights and measures will be. Will it be you or God? Are you going to trust your emotions, your moral instincts, your intellect? Or, are you going to trust the God of the universe who has graciously given us truth. And it's never been easier to know it. Study resources have never been more accessible. There is no excuse. And your spiritual success depends on it. Read it, memorize it, study it, discuss it in a small group. A faithful soldier knows truth. Number two,

2. Obey the Truth

A faithful soldier lives out truth. We just read Paul's prayer for us. Here's David's prayer for himself,

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if *there is any wicked way in me,*
And lead me in the way everlasting.**

Where am I failing to be obedient and faithful? Where am I not being honest? I serve a God of truth, where are the places in my own life that resist truth, ignore truth, compromise truth?

1 Timothy 1:5 (ESV)

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The word sincere is a combination of two words *sine cera* that literally mean: without wax. You bought a vase that looks good on the outside. Merchants used to cover over the cracks in their pottery with wax and then painted it to hide the reality of their product. And you were none the wiser. And so honest merchants began placing a sign at their place of business with the words; *sine cera*, without wax. In other words: what you see is what you get. It's the real deal, it's honest, it has integrity. Question: how much wax are you using to cover a disingenuous life? You're only hurting yourself.

A faithful soldier lives in the truth. Number three,

3. Allow Truth to Protect You

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

I love the Message paraphrase which reads: don't let the world squeeze you into its own mold. In other words: What will be your standard for truth? There are balls and strikes - are you going to call them the way you want or the way it is?

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life.

If you are a believer, Satan wants nothing more than to rob you of abundant life. He will seek to squeeze you into his own mold. And he does that through your mind. Satan is constantly attacking your thoughts. Deceiving you into thinking you will never have enough to be happy. You can handle life on your own. You have a right to be bitter. You will never be good enough for God. And on and on and on, lie after lie after lie. He plays on our fears and worries, resentments and guilt. And creates a stronghold in our minds that is resistant to the truth of God. You've got to stand against the negative and destructive thought patterns that rob you of the life. You've got to guard your heart, protect your mind. And the best way to do that is to think.

Philippians 4:8 (ESV) (read together)

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Where do you find these things? You find them in Jesus, who is the truth. You strap on Jesus like a belt that holds your life together.

What Must I Do to Stand Firm?

Here's the deal: Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

God is the source of freedom because God is the source of truth. When you stand on truth, when you operate in truth - all the schemes of the devil lose their power.