

BY FAITH

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SESSION 1 - SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Ephesians 6:10-20

TO BEGIN

If you could live in any other era, what time period would that be? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER

Together read Ephesians 6:10-20.

In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul reminds us that we are in a spiritual battle. Whether you like to admit it or not, there is a battle happening all around us. As followers of Jesus, we are called to stand firm in the midst of the battle by God's power, with the armor of God, and to live in constant prayer. If you are following Jesus, there is an enemy that isn't happy about your choice in surrendering all to Jesus.

- **Who does Paul say we are struggling against in Ephesians 6? What does this struggle look like in everyday life?**
- **Where do we get our strength from? How do we receive this strength?**

As followers of Jesus, we have been rescued, redeemed, adopted, and brought on to the winning side. We know how the war ends, but until then the battle continues on. Who is this enemy that we have read about in verse 12? And another question, who's not the enemy? Our battle is not against flesh and blood, the people around us. Our enemy is Satan, he is a liar, a thief, a slanderer, a murderer, and destroyer. Satan hates God

so what does he do? He attacks his creation—especially people. We are made in the image of God and Satan will do whatever he can to sideline you. The enemy is very real but is no competition for Christ or for those of us who follow Christ. We have victory in this life and the next because Jesus conquered death on the cross.

What do I need to do? Be strong and stand your ground by putting on God's armor. Resist Satan and he will flee from you. Pray—and keep on praying.

- **How do you become more aware of the spiritual realities that surround us on a daily basis?**
- **How do you practically follow Paul's advice in putting on the armor of God?**

Prayer is important. You don't go out and fight this battle all on your own. In verse 18 Paul tells us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions. The problem is that sometimes we can become complacent in our walk with Jesus. One of the best things we can do to combat complacency is to be aware of the importance of each day and that God wants to use you and me to accomplish His purposes here on earth now.

- **What are some things in your life that you have grown complacent about spiritually?**
- **What are some things you could do to start off your day on the right foot?**
- **What evidence do you see of the battle in your life? Your church? Your community? The world? What would it mean for you "to stand" in these particular areas?**

We have hope in Christ. Let me leave you with these words from Jesus in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have *peace*. In this world *you will have trouble*. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION 2 – HALL OF FAITH

Hebrews 11

To Begin

What is your favourite place to serve either in the church or in the community? If you could serve anywhere, where would it be?

DIGGING DEEPER

Together read Hebrews 11:1-4.

- **Define faith in your own words. What is your understanding of the term “worship”?**

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the great “Hall of Faith” or the “Faith Chapter.” This chapter gives a panorama of faith throughout biblical history. This chapter also challenges the believer to have faith through the use of historical testimony. Two literary devices are used throughout chapter 11: “by faith” is used repeatedly to drive home this point. And the author uses an example list, sharing with the audience an extensive list of evidence. God’s people must be a people of faith throughout all situations and circumstances.

- **Who in your life has been an example of faith during different situations and circumstances?**

As followers of Jesus, worship can be defined as reverent honor and respect towards God. Worship is a powerful expression of our love for God. Worship goes beyond the music we sing and

the church service we attend. Jesus gave us the greatest commandment, the greatest act of worship, “Love the Lord your God” in Matthew 22:37a which can be seen as an act of worship. Worship places your attention and focus on God. We live in a world focused on self and worship requires us to look beyond our circumstance and look towards God in all situations. However, what does it mean to have a faith that worships?

In verse one, the author begins by using the word “faith.” Faith can be compared with other words like belief or trust. In the same verse, the author uses the word assurance or confidence. Faith brings confidence. When we worship God, we receive His approval. Who do we worship? We worship the one who formed the universe at His command. We worship a God who has created everything that we see before us.

In verse 5, the author begins to go through a historical list of people who held faith. He begins his list with Cain and Abel.

- **As a group discuss the lives of Cain and Abel. If you desire to read the story, it can be found in Genesis 4.**

We see that Abel offered “a better sacrifice.” However, it was not the type of sacrifice that Cain and Abel offered which caused the difference, but the attitude of Abel’s heart in which he gave the sacrifice. It’s a matter of the heart. God knows our heart and the intent behind all our actions and he wants us to have a pure heart of worship before Him.

For Abel, his sacrifice contained “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.” He gave the best he had. We are required to give our all, our best to the Lord. He deserves the best for everything that he has done in our lives and continues to do.

How we act as believers is determined by the state of our heart. Do you have a heart that is full of worship, and praise towards our God?

- **What is the state of your heart? Do you do everything as an act of worship?**
- **What are some practical ways to live a life of worship?**

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION 3 – SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

Daniel 3

TO BEGIN

If you could go anywhere on vacation, where would you go and why?

DIGGING DEEPER

Together read Daniel 3.

Recorded in the third chapter of Daniel, the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego provides us with a strong image and a lasting impression. Their story takes place after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken over Jerusalem. Daniel 3 contains the account of four young Hebrews who were educated as counselors to the king. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Their Babylonian names were Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego respectively.

Starting in verse 1 of Daniel 3, we read that King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the construction of a ninety-foot golden statue and summoned all government officials to the dedication ceremony. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found out they would be expected to worship the statue as a god, they refused to attend. It was reported to Nebuchadnezzar that these Jews refused to obey his decree, and the king flew into a rage. He warned them and said he would give them another chance. If they still refused to worship the statue, they would immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace, and, he

said, “No god would be able to rescue them.” The men replied, “If we are thrown into a blazing furnace, then our God will rescue us; if not, you can be assured we will never worship your gods or the statue.”

Due to the dream recorded in Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to create a gold statue of himself and requires that all people come to the dedication of his statue. This was a huge spectacle. Everyone was required to bow down to this ninety foot golden statue. Nebuchadnezzar had created an idol.

- **Do you tend to go with the flow or against the flow?
When you hear the word idol, what do you think of?**

For those bowing before Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, I’m sure there was a sense of security. They found something to put their trust in. For this moment, we are not Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we are everyone else bowing to this idol that Nebuchadnezzar has made, I want to ask you a simple question.

- **Do you think you have any idols in your life that you bow down to? Why or why not?**

I think we often assume that idols are physical statues that are man made. Tim Keller in Counterfeit Gods, says “An idol is anything more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, or identity. For your sense of self-worth, value, security. Anything you rest your heart in more than God.” This is key for you to understand, “Idols aren’t bad things”, they are good things that you place your identity or purpose in that only God can give you. Loving anything else above God is an idol.

- **What in your life has taken priority above God? What idol do you bow down to on a daily basis?**

Let's get back to the story. Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to bow down to the statue Nebuchadnezzar had built.

Because Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not follow the king and his commands and they refused to worship the golden statue the king himself had set up they would face a penalty. The penalty for their actions was death. Even if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had to suffer a horrible, painful death in a burning furnace, they refused to abandon God and worship an idol. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, knew the reality of their death.

- **Do you have that hope that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had in God? What does this hope look like on a day to day basis?**

In verse Nebuchadnezzar was astonished that the fire did not consume Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He was even more amazed when he saw not three, but a fourth person with them. In verse 25, he says "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" The king moves closer. He's amazed. There's a change in his heart. He recognized that this God could save their lives from the fire. The three of them come out of the fire, everyone sees them alive.

Could you imagine the testimony? God wants to use your life, experiences, gifts, abilities, the moments God has moved in your life as a testimony for Him.

That's why it's so important to look back and see what God has done in your life. We need to find those moments where God has come through and redeemed, and moved our hearts.

- Looking back, what moments stick out to you where God as evidently on the move in your life?**

When the world looks at your circumstances and says there is no hope. Your being thrown in the fire, your dead, you're down and out. You're about to face the fire. Trust in God. God wants to use your life as a witness for hope and for love to the people around you. God wants to use you as a witness of His miraculous power to the people around you. We have a hope in a God that is mighty to save.

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

[illegible]

First Alliance



a christian & missionary alliance church

www.faccalgary.com | www.faconline.tv

#FACByFaith @faccalgary