

*Put on the full armor of God
so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.
Ephesians 6:11-12 NIV*

Put on the Armor

My hands tied behind my back, I was dragged before a tribunal of cloaked men. They accused me of subversion against the government because of my faith in Jesus Christ. I could not deny the charges, for spread across the table were books and articles I had written.

The congregation's singing brought me back to reality. Had I dozed off or seen a vision? I'll never know for sure. But I do know the Lord spoke to me. "Do you realize, Child," I felt Him say, "that the things you are writing may one day convict you? Are you willing to follow Me despite the cost?"

It was a sobering moment. I didn't ask Him to give me a closer look at the titles of my published works. And I didn't answer quickly or feel very brave when I finally said, "Yes, Lord."

That was fifteen years ago. Societally, things were bad and getting worse; but Christians generally were seen as part of the answer—not the problem. We were not the frequent brunt of jokes on TV sitcoms and talk shows. Media coverage was not openly biased. Gays were not militant. People did not worry about being politically correct. The New Age was beginning to infiltrate some churches, but few discerned its danger.

Things are changing—rapidly. We can no longer ignore all the signs that point to the return of Christ. They challenge us to be actively involved in spreading the Gospel while the doors remain open to produce and distribute Christian literature. But we do need to count the cost. In a very real way, writing for the Lord puts us on the front lines where "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12 NIV). To go into battle without the "full armor of God" (Eph. 6:11 NIV) is dangerous.

"This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels," *The Message* says. "Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued" (Eph. 6:12-13). Having been defeated too often, I'm learning to pray on the armor every morning that I might "resist the enemy whenever he attacks, and when it is all over . . . still be standing up" (Eph. 6:13 TLB).

"Lord," I pray, "help me to gird myself with your 'belt of truth'" (Eph. 6:14 NIV). "Give me discernment that I might immediately recognize the enemy's lies and half-truths. Help me to refuse to receive or believe them." When a manuscript is returned and those insistent inner whispers threaten to defeat me, I buckle the belt of God's truth more tightly around me. I affirm, often out loud, that the return of one manuscript (or dozens of manuscripts) does not mean I should quit writing. I know God has called me to write, but that is not a guarantee of accepted manuscripts. I must keep developing the gifts of writing and marketing and persevere.

The "breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14 NIV) protects my most vulnerable area—my heart, the home of my feelings and emotions. It is so easy for me to be wounded by others, to allow myself to be influenced by fear of what they might say or think. I need to be constantly vigilant against the temptation to compromise because "everyone else is doing it." I cannot pad my writing expenses on my Schedule C. I cannot be careless attributing quotes or use copyrighted material without permission. Instead, I must handle every aspect of the business side of

my writing in a way that honors the Lord. My first priority must be to bring glory to Him and not to myself. “Lord,” I pray, “help me today to consistently choose to do what is right in Your eyes.”

Putting on the shoes of readiness to share the Gospel (Eph. 6:15) protects me from the temptation to get sidetracked. There are often other things I can do and write that would require less time and effort, but if I am to be a soldier of the King, I must take my orders from Him. I need to follow His marching orders instead of asking Him to bless mine. When I walk in obedience, I find that my feet do not become bruised and weary from going places He never intended me to go. I also find that when I say yes to what He wants me to do, rather than yes to what others tell me I should do or what I feel they expect me to do, I am filled with peace instead of tension.

I prayerfully pick up the “shield of faith” to “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16 NIV). I ask God to make me mighty in spirit—to help me to walk by faith, not by sight. I also ask Him to help me not to lower my shield by nurturing doubts. A soldier can be fatally wounded if he lowers his shield for only a moment.

The “helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17 NIV) protects my thought life. Each morning I thank God that I do not have to be bound by old habits and thinking patterns. I ask Him to continue His work of transforming me by renewing my mind (Rom. 12:2) and giving me the “thoughts and mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16 TLB).

Finally, there is the one offensive piece of armor. It is with the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17 NIV) that we go forth into battle to confront the evil of our day. Doing so doesn’t mean we are supposed to hit our readers over the head with the Bible. Instead, I pray that God’s Word will so permeate my life that the principles of Scripture will be evident in all I do, say, and write.

“The enemy is within the gates,” Chuck Colson wrote in *Against the Night* (Servant Publications, 1989, p. 19). “I believe that we do face a crisis in Western culture, and that it presents the greatest threat to civilization since the barbarians invaded Rome” (p. 23). But God commands us to trust Him. Even when facing the spirit of the antichrist, we need not fear because “the one who is in [us] is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4 NIV). We need to “pray all the time” (Eph. 6:18) and to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Eph. 6:10 NIV) knowing that Jesus has already won the battle.

Responding to God’s Call to Write

Study Ephesians 6:10-18 in several translations or paraphrases. Ask the Lord to show you what each piece of the armor can mean in your life. List those insights below and begin to daily pray on the armor.

Belt of truth

Breastplate of righteousness

Shoes of readiness

Shield of faith

Helmet of salvation

Sword of the Spirit

From *Write His Answer – A Bible Study for Christian Writers* by Marlene Bagnall. ACW Press. © 1990, 1999 Marlene Bagnall.