

Ephesians Sermon Illustrations 6

EPHESIANS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

OUR DAILY BREAD, et. al.

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Special But Not Spoiled

Ephesians 6:1-4

March 1, 2003

Family counselor John Rosemond asks, "Is your child special ... the most exceptional person in the world?" He answers, "Of course—to you!"

Rosemond says that letting your child know he's special to you is healthy, but no child should grow up thinking he's more special than others. "That child," he warns, "is likely to think he's also deserving of special things and special privileges." He'll easily "justify outbursts of hurtful anger, selfishness, jealousy." How can we counteract this danger?

Christian parents, if they are grounded in the Scriptures, are equipped to get the right balance. First, they can affirm their children without showing favoritism by telling them that they are unique creations of God (Psalm 139:13-16). Second, they can teach their sons and daughters that sin, the great equalizer, is in every individual, and that they too need Christ's saving grace (Ro 3:23).

Parents who impart these perspectives are well on their way to fulfilling the apostle Paul's instruction for child rearing: "Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Children with this upbringing are more likely to grow up feeling special without being spoiled. —Joanie Yoder

Speak the truth to these your precious ones,
For guidance tell your daughters and your sons
Of One who loves them even more than you,
And who will be their guide a lifetime through. —Anon.

Spoiled children are given what they want; wise parents give them what they need.

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Happy Fathers
June 17, 2001
Ephesians 6:1-3

Some people have attributed to Mark Twain the statement, "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in 7 years."

The attitude of children toward their parents changes as they grow older. Some young people show little respect for their fathers and mothers. It's disheartening to see this. But as they mature, many begin to recognize that Mom and Dad knew a lot more than they gave them credit for.

On the other hand, some young people come to realize with deep regret that if they had followed the counsel of their parents they could have avoided much heartache both for themselves and their family. The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1, 2, 3). The book of Proverbs counsels, "Listen to your father who begot you ... The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him" (Pr 23:22,24).

Remember—wise children make happy fathers! —R W De Haan

Above all else that you can do
To make your father proud of you,
Be diligent, be kind, be wise—
Such traits are priceless in his eyes. —Fasick

Your parents brought you up; don't let them down.

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Meaning And Purpose
April 12, 2002
Ephesians 6:1-3

When our daughter was 3 years old, my wife and I introduced her to the "fine art" of dishwashing. It amuses me that many preschoolers want to wash dishes but parents refuse to let them. Then, when they become teenagers and no longer desire to clean plates, parents insist that they do.

The real issue, of course, is not doing dishes. Rather, it has to do with loving, honoring, and obeying God. As children love, honor, and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1, 2, 3), they are showing respect for God. And when they do, they find meaning and purpose in their lives.

We are living in a world in which teen suicide is a disturbing reality. Why such despair? Too many young people have not found a reason for living. They don't know the joy of a relationship with God.

In Malachi 1:6, God had to remind His people that He was their Father, because their behavior reflected that they had forgotten their relationship to Him. Not only had they forgotten that God was their Father but also that He was their Master, and they had failed to serve Him.

We can all live meaningful and purposeful lives. How? By knowing God as our heavenly Father, and obeying Him as our Master and Lord. —Albert Lee

Grant us, Father, hearts that love You,

Hearts that serve You day by day;
Help us find in You our purpose
For the things we do and say. —Fitzhugh

Knowing God gives meaning to life; obeying God gives purpose to life.

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No Pain, No Gain

Ephesians 6:1-4

June 28, 2001

Christian educator and author Howard Hendricks cautions parents not to bribe or threaten their children to get them to obey. What they need is firm, loving, and at times painful discipline.

Hendricks recalls being in a home where a bright-eyed grade-schooler sat across the table from him.

"Sally, eat your potatoes," said her mother in a proper parental tone.

"Sally, if you don't eat your potatoes, you won't get any dessert!"

Sally winked at Hendricks. Sure enough, mother removed the potatoes and brought Sally some ice cream. He saw this as a case of parents obeying their children rather than "Children, obey your parents" (Ephesians 6:1).

Many parents are afraid to do what they know is best for their youngsters. They're afraid their children will turn against them and think they don't love them. Hendricks says, "Your primary concern is not what they think of you now, but what they will think 20 years from now."

Even our loving heavenly Father's correction is painful, yet afterward (perhaps years later) "it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). As loving parents, dare we have less long-term vision than our heavenly Father has? —Joanie Yoder

As parents we must have this goal:
To teach our children self-control;
For firm and loving discipline
Can keep them from the ways of sin. —D. De Haan

The surest way to make life hard for your children is to make it soft for them.

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Honor Your Parents

Ephesians 6:1-4

September 15, 1994

It was a sad, unsigned letter from an elderly mother. "I have an only son," she wrote, "who does all sorts of things for other people but hates to do anything for me. He rarely visits me although I live only 8 minutes away. He seldom even phones."

God puts a high priority on family relationships throughout life--so says the fifth commandment. On the surface it seems directed exclusively to children, but parents must set the example. Children learn to honor, respect, and obey their parents when they see Mom and Dad honoring one another, when they feel respected, affirmed, and loved by their parents, and when they observe their obedience to God. This commandment to children actually touches us all.

How many of us have been as thoughtful of our parents as we could have been? And who of us as parents have been to our children all that we should have been? Although we've broken this commandment, our guilt has been removed by Jesus' death on the cross. He gives the courage to ask forgiveness of our children and our parents. And if they are not living, we can show the sincerity of our repentance by strengthening our other family relationships.

We honor our Father when we honor our parents. --D J De Haan

Children who honor their parents
Are doing what's good in God's sight;

Parents who love and admonish
Are teaching to do what is right. --Sper

Honoring our parents is learned by example.

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Dad's Hat

Ephesians 6:1-4

June 19, 2005

Amid the celebration, there was tragedy. It was the opening ceremonies of the 1992 summer Olympic Games in Barcelona. One by one the teams entered the stadium and paraded around the track to the cheers of 65,000 people. But in one section of Olympic Stadium, shock and sadness fell as Peter Karnaugh, father of United States swimmer Ron Karnaugh, was stricken with a fatal heart attack.

Five days later, Ron showed up for his race wearing his dad's hat, which he carefully set aside before his competition began. Why the hat? It was the swimmer's tribute to his dad, whom he described as "my best friend." The hat was one his dad had worn when they went fishing and did other things together. Wearing the hat was Ron's way of honoring his dad for standing beside him, encouraging him, and guiding him. When Ron dove into the water, he did so without his dad's presence but inspired by his memory.

On this Father's Day, there are many ways to honor our fathers, as Scripture tells us to do (Ephesians 6:2). One way, even if they're no longer with us, is to show respect for the values they taught us.

What can you do for your dad today to show him the kind of honor the Bible talks about? —Dave Branon

We're thankful for our fathers, Lord,
They're special gifts from You;
Help us to show we honor them
By what we say and do. —Sper

The best fathers not only give us life—they teach us how to live.

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On this Father's Day, there are many ways to honor our fathers, as Scripture tells us to do. One way, even if they're no longer with us, is to show respect for the values they taught us.

What can you do for your dad today to show him the kind of honor the apostle Paul was talking about? --J D Branon

We're thankful for our fathers, Lord,
They're special gifts from You;
Help us to show we honor them
By what we say and do. --Sper

The best fathers not only give us life but also teach us how to live.

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Parental Balance

Ephesians 6:4

Every conscientious parent recognizes how difficult it is to exercise his God-given authority over his children. The delicate balance of being tough yet tender is not easy to maintain. Many parents intensify a rebellious spirit by being dictatorial and harsh. Others yield when their authority is tested. When a strong-willed child resists, the pressure to give in for the sake of peace and harmony can become overpowering. I am reminded of the mother who wanted to have the last word but couldn't handle the hassle that resulted whenever she said no to her young son. After an especially trying day, she finally flung up her hands and shouted, "All right, Billy, do whatever you want! Now let me see you disobey THAT!"

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The Task Of A Father

Ephesians 6:4

June 17, 2000

What admirable quality is common to marmosets, siamangs, sea horses, and jacanas? Here are your clues. Marmosets are squirrel-size monkeys. Siamangs are members of the ape family. Sea horses aren't really horses. And jacanas are robin-size wading birds, sometimes called "lily trotters" because their long toes allow them to walk across water on lily pads.

Your time is up. Here's the answer I'm looking for: The male of each of these species takes care of its young.

I wish this could be said of all Christian fathers about the spiritual nurture of their children. Dads have a wonderful opportunity to encourage, to warn, to teach, to counsel, and to model the Christian life for them. It's significant that Moses' instruction in Deuteronomy 6 was directed toward fathers. Verse 7 especially spells out one task of a father—to teach his children.

This sounds like Paul's statement in Ephesians 6:4. He said that fathers should rear their children "in the training and admonition of the Lord." Christian fathers who do this will distinguish themselves from other dads and will be obedient to God's will. Oh, that our children would be nurtured by moms and dads who love the Lord! —M R De Haan II

Fathers, give your children guidance
And instruction from God's Word;
Then with wisdom and compassion
Teach them how to love the Lord. —Sper

A Christlike example is a father's greatest gift to his children.

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Little Cucumbers

Ephesians 6:4

April 14, 1998

When I was just a boy, I was intrigued by a large cucumber. It was no different from any other cucumber, but it was in the strangest place. My uncle kept it in a bottle on a shelf. This particular cucumber was many times too large to go through the neck of the bottle. I wondered how it got there in the first place.

I was filled with awe of my uncle who could perform such a feat. He joked about it and never told me how he did it. My mother finally explained that when the cucumber was very tiny, it had been passed through the narrow neck and allowed to grow while still attached to the vine.

My mother practiced a similar principle with her children. From my earliest memory she surrounded me with prayer and instruction and the gospel. As a result, I was brought to Christ and am now safe in the bottle of His salvation.

What a lesson for parents who have "little cucumbers" at home. Don't let anything interfere with your first duty toward them. The person who said "Give me a child till he is 7 and I care not who gets him after that" knew the value of early training.

Don't neglect your little cucumbers. Soon they will be big. --M R De Haan

Our children are a gift from God
To nurture and to love;
They need our help in guiding them
To turn their thoughts above. --Sper

A parent's life is a child's guidebook.

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It's Sally!

Ephesians 6:4

May 17, 1996

Benjamin West was just trying to be a good babysitter for his little sister Sally. While his mother was out, Benjamin found some bottles of colored ink and proceeded to paint Sally's portrait. But by the time Mrs. West returned, ink blots stained the table, chairs, and floor. Benjamin's mother surveyed the mess without a word until she saw the picture. Picking it up she exclaimed, "Why, it's Sally!" And she bent down and kissed her young son.

In 1763, when he was 25 years old, Benjamin West was selected as history painter to England's King George III. He became one of the most celebrated artists of his day. Commenting on his start as an artist, he said, "My mother's kiss made me a painter." Her encouragement did far more than a rebuke ever could have done.

The apostle Paul instructed parents: "Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

It's easy to notice the wrong in a child, but difficult to look beyond an innocent offense to see an act of creativity and love. What a challenge to raise our children according to God's standards, knowing when to say, "It's a mess!" and when to say, "Why, it's Sally!"
--D C McCasland

Lord, give us wisdom to provide
The proper atmosphere
To lead our children in Your ways
By what they see and hear. --Sper

Correction does much;
encouragement does more.

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A Dad Who Didn't Quit

Ephesians 6:4

November 12, 1996

Three months before my father died of cancer, he wrote me a letter. I had just left the security of teaching and had gone into fulltime freelance writing. Life was very uncertain.

Dad said, "I know you, I know what's behind you, and I am pretty sure that I understand your goals and the kind of writing you hope to do and the message you wish to convey. Stay in there, and may the Lord bless you. If you ever get in a tight place and need some ready cash, let me know. I think I know where I can lay my hands on a little of it."

When Dad sent me that letter, I was 36 years old and had a wife and three children. But I was still his son and he knew I needed encouragement. He was still parenting, in the best sense of the word.

When the Bible tells fathers to bring up their children "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), it doesn't put a time limit on the process. As children grow, a parent's role changes, but the responsibility to care remains the same. Loving, training, admonishing, and encouraging never go out of style.

I still have that letter. I'm still thankful for the man who never stopped being my dad. --D C McCasland

We're thankful for our fathers, Lord,
They're special gifts from You;
Help us to show we honor them
By what we say and do. --Sper

The best fathers not only give us life--
they also teach us how to live.

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That's My Dad!

Ephesians 6:4

June 15, 1997

You don't have to meet a man face to face to know what kind of a father he is. Just listen to the way his children refer to him.

The respect that children have for their parents can be a good indicator of how much respect they deserve. One of the Ten Commandments is to honor our father and mother (Ex. 20:12). But how many parents live in a way that is worthy of honor?

I cannot think of a greater tragedy in life than to lose the respect of my children. I would be the most humiliated man if my children were ashamed of me. But nothing would make my heart beat faster than if my child pointed me out in a crowd and said proudly, "That's my dad!"

A good test of whether you are a father who is respected by his children is to ask yourself, "Do I want my son to be what I am, to do what I do, to go where I go?"

Fathers, remember that never before in all history have your children needed the undivided interest and attention of loving parents as in these days of a polluted moral and spiritual atmosphere.

With the help of God's strength and wisdom, determine to be the kind of parent whose child is proud to say, "That's my dad!" --M. R. De Haan, M.D.

A father who emulates God
Is one who is faithful and true;
And if he is honest and strong,
His children will follow him too. --Hess

A good father earns the respect of his children.

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Don't Forget Your Children

Ephesians 6:4

June 21, 1998

It's one of the saddest stories I've ever heard. A father was to drop off his infant child at daycare on the way to work, but his mind was preoccupied and he forgot. Left alone in the car, the baby girl died from the excessive heat. The father will bear that painful memory the rest of his life.

While this dad inadvertently forgot his child, many other fathers are forgetting their children deliberately--abandoning them to pursue their own selfish desires. They forget their children when they engage in an extramarital affair. They forget their children while they indulge in pleasures, or become preoccupied with work, money, sports, or any number of distractions. As they do, their children are left without the guidance only a dad can give.

The importance of a father in a child's life is monumental. He is to nurture his children by giving them instruction, protection, sustenance, companionship, assistance, love, discipline, and example.

A good father provides a wide-ranging supply of godly advice and wisdom as he guides his children (Pr 3:1-12). But a father can't do that if he ignores his children because he is busy with self-serving activities.

Dad, don't forget your children. They need you. --J D Branon

Our children need a home where love
Provides security,
Where what is taught is not confused
By what they hear and see. --Sper

The greatest gift a father can give to his children is himself.

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Watching And Learning

Ephesians 6:4

September 17, 1998

I was browsing in a used book shop when an irate customer stormed in and loudly demanded a refund. When the man couldn't get what he wanted, he began swearing at the clerk. He continued the tirade for several minutes as a girl of 7 or 8 stood passively at his side. Eventually he stomped out of the store, cursing as he went, with the little girl following close behind.

I wondered if the girl was his daughter. If so, what did she learn from her dad that afternoon? More important, the event caused me to ask, "What does my daughter learn from me at home and all the places we go together?" She learns a lot more from watching my behavior than from all my little talks about life and God.

"Fathers," the Bible says, "do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). This speaks to me of my own relationship with Christ and the example I live before my children. Only as I submit to God's training and instruction can I bring up my children in His way.

There are children watching us today, deciding what to believe about life and God. What are they learning from us? --D C McCasland

No written word nor spoken plea
Can teach young hearts what they should be,
Nor all the books upon the shelves,
But what the teachers are themselves. --Bennett

Actions speak louder than words.

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A Nurturing Parent

Ephesians 6:4

September 18, 2000

Learning a trade as an apprentice is not as involved now as it was in days gone by. Today, when someone is assigned to a department or an individual to learn a job or craft, he does so by observation, instruction, and practice.

But in years past, an apprenticeship often began while the learner was still a young person. He moved right in with his teacher and lived as he lived. He was with the master carpenter or blacksmith 24 hours a day, watching his every move and following his careful and sometimes harsh instruction. He learned the skill, but he learned much more than a profession. He was being taught a whole way of life.

This total-life concept is built into the word translated "training" in Ephesians 6:4. The command applies to both fathers and mothers, and it means much more than teaching the Bible and Christian belief, though those are involved. The expectation is that through word and personal example parents will nurture their children and teach them what it means to live for Christ in a practical, daily sense.

Sure, children learn a lot about God in Sunday school. But only from you, Dad and Mom, will they see what it means to walk with

Jesus in a total-life way. —David C. Egener

God gives us children for a time,
To train them in His way,
To love them and to show them how
To follow and obey. --Sper

**Train up a child in the way he should go,
but be sure you go that way yourself.**

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Ephesians 6:5

Eye Service

A retired friend became interested in the construction of an addition to a shopping mall. Observing the activity regularly, he was especially impressed by the conscientious operator of a large piece of equipment. The day finally came when my friend had a chance to tell this man how much he'd enjoyed watching his scrupulous work. Looking astonished, the operator replied, "You're not the supervisor?" (Howard A. Stein in Reader's Digest quoted in [10000 Sermon Illustrations. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press](#))

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On Being a Good Employee

Ephesians 6:5

1. Be loyal. Bosses will forgive carelessness, stupidity, tardiness and the occasional temper tantrum. These can be corrected, but disloyalty is a true character flaw. You cannot—and will not—be trusted.

2. Keep the boss informed. The boss should be informed about what you are doing, where you are, whom you are talking to and why. If you must err, err on the side of overkill. Bombard the boss with bulletins, memos, and FYI's until he or she says, "Stop." No one had ever lost a job because they told the boss too much.

3. Embrace change, even if you do not understand it. Any boss must, as part of his or her job, instigate change. It is not your job to resist.

4. Respect the boss's time. If you need thirty minutes with him, don't take sixty. Better yet, take twenty.

5. Don't tread on his turf. At least, don't do it without permission.

6. Follow up quickly. Bosses don't pull out a stopwatch when they give a command. But their internal clock is ticking. (Bits & Pieces, May 27, 1993, pp. 2-3 quoted in [10000 Sermon Illustrations. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press](#))

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Dad's Rules

Ephesians 6:5

July 28, 2002

The unsolicited e-mail was full of truth and wisdom. As the father of three daughters, I recognized that the note titled "Daddy's Rules For Dating" offered advice dads can understand. With humor and sarcasm, it listed 10 rules for any boy who hopes to date our daughters.

Rule One, for example, says, "If you pull into my driveway and honk, you'd better be delivering a package, because you're not picking anything up." Translated: "Don't you dare be rude." Each rule had a nugget of truth fathers understand well: "Do not touch my daughter." "Get my daughter home early." "Treat my daughter with respect."

We as fathers (and mothers) are protective of our children, and rightly so, because God has given them to us as a trust. And because our society does not value modesty and sexual purity, we must protect our sons and daughters.

That's why the difficult but balanced teaching in Ephesians 6:4 is so vital. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." If we properly instruct our sons and daughters about what God expects of them, and live it out ourselves, we can avoid angering and discouraging them.

Instead of exasperating children, let's teach them. —J Dave Branon

We must teach our children clearly
What is right and what is wrong;
Live before them an example—
Godly, righteous, pure, and strong. —Fitzhugh

To teach your children well, let God teach you.

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Divine Concentrate

Ephesians 6:1-9

August 17, 1999

An experienced parent said, "Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories!"

The task of parenting can sometimes seem overwhelming. As we look for help, we find bookstores jammed with "how to" volumes by religious and secular advisors. Yet, when we search the Bible for specific guidance, we find few passages that tell us exactly what to do and how to do it. We often come back to Ephesians 6:4, which states, "Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

We might wish for more instruction than what this verse tells us, but perhaps God has packed more into it than we realize. If we began to "dissolve" that verse in our thinking and ask God to help us understand how to put it into practice, we might find it to be like a packet of concentrated, flavored drink mix that makes 500 gallons.

When was the last time we thought about what we do that provokes our children to anger? How do our words and tone of voice discourage them? What simple thing can we do today to encourage their spiritual growth?

Why not start putting Ephesians 6:4, God's concentrated plan for parenting, into practice right now! --D C McCasland

Your privilege is beyond all price--
Worth more than silver, gold, or fame--
To guide with love and sacrifice,
And write on children's hearts God's name. --Anon.

A godly parent is a child's best guide to God.

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A People Company

Ephesians 6:5

September 4, 2006

My brother worked 42 years for the Herman Miller Furniture Company. At his retirement dinner he said, "This is my company. Where else could a production worker like me participate in the management of the company?" What had instilled this kind of loyalty? In part, it was the leadership of D. J. De Pree, longtime president of the company.

One day a worker in the plant died suddenly. When Mr. De Pree visited his widow, she told him of her husband's poetry and of his witnessing to the night watchman. This impressed De Pree with the value of each of the workers in his plant. From then on, his attitude toward the business changed. "I realized," he said, "that the manufacturer's first priority was to make his product the best he could for the one who would use it; the second was the man in the factory who made it; and the third was the ownership."

This attitude is rooted in Scripture. Christians in labor and in management all work for one Master. Employees must therefore serve with diligence. Management must do the same—with two additions. They must be fair and just (Col 4:1) and must not threaten (Eph 6:9).

Integrity, concern for others, and mutual respect make any company a people company. —Dennis J. De Haan

Lord, teach me how to love and work,
So every deed I do
May be to someone in its turn
A service fine and true. —Anon.

When integrity and people rate higher than pay and profits, everyone profits!

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The Real World **Ephesians 6:5-9**

The owner of a company was talking with one of his managers about an employee who was stealing from the firm. The owner, who was a follower of Christ, asked, "What do you think we should do about him?"

"Give him the ax!" replied the manager.

"Suppose he admits his wrongdoing and agrees to pay for what he's stolen," said the owner. "Why not let him keep his job? Isn't that how you would want to be treated?"

"Well, yeah," said the manager, "but that's not the real world!"

Jesus calls us to follow the rules of His world, which is the real world. His rules demand our integrity, responsibility, and accountability. When they are practiced, employees become more dependable and fulfilled. And employers make their workers' welfare as important as making a profit. The result? More people stay off welfare rolls and out of unemployment lines.

Paul had some advice for workers and employers. He urged workers to carry out their duties "as bondservants of Christ, ... as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:6, 7). And he instructed masters not to threaten their servants, reminding them that their Master shows no partiality (Eph 6:9).

What about us? Are we living in the real world by the rules Jesus gave us? --D J De Haan

Thinking It Through
What principle does the golden rule (Mt. 7:12) give us for serving others?
How does it apply in the workplace?

The reward for honest labor is always greater than the wages received.

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Just A Job? **Ephesians 6:5-9** **October 25, 1996**

Three men were hard at work on a large building project. Someone asked them, "What are you doing?" "I'm mixing mortar," one said. The second man said, "I'm helping put up this great stone wall." But the third man replied, "I'm building a cathedral to the glory of God."

Those three men could just as well have been working on a car, in a factory, behind a counter, or on any legitimate product or service a man or woman might provide.

Most people work to earn a living, attain success, or amass wealth. Such reasons, however, must not be the Christian's primary motive for working. Like the third man in our story, we need to see that what gives work eternal value is not the product or service of our labor but the process of laboring itself--doing the job faithfully to the glory of the Lord.

God commands us to work because it is good. But work also gives believers the opportunity to represent Jesus Christ to unbelievers. By performing our God-given tasks to the best of our abilities, we bring honor and glory to His name. And we demonstrate to fellow employees the difference Christ can make in a life. Is our work just a job? Or are we doing it to the glory of

God? --D J De Haan

Man's work can make of him a slave
And lead him to an early grave,
But if it's done as to the Lord
His labors bring him great reward. --D J De Haan

We are given time to build for eternity.

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August 22, 2001

The Smallest Place

Ephesians 6:5-9

One of England's most admired heroes, General Charles Gordon (1833-1885), was a devout Christian. Unconcerned about status and wealth, he was passionately ambitious to do God's will. Gordon desired to serve the Lord faithfully, whether it was a big responsibility or a small, unnoticed task.

In a letter to a friend, he said that "governing huge countries, or ... occupying the smallest place are the same in reality, for Christ rules events as much with respect to ... government as He does in ... little affairs."

Do we believe, as Gordon did, that Jesus Christ is the omnipotent ruler of everything? Do we remember that He is Lord over our own "little affairs," as well as over the governments of "huge countries"? Do we recognize that everything, big or small, is to be done "as to the Lord and not to men"? (Colossians 3:23).

If we recognize these truths, we will not grumble because God assigns us the "smallest place" rather than a position of prominence and great responsibility. Even if our situation in life is considered lowly by some, we can do all things as to the Lord and for His glory (1Corinthians 10:31).

Father, by Your Spirit, enable me to serve and glorify You, no matter where You've placed me. Amen! —Vernon C Grounds

Does the place you're called to labor
Seem so small and little known?
It is great if God is in it,
And He'll not forget His own. —Suffield

Little is much when God is in it.

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Glad Service

Ephesians 6:5-9

April 18, 2006

As a boy, I never shared my father's enthusiasm for the soil. For several summers he had a little plot of ground in the country where he planted a garden. It provided physical therapy and relaxation for him, as well as a bountifully laden table for family and friends.

Back then, a hand-pushed plow was used to break up the ground, and the initial plowing, therefore, was often difficult. I remember helping my dad load his cultivator into the trunk one day and going with him to his garden. When we arrived, he prepared to make the first furrow while I took the lunch basket and picked a comfortable seat under the shade of an apple tree.

I was totally unsuspecting as I observed my father attach a rope to both handles of the cultivator and make a harness. Soon an unwilling boy was in front of that plow. Dad pushed and I pulled—and grumbled. Up one row and down another—over and over again. How miserable I was doing my duty!

Sometimes when we're asked to serve the Lord in a particular way, we reluctantly accept, but we do so only out of a sense of obligation. When that happens, we need to pray for a willing spirit so that we can "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2). — Paul Van Gorder

I am happy in the service of the King,
I am happy, oh, so happy;

Through the sunshine and the shadow I can sing,
In the service of the King. —Ackley
© 1912, The Rodeheaver Co.

A willing spirit changes the drudgery of duty into a labor of love.

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No Vacancy

Ephesians 6:5-9

July 14, 2003

Fred, a clerk in a retail store, was rude to the customers and lazy. On several occasions his boss was about to fire him. But he didn't follow through because of his concern for Fred's wife and children, who would suffer from his dismissal.

One day a regular customer stopped in and noticed that Fred wasn't there. He asked the manager about him and was told that he had taken another job. The customer asked, "Are you planning to replace him?" The manager replied, "No, it isn't necessary. Fred didn't leave a vacancy."

Fred's work was of such poor quality that the business was better off without him. That should never be true of any employee, especially a Christian.

The apostle Paul told servants to be obedient to their masters "with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7).

God expected Christian servants in Paul's day to work diligently for their masters, and we too should give our employers an honest day's work. It's the right thing to do, and it strengthens our witness for Christ.

One good way to test the value of your work is to ask yourself this question: If I left my job, would it create a vacancy? —Richard De Haan

Some people stop looking for work when they get a job.

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His Best Effort

Ephesians 6:7

In her book *Today's Good Word*, Ethel B. Sutton told the story of a young British soldier who was blinded in battle. He was a trained musician, so after he recovered from his injury he spent much of his time playing the piano for the wounded who had been sent to a London hospital. He sometimes wondered if anyone was paying attention to his music, for he often heard the tramping of feet through the corridors as visitors came and went. But he never let this distract him. He always put his best effort into his playing, hoping his music would encourage and comfort those who were depressed by their painful injuries.

One day when he paused to rest, he heard somebody nearby heartily clapping his hands. Turning his sightless eyes in that direction, he asked with a smile, "Who are you?" "I am your King!" was the reply. The British monarch was visiting the wounded to cheer them and strengthen their morale. Without realizing it, the young man had been using his talent to entertain royalty.

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FAITHFULNESS IN DAILY LIFE

Ephesians 6:7

F B Meyer

THE COMMON drudgery of daily life can be a Divine Calling. We often speak of a young man as "being called to the Ministry"; but it is as fitting to speak of a carpenter being called to the bench, the blacksmith to the forge, and the shoemaker to his last. "Brethren," said the Apostle, "let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

Remember that your life has been appointed by God's wise providence. God as much sent Joseph to the drudgery and discipline of the prison as to the glory and responsibility of the palace. Nothing happens to us which is not included in His plan for us; and the incidents which seem most tiresome are often contrived to give us opportunities to become nobler, stronger characters.

We are called to be faithful in performing our assigned duties. Not brilliance, not success, not notoriety which attracts the world's

notice, but the regular, quiet, and careful performance of trivial and common duties; faithfulness in that which is least is as great an attainment in God's sight as in the greatest.

In every piece of honest work, however irksome, laborious, and commonplace, we are fellow-workers with God. We must help God to give men their daily bread. It is for Him to cause the growth of the corn, but man must reap and thresh, grind out the flour, make and distribute the bread. The tailor is God's fellow-workman, helping Him to clothe the bodies which He has made to need garments of various textures. The builder co-operates with God in housing His children. The merchant helps to bring the products of the East to refresh and enrich the toiling masses of the West. God uses man in a thousand ways to serve the children of men.

Take up your work, then, you who seem to be the nobodies, the drudges, the maid-of-all-work, the clerk, or shop assistant. Do it with a brave heart, looking up to Him who for many "years toiled at the carpenter's bench. Amid the many scenes and actions of life, set the Lord always before your face. Do all as in His presence, and to win His smile; and be sure to cultivate a spirit of love to God and man. Look out for opportunities of cheering your fellow-workers. Do not murmur or grumble, but let your heart rise from your toil to God your Maker, Saviour, and Friend. So the lowliest service will glisten, as grass-blades do when sun and dewdrops garnish them.

PRAYER- Be not far from me, O Lord, this day; and through all its hours may I be found doing those things which are well-pleasing in Thy sight. AMEN. (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

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An Ordinary Life **Ephesians 6:8**

Barb listened with quiet envy as the speaker at the women's retreat talked in glowing terms of the way the Lord had marvelously provided for her need. Barb wished that would happen to her.

Later in the retreat, she was spellbound as another speaker told of the amazing opportunity the Lord had given her to testify and how several women in deep despair had opened their hearts to Christ. Barb longed for God to use her in a powerful way, but she didn't expect it to happen.

Barb's routine involved getting her husband off to work and her children to school, caring for her home, working a couple of days a week, and helping in their church. She didn't think there was much opportunity to be used mightily by God.

With all the emphasis on the spectacular these days, it's easy for us to lose sight of the fact that God is the God of everyday living. It seems that we're always looking for some great display of His power in our lives. But what the Lord desires is for us to focus on doing His will from our heart each day, delighting in humble service for Him (Eph. 6:6, 7).

Don't miss the wonderful ways God wants to use you in the day-in, day-out activities of ordinary life. --D C Egner

A bigger place than this to fill,
O Lord, I do not pray,
But to be big enough to fill
The place I'm in today. --Anon.

You can do the most good for God
right where you are.

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On Alert **Ephesians 6:10-18** **October 27, 1997**

In an article for Youth Ministries magazine, a 14-year veteran of the Navy SEALs describes the color-code system they use to indicate levels of combat readiness. Each stage has a parallel in spiritual warfare.

Condition White: The soldier is relaxed and daydreaming, unaware of his surroundings. A Christian in this condition is easy prey for Satan.

Condition Yellow: The soldier is relaxed physically but alert mentally. A believer at this level may sense trouble coming, but he's not ready to confront it.

Condition Orange: The soldier is physically prepared, mentally alert, and ready to fight. A believer at this stage has on the full armor of God.

Condition Red: As in condition orange, the soldier is ready to fight. The difference is experience. A battle-seasoned Christian knows quickly what to do because of his experience and familiarity with Scripture.

Wherever we as followers of Christ happen to be--at work, in the mall, on a business trip, even among fellow believers--we need to know about Satan's methods and be prepared to resist. He always seems to attack at our most vulnerable moments. But if we stay alert and armed, we can fend off his most powerful attacks. --D C Egener

Thinking It Over

Which color code describes your spiritual condition?

How have you responded recently to temptation?

Are you studying and obeying God's Word?

Spiritual victory comes only to those who are prepared for battle.

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Shrike System

Ephesians 6:10-18

April 4, 2006

The ancient sport of falconry used trained hawks or falcons in the pursuit of wild game. When the "educated predator" was allowed to fly, however, it often rose too high for human eyes to see. So a hunter often carried a small caged bird called a shrike. By watching the antics of the little bird, the man could always tell where his hawk was, for the shrike instinctively feared the predator and cocked its head to keep it in view.

Christians desperately need an alert perception similar to that of the shrike to detect their spiritual enemy. Our adversary, Satan, "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1Peter 5:8). Our responsibility, according to the apostle Peter, is to be sober and vigilant. In other words, we're to be always on the alert.

It would be nice if God had giant sirens to warn us of an attack by the devil. But He doesn't operate that way. Instead, we must read the Bible regularly, meditate on its truths, maintain a prayerful attitude throughout the day, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only then will we be sensitive to an imminent assault by the evil one, and be armed by grace to meet it. —Mart De Haan

The devil is clever, deceiving us all,
He cunningly causes the strongest to fall;
But we his sly methods are sure to discern
By making God's warnings our daily concern. —D. De Haan

He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. —1John 4:4

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The Battle Still Rages

Ephesians 6:10-18

December 4, 2001

The world has changed drastically since my dad stood his ground against the enemy in World War II. Back then, he and his brave comrades fought against nations that were threatening to destroy any country that dared stand in their way. Dad took a bullet in the leg and suffered the painful effects of that injury for the rest of his life.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who fought in that war. Their bravery issued from a cause they believed in—a mission they were willing to die for. They understood that if they did not go overseas, many people would lose their freedom, or even their lives, under the rule of ruthless dictators. Thankfully, the battles of those years are behind us.

A different kind of battle still rages today—a battle that we as Christ's followers must fight every day (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemy,

the devil, continues to try to bring down our faith, take over our hearts, and stop the spread of the gospel. He is called "the wicked one" (Eph 6:16), and he will always be our enemy.

Are we willing to suffer for the cause? Are we brave enough to be a faithful generation of believers? Let's fight the good fight! —J D Branon —Dave Branon

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before!
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;
Forward into battle see His banner go! —Baring-Gould

Christ's soldiers fight best on their knees.

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Blackbeard

March 22, 2006

Ephesians 6:10-18

As a young man in the late 1600s, Edward Teach joined the crew of a British ship that was headed to the Caribbean. Much later in his nautical career, he managed to capture a merchant vessel and turn it into a 40-gun warship. Teach soon became known as Blackbeard—the most feared pirate in the hemisphere.

Blackbeard had some success as a pirate, but his "career" abruptly ended when he encountered a contingent of the British Royal Navy. In a desperate battle, he and his fellow pirates were killed, putting an end to their terrorizing exploits.

Long ago in the heavenly places, an angel fell into spiritual piracy. Lucifer was a cherub who stood in the radiant glory of God (Ezekiel 28:11, 12, 13, 14, 15). But his own self-love replaced love for his Creator. Desiring to be like the Most High, he led a rebellion and was cast out of heaven (Is 14:12, 13, 14, 15). Today he and his henchmen are doing whatever they can to commandeer the lives of human beings (Luke 8:12; 2Corinthians 4:4).

Even so, we don't need to be afraid. Satan is a dangerous enemy, but Jesus sealed his ultimate fate when He rose from the dead. And He has given us everything we need to withstand the devil's attacks (Ephesians 6:10-18). —Dennis Fisher

And though this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us. —Luther

He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. —1 John 4:4

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Midnight Encouragement

Ephesians 6:10-12

The Midianites and their allies had invaded Israel. It was the time of the judges, and Gideon could muster only 32,000 men against an army "as numerous as locusts" (Judges 7:12). Then God cut the army down to 300 (vv.2-7). Gideon was afraid, so God sent him into the enemy camp at night. Crouching behind cover, the Israelite captain heard one soldier tell another about a dream (Judges 7:13, 14). A loaf of barley bread had tumbled into the Midianite camp, destroying one of its tents. His friend saw it as a sure sign that Gideon would win the battle.

Gideon was greatly encouraged. After worshiping God, he returned to the camp, organized his 300 men with their trumpets and lamps, and routed the superior Midianite forces (Judges 7:15-22).

As Christ's followers we're not battling armies, but we are at war. Spiritual foes attack us (Ephesians 6:10-12). They undermine our confidence and sap our strength. We're also battling ourselves—our weaknesses, fears, doubts (Romans 7:15-25). After a while, we can get discouraged.

But our God is the great Encourager. When our resolve weakens or vision fades, by His power He will give us the strength we need (Ephesians 3:16)—even when the enemy seems more numerous than a swarm of locusts.—David C. Egner

As we meet fierce foes on the pathway of life,

Whether Satan or self or sin,
Let us look to the Lord for encouragement;
If we do, the battle we'll win! —Fitzhugh

To trust is to triumph, for the battle is the Lord's.

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The Angel Of Music

Ephesians 6:10-18

May 28, 2006

In Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Phantom of the Opera*, a young chorus girl named Christine Daae receives voice training from a mysterious musician she calls the "Angel of Music." Christine believes this is the angel her dying father had promised to send to complete her musical training.

As the plot thickens, we find that her mysterious mentor is really a demented man who wants to carry her away into a bizarre underworld beneath the opera house. What the girl thinks is a supernatural agent sent by her beloved father is really a madman who wants to possess her for his own ends. The "Angel of Music" is evil masquerading as good.

The believer in Christ also faces an evil one who masquerades. One of Satan's key strategies is to look like someone who is good. Paul told us, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The Greek word translated as "transforms" means "to change appearance, masquerade, or disguise oneself."

In preparing us to face the evil strategies of the devil, God has provided all the equipment we need to stand our ground. Protecting ourselves with the armor of God unmasks the evil that opposes us and stabilizes our spiritual walk (Ephesians 6:10-18). —Dennis Fisher

When you're making a decision,
Evil sometimes wears a mask;
Trust the Lord for true discernment—
He'll give wisdom if you ask. —Hess

God's armor is tailor-made for us, but we must put it on.

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My Achilles Heel

Ephesians 6:10-18

July 17, 2001

Nobody is temptation-proof. Even mature Christians have weaknesses in their spiritual armor that make them vulnerable to a wounding attack by the enemy of their souls. Our pride can provide the very opening needed for the sharp thrust of a satanic dart. So can the love of money, a quick temper, a critical tongue, or chronic impatience.

What, after all, is temptation? It's any enticement to think, say, or do something contrary to God's holy will. It may be a weak impulse or a powerful urge. It's anything that's against what God approves or desires for us.

The ancient Greeks told a story of a warrior named Achilles. His mother had been warned that he would die of a wound, so she dipped him as an infant in the river Styx. That was supposed to make him invincible. But she held him by one heel which the protective waters didn't cover. And it was through that heel that he received his fatal wound.

Each of us must ask: What is my Achilles heel? We need to know our weaknesses, where we could easily be wounded spiritually. Then, as we rely on the Lord for His help, we will be protected from "the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Ephesians 6:16). —V C Grounds

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul;
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole. —Wesley

Our greatest weakness may be our failure to ask for God's strength.

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The Power Of Prayer

Ephesians 6:10-18

April 5, 2000

While crossing the Atlantic on a ship many years ago, Bible teacher and author F. B. Meyer was asked to speak to the passengers. An agnostic listened to Meyer's message about answered prayer and told a friend, "I didn't believe a word of it."

Later that same day, the agnostic went to hear Meyer speak to another group of passengers. But before he went to the meeting, he put two oranges in his pocket. On his way, he passed an elderly woman who was fast asleep in her deck chair. Her arms were outstretched and her hands were wide open, so as a joke he put the two oranges in her palms. After the meeting, he saw the woman happily eating one of the pieces of fruit.

"You seem to be enjoying that orange," he remarked with a smile. "Yes, sir," she replied, "My Father is very good to me." "What do you mean?" pressed the agnostic. She explained, "I have been seasick for days. I was asking God somehow to send me an orange. I fell asleep while I was praying. When I awoke, I found He had sent me not only one but two oranges!" The agnostic was amazed by the unexpected confirmation of Meyer's talk on answered prayer. Later, he put his trust in Christ.

Yes, God answers prayer! —Henry G. Bosch

For answered prayer we thank You, Lord,
We know You're always there
To hear us when we call on You;
We're grateful for Your care. --J D Branon

God always gives us what we ask--or something better.

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Standing Firm

Ephesians 6:10-20

May 3, 1994

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are engaged in spiritual warfare with unseen wicked forces. To overcome our enemy in the power of the Holy Spirit, we must remain resolute in our confidence in God and determine never to accept defeat.

A story from the Korean War illustrates this attitude. As enemy forces advanced, Baker Company was cut off from the rest of their unit. For several hours no word was heard, even though headquarters repeatedly tried to communicate with the missing troops. Finally a faint signal was received. Straining to hear, the corpsman asked, "Baker Company, do you read me?" "This is Baker Company," came the reply. "What is your situation?" asked the corpsman. "The enemy is to the east of us, the enemy is to the west of us, the enemy is to the north of us, the enemy is to the south of us." Then after a brief pause, the sergeant from Baker Company said with determination, "The enemy is not going to get away from us now!" Although surrounded and outnumbered, he was thinking of victory, not defeat.

Lord Jesus, help us to stand firm in the victory You've won for us through Your death on the cross and Your resurrection from the grave. --D J De Haan

There's victory o'er Satan and freedom from shame;
Look only to Jesus, there's power in His name.
The devil can't harm you nor cause you to sin;
When you trust the Savior, the victory you'll win. --Anon.

To defeat Satan, surrender to Christ.

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Stay Protected

Ephesians 6:11

August 20, 2002

My married daughter called from her home in another state to report some "bad news." She had two cavities in her previously flawless teeth.

I asked Lisa, "Does your city fluoridate its water?" A couple of days later, she called me to say that it did not. As a result, her teeth were more vulnerable to decay than when she grew up drinking fluoridated water.

Admittedly, this was not a great tragedy. Worse things can happen, but Lisa's dental problems can point us to a vital truth in our Christian lives.

We would be wise to do all we can to prevent tooth decay, but it's even more important that we do all we can to prevent Satan from harming us spiritually (1 Peter 5:8, 9). To ignore the prescribed protection that God has made available to us is to ask for trouble much worse than holes in our teeth.

In Ephesians 6, Paul said that to be protected from Satan's attacks we need to "put on the whole armor of God" (Eph 6:11). Ephesians 6:14-18 tell us we must put on the belt of "truth," "the breastplate of righteousness," the shoes of "the gospel of peace," "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit," along with "all prayer."

With God's armor we can stand and stay protected! —J D Branon —Dave Branon

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed,
His truth to triumph through us. —Luther

God's truth is the best protection against Satan's lies.

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The Great Impostor

Ephesians 6:11

October 1, 1996

The arctic polar bear feeds almost entirely on seals. To enjoy such a meal, he sometimes resorts to a cunning bit of trickery. If the hole in the ice through which the seal gets his food is not too far from the edge of open water, the polar bear will take a deep breath, slip underwater, and swim to the seal's fishing hole. He will then imitate a fish by scratching lightly on the underside of the ice. When the seal hears this sound, he dives in for a quick supper, only to find himself suddenly caught in the huge, hungry embrace of his predator.

The devil entices us in a similar way. He baits us with some seemingly harmless pleasure and disguises the ugliness of sin with something that looks or sounds appealing. Then, when we've succumbed to the temptation, he catches us in his trap.

Christians have no excuse for being taken in by the deception of the enemy. We can put on the armor of God, and with the "shield of faith ... quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Eph. 6:16).

As we meditate on the truths of God's Word and rely on the Holy Spirit, we can know the difference between what is truly satisfying and what only appears to be. Don't let the great impostor fool you! --M R De Haan II

The devil is subtle, deceptive, and sly,
He cleverly tricks us to swallow his lie;
But his cunning methods we're sure to discern
By making God's warnings our daily concern. --D J De Haan

Satan may look like an angel of light,
but he has the teeth of a lion.

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EVIL OR DEVIL?

Ephesians 6:11

Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. --2 Corinthians 11:14

Bible teacher William Evans wrote, "It is popular in some circles to day to spell the word devil with the letter "d" left off. This reduces the idea of an actual person called the devil to a mere influence called evil.

"If the devil can't mislead people that way," Evans continue, "he would have them think of him as a horrible, monstrous-looking creature with a forked tail, dressed in a fiery red suit, and with horns protruding from his head. If the devil can get folks to think of him like that, then when he comes as an 'angel of light', he will not be recognized, and so find it easier to beguile his unsuspecting victims."

When we trust Christ as Savior, we have peace with God, but at the same time we come into conflict with the devil. Our "adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). That's why the Bible says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

We who know Christ can overcome the devil and the evil he creates by learning and obeying God's Word. And let's be thankful that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).-- Richard W. De Haan

The prince of darkness grim --
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure.--Luther

The devil may be out of fashion, but he's not out of business.

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The Fruit Stealer

Ephesians 6:11

July 21, 1999

Four young men crept silently through the late-evening shadows toward the unattended farm market. One picked up a ripe watermelon and slipped to the edge of the darkness. He handed it to the second young man, who relayed it to the third. The fourth put it into the trunk of their car. In a few minutes they had taken a dozen watermelons, and they sped off.

Fruit-stealing happens more often than we realize, not only with real fruit but also with what the Bible calls spiritual fruit. The apostle Paul told believers to develop the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). But Satan doesn't want that fruit to be on display in our lives. As soon as we begin to develop these spiritual virtues, the devil uses his wiles to "steal them away" from us by tempting us to sin.

The next thing we know, Christlike character traits are replaced by un-Christlike ones. Our fruit is gone. To protect ourselves, we need to focus on the truths of the Bible, choose to do what is right, remember our purpose as God's redeemed children, trust God, and pray always (Eph. 6:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

As we do these things, we will be fruitful and not be victims of the fruit-stealer. --D C Egener

You can trust the Savior's power
To protect from Satan's snare;
But you must be ever watchful--
Of the robber be aware! --Hess

To bear the Spirit's fruit don't let sin take root.

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No Place For The Devil

Ephesians 6:11-18

April 8, 1997

A teacher in a Bible school gave his students an hour-long exam. They were to spend half their time writing about the Holy Spirit and the other half about the devil.

One student wrote steadily for the whole hour on the first subject, the Holy Spirit, and then wrote at the bottom of his manuscript, "I had no time for the devil."

That wasn't the way to get a good grade on an exam, but his comment does point us to the only way we can resist and overcome Satan. If we fill ourselves with God's Word, pray, and submit to the Holy Spirit, we will not "give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27).

The word place in that verse is significant. The devil cannot gain a foothold in an area of our life that the Holy Spirit controls. When we are saved, we receive the Holy Spirit, yet it is possible for a true believer to "give place" to Satan. The only remedy is to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18), which means to be completely surrendered to the will of God.

Before you launch out into the world today, have you stopped to read the Scripture suggested at the beginning of this article? Have you prayed? Are you filled? If so, go forth to conquer with the shield of faith and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (6:16). -M. R. De Haan, M.D.

There's victory o'er Satan and sin's dark shame,
Look only to Jesus, there's power in His name;
The devil can't harm you nor cause you to sin,
When you trust the Savior, the victory you'll win. --Anon.

The Christian who wields the Sword of the Spirit yields no ground to Satan

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Weight Loss

Ephesians 6:11-17

March 8, 2005

The army of Alexander the Great was advancing on Persia. At one critical point, it appeared that his troops might be defeated. The soldiers had taken so much plunder from their previous campaigns that they had become weighted down and were losing their effectiveness in combat.

Alexander commanded that all the spoils be thrown into a heap and burned. The men complained bitterly but soon saw the wisdom of the order. Someone wrote, "It was as if wings had been given to them—they walked lightly again." Victory was assured.

As soldiers of Christ, we must rid ourselves of anything that hinders us in the conflict with our spiritual enemy. To fight the battle effectively, we must be clad only with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17).

The Bible also likens Christians to runners. To win the race, we must "lay aside every weight" that would drag us down and rob us of our strength and endurance (Hebrews 12:1). This weight may be an excessive desire for possessions, the captivating love of money, an endless pursuit of pleasure, slavery to sinful passions, or a burdensome legalism.

Yes, if we are to fight the good fight of faith and run the spiritual race with endurance, the watchword must be: Off with the weight! —Richard De Haan

Fight the good fight with all thy might!
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally. —Monsell

If your Christian life is a drag, worldly weights may be holding you back.

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A Significant Impact

Ephesians 6:12

February 11, 2004

John Wesley was convinced that the prayers of God's people rather than his preaching accounted for the thousands who came to

Christ through his ministry. That's why he said, "God will do nothing except in answer to prayer." An overstatement? Yes. But the fact is that our praying is a powerful weapon in the war between God and Satan.

In today's Scripture reading, Daniel was so disturbed by a revelation about Israel's future that he could do nothing except fast and pray. Three weeks later a heavenly messenger appeared, saying that God had sent him when Daniel prayed, but that the prince of Persia had detained him (10:13). This "prince" was an evil spirit who sought to influence the rulers of Persia to oppose God's plan. He had detained God's messenger, until the archangel Michael came to his aid.

A cosmic conflict between good and evil is continually being fought in the invisible spirit world. Paul reminded us that it involves Christians. He listed the spiritual armor and weaponry we need for these battles (Ephesians 6:13-17), and then he added "praying always" (Eph 6:18).

Our prayers can have a significant impact on the outcome of those spiritual battles. May we, therefore, faithfully pray as we fight the good fight (1Ti 1:18). —Herbert Vander Lugt

Something happens when we pray,
Powers of evil lose their sway,
We gain strength and fear gives way—
Therefore, let us pray. —Anon.

Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

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Ephesians 6:13

Craig Brian Larson gives the following illustration...

Recently NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ran an article about the Alaskan bull moose. The males of the species battle for dominance during the fall breeding season, literally going head-to-head with antlers crunching together as they collide. Often the antlers, their only weapon are broken. That ensures defeat. The heftiest moose, with the largest and strongest antlers, triumphs. Therefore, the battle fought in the fall is really won during the summer, when the moose eat continually. The one that consumes the best diet for growing antlers and gaining weight will be the heavyweight in the fight. Those that eat inadequately sport weaker antlers and less bulk.

There is a lesson here for us. Spiritual battles await. Satan will choose a season to attack. Will we be victorious, or will we fall? Much depends on what we do now—before the wars begin. The bull-moose principle: Enduring faith, strength, and wisdom for trials are best developed before they're needed. (Craig Brian Larson quoted in [10000 Sermon Illustrations. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press](#))

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Be Careful!

Ephesians 6:13

January 28, 2003

Several years ago my wife Carolyn and I were hiking on Mount Rainier in Washington when we came to a swollen, glacial stream. Someone had flattened one side of a log and dropped it across the river to form a crude bridge, but there was no handrail and the log was slippery.

The prospect of walking on the wet log was frightening, and Carolyn didn't want to cross. But she found the courage, and slowly, carefully she inched her way to the other side.

On the way back we had to walk on the same log, and she did so with the same care. "Are you afraid?" I asked. "Of course," she replied, "that's what keeps me safe." Again, fully aware of the danger, she made her way to safety.

Much of life poses moral danger for us. We should never assume in any situation that we're incapable of falling. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Given the opportunity and circumstances, any of us are capable of falling into any sin. To believe otherwise is sheer folly.

We must watch and pray and arm ourselves for every occasion by putting our total trust in God (Ephesians 6:13). "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 10:13), and He will give us the strength to keep from falling. —David H. Roper

The hand of God protects our way
When we would do His will;
And if through danger we must go,
We know He's with us still. —D. De Haan

God provides the armor, but we must put it on.

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Smart Armor System

Ephesians 6:16

November 30, 1994

United States Army and Pentagon officials are developing a sophisticated armor system to protect tanks against enemy fire. According to the Army Times, this new system will protect armored vehicles against the latest kinetic energy rockets, which are long, thin, sharp-pointed projectiles that pierce armor when they hit head-on. The Smart Armor System (SAS) will keep these missiles from penetrating the armor of tanks because special reactive tiles will deflect them.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we need protection from the "fiery darts" being hurled at us by Satan. He has some powerful missiles that can stir up within us doubt, fear, disappointment, impurity, lust, greed, selfishness, covetousness, and pride. And he attacks us when we are most vulnerable in these areas. But God has given us the shield of faith for our protection to deflect Satan's most powerful missiles. When we trust God, believing what He tells us in His Word, the enemy's most deadly attacks will be futile.

As you go out into battle today, put on the whole armor of God. Above all, take up the shield of faith. Reassert your trust in God and commit your ways to Him. It's your Smart Armor System. --D C Egener

The devil's tactic is surprise,
He'll stop you in your tracks;
So keep on guard and trust God's Word,
Resist his strong attacks. --J D Branon

Trust in God's Word is a sure defense
against temptation.

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Use Your Weapons

Ephesians 6:16

December 8, 2005

Above all, [take] the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. -Ephesians 6:16

While visiting a museum, I was intrigued by a small inscription describing a class of Roman gladiators-the Retiarii—who fought using only a net and a trident. Of all the fearsome and lethal weapons available to those warriors, who often battled to the death, these men were given two items—a piece of webbing and a three-pronged spear. When they entered the arena, their survival depended on how well they used their weapons.

In the spiritual battle we face as Christians, God has chosen our weapons: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4).

It's worth pausing to look at ourselves in the mirror of Ephesians 6:10-18 to see if we are properly equipped with "the whole armor of God." From the helmet of salvation to the shoes of the gospel of peace, we are to be protected and armed for a conflict that depends not on human strength but on the power of God.

When we realize the nature of that warfare and the forces against us, it's foolish to enter the fray with anything except our God-given weapons. —David C. McCasland

Does all the world seem against you
And you're in the battle alone?
It's often when you are most helpless
That God's mighty power is known. -Anon.

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. -Is 40:31

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Confident Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

June 25, 1997

As one of Africa's first explorers, David Livingstone loved its people and longed to see them evangelized. His journals reveal his spiritual concern and deep faith.

In late March 1872, he wrote, "He will keep His word--the gracious One, full of grace and truth--no doubt of it. He said, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out' and 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name I will give it.' He will keep His word; then I can come and humbly present my petition, and it will be all right. Doubt is here inadmissible, surely."

Livingstone had rock-like confidence in the Father's promises. In our praying we too can exercise the trust that God will not deny our requests when they are in keeping with His will. (By the way, are we reading His Word so that we know His will?)

We can defeat doubt when we remind ourselves that no matter what happens in life, He cares deeply about us and longs to give us the wisdom to handle what comes our way (1 Pet. 5:7; James 1:5). Our faith will grow stronger as we realize that our heavenly Father is gracious, delighting to give good gifts to His children (Mt. 7:11). Humbly but confidently, we can come to Him with our requests. --V C Grounds

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much. --Newton

When we love God as our Father, we won't treat Him as our servant.

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Ephesians 6:18

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

What multitudes of prayers we have put up from the first moment when we learned to pray. Our first prayer was a prayer for ourselves; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard us. But when he had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace; we have been led to crave for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty, and for succour in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our souls, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere. All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drank has flowed from the living rock—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God; and hence your prayers have ascended to heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants were innumerable, and therefore the supplies have been infinitely great, and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless. Then have you not cause to say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication"? For as your prayers have been many, so also have been God's answers to them. He has heard you in the day of trouble, has strengthened you, and helped you, even when you dishonoured him by trembling and doubting at the mercy-seat. Remember this, and let it fill your heart with gratitude to God, who has thus graciously heard your poor weak prayers. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

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Free Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

October 18, 2004

A pastor was asked to call on a woman in a psychiatric hospital and pray for her. After his visit, he thought how good it would be for

somebody to go there regularly and pray for the residents. The "somebody" turned out to be him. On a table in one of the wards, he put up a sign saying "Free Prayer." Later he recalled, "Suddenly I had 15 people standing in line to get prayed for."

People often ask for our prayers, but do we faithfully pray for them? Many times we see others in great need but find it easier to discuss their plight with friends rather than to intercede for them. But people need and want our prayers.

Paul concluded his call to put on "the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13, 14, 15, 16, 17) by writing, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18).

Oswald Chambers often referred to prayer as "the ministry of the interior" and said, "There is no snare, or any danger of infatuation or pride in intercession; it is a hidden ministry that brings forth fruit whereby the Father is glorified."

Faithful prayer—whether in public or private—is one of the greatest gifts we can give others.—David C. McCasland

To give to others what they need,
We show no greater care
Than when we give them to the Lord,
Upholding them in prayer. —D. De Haan

Our intercession may be the key to God's intervention

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Ephesians 6:18

F B Meyer

Praying at all seasons in the Spirit.

The dying Monod regretted he had not prayed more. We should pray at all seasons. Prayer is never out of place. There is no conceivable circumstance in life where it would be inappropriate to pray. At the wedding or the funeral; as we engage in work or finish it; whether the wind blow from the cold north or the balmy south — it is wise and right to pray. "Prayer and provender," the old proverb says, "hinder no man."

We should pray in the Spirit. Reversing the order of the words, but bringing in their true meaning, we might say, "Let the Spirit pray in the soul." It is well in prayer to wait until the scum of our own choice and desire has passed off, that the yearnings of the Holy Spirit may arise and manifest themselves. We need to be in the Spirit, not only on the Lord's Day, but always, that He may be mightily in us, teaching us the will of God.

We should pray unselfishly. "For all saints," said the apostle, "and for me."

We should watch. Do not give runaway knocks. Stand at God's door till it opens. Be on the alert. Wait on the watch-tower. Many of God's ships pass in the night, and many of his gifts arrive at the wharf when those to whom they were consigned are asleep or gone.

We should persevere. God keeps us waiting that He may test and humble us, and know what is in our heart. Delays are his winnowing fan, discriminating between the chaff and the wheat. What we asked so vehemently we did not ask wisely. When we pray according to his heart, He graciously sustains us. Persevere; you do not know how near you are to the blessing you have sought for years. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

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LET'S KEEP PRAYING!

Ephesians 6:18

Irina Ratushinskaya's childhood quest for God, even while she was hearing school lectures promoting atheism and mocking Christianity, led her to a deep and unflinching faith. Her poetry expressed that faith and brought inspiration and hope to believers all over Russia.

It also brought her to the attention of the KGB. At age 28, Irina was arrested and sentenced to 7 years hard labor in the Bareshevo labor camp. There she was subjected to relentless interrogations, chilling cold, starvation, hard labor, and months of solitary confinement.

Irina's faith did not break. During the lonely nights, huddled against the cold wall of her cell, she composed poetry in her head

about God. When Irina was finally released, she credited the prayers of believers for sustaining her. In one of her poems, she wrote:

Believe me, it was often thus:
In solitary cells, on winter nights
A sudden sense of joy and warmth
And a resounding note of love.

And then, unsleeping, I would know
A-huddle by an icy wall:
Someone is thinking of me now,
Petitioning the Lord for me.

I wonder, have we been faithful in praying for people who are going through difficult situations? Our prayers can make a difference!
- David C. Egnor

You can expect God to intervene if you're willing to intercede.

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SPEAKING WELL OF GOD'S SON

Ephesians 6:19

Scottish missionary Frederick Arnot spoke well of God's Son in central Africa. Indeed, he spoke so well of Him that thousands of people in the area became Christians. But Arnot had made it his practice to speak well of God's Son long before leaving to serve his Lord in that unevangelized field.

When he was still young, Arnot and a friend tried to hold a street meeting in Glasgow's tavern district. As long as they sang hymns, the rough crowd tolerated them, but when they began to preach, their drunken audience drowned out their voices with hoots and profane howling.

Moved to tears, Arnot and his companion prepared to leave. But a tall, elderly Christian who had been listening urged, "Keep at it, laddie. God loves to hear men speak well of His Son." Encouraged by that admonition, he and his friend doggedly continued their witness and gained a more attentive audience. All through his years of ministry, Arnot's highest goal was to speak well of God's Son.

Is that our motive too? When opportunity presents itself, do we speak out boldly, telling who Jesus is and what He has done for us? How about speaking well of God's Son today? -- Vernon C. Grounds

Take control of my words today,
May they tell of Your great love;
And may the story of Your grace
Turn some heart to You above. -- Sees

Keep the faith --
but not to yourself.