

OCTOBER 2026 BIBLE STUDY

Words of Battle

A five session study on standing still while God fights

FAITHLABZ

Welcome to Words of Battle

September was about change. Five people, five pictures, and one thing underneath all of them: the person being changed was never the one doing the changing. Your part was two words. Stay, and look.

Here is what nobody tells you about the month after you decide to do that. It gets loud.

The week you decide to abide is the week the calendar fills up. The morning you decide to behold is the morning the phone will not stop. The old habit you thought was buried turns up at the door with a bag packed. The person who was fine with you last month is not fine with you now. And somewhere in the middle of it a voice you cannot quite place starts a running commentary on whether any of this was ever real.

The Bible does not treat that as a coincidence. It treats it as a war.

That is a heavy word and we are going to use it carefully, because the church has sometimes used it badly. We are not going to see a demon behind every flat tire. We are not going to pretend that the fight is mostly about feelings. And we are not going to hand you a technique. What we are going to do is open four stories about four people who found themselves in the middle of something they did not start, could not win, and could not get out of, and watch what God did.

A rich man in a country nobody can find on a map loses everything in one afternoon, and the reason is a conversation he never heard. A prisoner chained to a soldier in Rome looks at the man's uniform and starts writing. A king stands in front of his whole nation and prays the most honest sentence a leader ever prayed: we do not know what to do. And a prophet's servant wakes up to find an army around the town, and gets told to look again.

Four stories. Not one of them ends with the hero winning the fight. That is the thing to watch for.

Each week has its own Hebrew or Greek words, sitting right where the Bible puts them. The word for Satan turns out to be a job title. The word for the devil is a word about throwing things. The word for faithfulness in Psalm 91 comes from the same root as the word for Moses' hands being held steady on a hill. Words are how this study gets underneath the English, and this month they matter more than usual, because a war is a bad place to be confused about what things mean.

— HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This guide works for a small group or for one person with a cup of coffee. Each session runs about forty five to sixty minutes together. Don't rush it. If a question opens up a real conversation, let it run long. That's the study working, not the study getting off track.

For small groups. Have one person read The Story aloud, or take turns by paragraph. Then work the Discussion Questions together. The Observation questions are the warmup and everybody can answer them. The Interpretation questions are where the room gets interesting. The Application questions are where it gets personal, and those are the ones to protect time for. Don't skip them because you ran long.

For individual study. Go at your own pace. Read The Story slowly, sit with the word cards, and use the Personal Reflection prompts for journaling. The Weekly Practice at the end of each session is the part that leaves the page and gets into your week.

— WHAT YOU'LL NEED

A Bible in whatever translation you love. We quote the ESV here, and we'll tell you the Hebrew or Greek when it changes something. Something to write with. And a willingness to sit with a question that doesn't close cleanly. Some of the best moments in this study will happen while you're still not sure what you think.

— A NOTE ON THE HARD PARTS

This month opens with the hardest book in the Bible. Job loses ten children in a sentence, and the text lets you hear the conversation in heaven that he never got to hear. We are not going to soften that, and we are not going to explain it away, because the book itself refuses to. Job gets an answer at the end, but it is not the answer he asked for. If you are walking through something right now that nobody has been able to explain to you, session one was written with you in the room.

Four People, One Month

September was God working on the builder. October is what happens when something tries to knock the house down.

There are four sessions and then one more that ties them together. Each session is one person, told whole. You can read them in any order and each one stands on its own. But they were built to be read in this order, because they are four answers to the same question: what do you do when something fights back?

- 1 The Accuser.** Job. A conversation in heaven he never heard, everything gone in an afternoon, three friends who said nothing for a week and then should have kept saying it, and God answering out of a storm.
- 2 The Armor.** Paul. A prisoner in Rome chained to a soldier, writing to a church about armor he can see from where he sits, and the prophet seven hundred years earlier who saw God put it on first.
- 3 The Choir in Front of the Army.** Jehoshaphat. Three armies on the road, a king who admits he does not know what to do, and singers sent out ahead of the soldiers.
- 4 The Hills Full of Fire.** Elisha. A city surrounded overnight, a terrified servant, a prayer to open his eyes, and an enemy army led blind into the capital and fed a meal.
- 5 The Battle Is Not Yours.** Integration. What four people who never swung a sword have in common, and what to do with it on Monday.

— THE THREAD, BEFORE YOU START

Watch the hands. Job's hands scraping sores with a piece of broken pottery. A soldier's hand chained to Paul's. A king standing in a courtyard with his whole nation watching, his face soon on the ground. Moses' hands held up by two other men until the sun went down. Elisha leading a blind enemy army by the hand to dinner. In every story, the hands that win the fight are not the hands of the person in trouble. Session five is where that clicks together. It is worth knowing now that it is going somewhere: this month opens on an enemy who has to ask permission and closes on a parade.

— WATCHING ALONG

Every word here also gets its own short video the morning of, Tuesday through Sunday, with a longer story video on Wednesdays and the podcast on Sundays. There's a full day by day map at the back of this guide, so the study works whether or not you ever press play.



SESSION ONE

The Accuser

JOB | JOB 1 TO 2 AND 38 TO 42 | WEEK OF OCTOBER 6

A man loses his livestock, his servants, and all ten of his children between one messenger walking in and the next one walking in behind him. Then he loses his health. Then his wife tells him to curse God and get it over with. And the reader is given something Job never gets: a seat in the room where it was decided. This session tells the whole story, including the ending, and it introduces the enemy by his real name, which turns out not to be a name at all.

— OPENING QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Think of the hardest stretch you have been through. When you were in it, who or what did you blame? God, yourself, somebody else, bad luck, the devil? Did the explanation you landed on help, or did it just give the pain somewhere to sit?

— SCRIPTURE READING

Read aloud: Job 1:6 to 22, then Job 42:1 to 6.

Reference passages: Job 2:1 to 13 (the second round), Job 19:25 to 27 (the Redeemer), Job 38:1 to 7 (the whirlwind), Psalm 91:1 to 4 and 9 to 12 (the shield and the angels), 1 Peter 5:8 to 10 (the lion), Revelation 12:10 to 11 (the accuser thrown down).

— THE STORY (READ ALOUD, 10 TO 15 MINUTES)

Nobody knows where the land of Uz was. Nobody knows exactly when this happened. The book never says, and the best guess is somewhere out east of Israel in the age of Abraham, when a man's wealth was counted in animals and his standing was counted in sons. That is where we meet him.

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

JOB 1:1

Hold the word blameless, because the whole book turns on it. In Hebrew it is *tam*, and it does not mean sinless. It means whole. Intact. A man with no crack running through him, who is the same person in the field as he is at the altar. Job had seven sons and three daughters, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pairs of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and the text calls him the greatest man in the east. Every time his kids threw a party, Job got up early the next morning and offered a sacrifice for each of them, in case one of them had cursed God in his heart. He was not just rich and good. He was careful. He prayed for his children before anything was wrong.

Then the camera leaves earth.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

JOB 1:6 TO 7

We need to stop here, because the English has already done something the Hebrew does not. In Hebrew there is a little word in front of that name. It says *the satan*. Not Satan, a name, but the satan, a title. The word means adversary. Accuser. The one who stands against you in court. It is used elsewhere in the Old Testament for ordinary human opponents, and in Job it comes with the definite article every single time, which means the writer is not introducing a character with a name. He is introducing a job. There is someone whose work it is to walk the earth looking for a case to make, and he has come to make one.

And watch who speaks first about Job. It is not the accuser.

And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

JOB 1:8

God brings him up. God calls him my servant. God repeats the exact description from verse one. Whatever is about to happen, it does not happen because God lost track of Job. It happens because God was proud of him.

The accuser's answer is the oldest argument in the world.

Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

JOB 1:9 TO 11

Does Job fear God for no reason. In other words, of course he loves you. Look what you pay him. Take the hedge down and watch what happens. The accusation is not really against Job. It is against God. It says nobody loves you for you. It says the whole arrangement is a transaction, and the only reason anybody on earth worships is that worship has been working out for them.

And God says yes.

And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

JOB 1:12

Read that limit carefully. All that he has, in your hand. Not him. The accuser does not get to decide the terms. He has to ask, and he gets a boundary, and he leaves. That is the first thing this month wants you to know about your enemy, and it is said before a single thing goes wrong on earth: he needs permission, and he gets a fence.

Then one afternoon, four men walk in.

The first says raiders took the oxen and the donkeys and killed the servants. While he is still talking, the second says fire fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the shepherds. While he is still talking, the third says another raiding party took the camels and killed the men with them. And while he is still talking, the fourth one comes in.

"Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

JOB 1:18 TO 19

Ten children. One sentence. And here is what Job does.

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

JOB 1:20 TO 21

Notice the order. He tore his robe first. He shaved his head. He fell on the ground. The grief is not skipped and it is not pretty. And then, with his face in the dirt, he worships. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Not the raiders. Not the wind. Not the accuser, whose name Job will never once say, because he does not know he exists. Job puts it all in the hands of God, and the text says that in all of it he did not sin or charge God with wrong.

So the accuser loses. And he comes back.

Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face."

JOB 2:4 TO 5

Same argument, one layer deeper. Sure, he can lose his stuff. Touch his body. And again God sets a limit: he is in your hand, only spare his life. And Job is covered in sores from his feet to his scalp, and he goes and sits in the ashes, which by most accounts was the refuse heap outside town, and he picks up a piece of a broken pot to scrape himself with.

That is the image of this session. A man in an ash heap with a potsherd. Keep it, because you are going to need it when the story turns.

His wife has watched all of this. She buried the same ten children. And she says the only thing she has left.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

JOB 2:9 TO 10

Go easy on her. She is not a villain. She is a mother at the end of herself, saying out loud what the accuser said in heaven, and she has no idea she is quoting him. Job's answer is the sentence the rest of the book will have to earn: shall we receive good from God and not receive evil?

Then the friends come. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, three men from three different places who hear what happened and travel to be with him. And when they see him from a distance they do not recognize him. They tear their clothes, they throw dust on their heads, and then they do the best thing anybody does in this entire book.

And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

JOB 2:13

Seven days. Not a word. If they had gotten up on the eighth morning and gone home, they would be the heroes of the story. They did not. Job finally opens his mouth and curses the day he was born, and his friends decide that what the situation needs is an explanation.

What follows is about thirty five chapters of men arguing in poetry, and the friends' argument never changes. God is just. Suffering is punishment. Therefore you did something. Confess it and this will stop. It is tidy, it is religious, it is the kind of thing people still say at funerals, and it is wrong. The reader knows it is wrong because the reader was in the room in chapter one. Job knows it is wrong because he was there for his own life. And Job will not confess to a crime he did not commit, even to make the pain stop, even though his friends think refusing is the proof.

He says things in those chapters that would get him thrown out of a lot of churches. He says God has become his enemy. He says he wants a hearing and cannot get one. He says he wishes he had died in the womb. And in the middle of the darkest stretch of it, with no reason at all, he says this.

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I
shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints
within me!

JOB 19:25 TO 27

The word for Redeemer there is the word for the relative who buys you back when you have lost everything, the one who steps in when there is nobody else. Job, with his children gone and three friends calling him a liar, says that somebody is going to stand up for him at the end. He has no evidence. He says it anyway. And then his heart gives out from saying it.

Finally, after a young man named Elihu has his turn too, and after every human voice has worn itself out, God speaks. And he does not speak from a throne. He speaks from a storm.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that
darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will
question you, and you make it known to me."

JOB 38:1 TO 3

And then the first question.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have
understanding."

JOB 38:4

And for four chapters God asks Job questions he cannot answer. Who shut in the sea. Who told the dawn where to come up. Who feeds the lions, who taught the hawk to fly, who made the horse not afraid of the sword. It is the most beautiful passage about creation in the Bible, and here is what it is not. It is not an explanation. God never tells Job about the conversation in chapter one. He never mentions the accuser. He never says, here is why. Job asked for a reason, and God gave him himself.

And Job says this.

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I
despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

JOB 42:5 TO 6

Now my eye sees you. The man in the ash heap did not get an answer to his question. He got something he turned out to want more. And then God turns to the three friends, the ones who had defended God so carefully for thirty chapters. His anger burns against them, he says, because they have not spoken of him what is right, the way his servant Job has. The man who yelled at God in the dark was right about God. The men who explained God were wrong. Hold that for a minute, because it should change how you pray.

Then the last thing.

**And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends.
And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.**

JOB 42:10

When he had prayed for his friends. Not when he finally understood. Not when the sores healed. The turn comes when the man who was wronged gets on his knees for the men who wronged him. And God gives him back double the animals, and seven more sons and three more daughters, and the daughters get names in the text and an inheritance alongside their brothers, which almost never happened in that world. And Job lived a hundred and forty more years and saw four generations of his family.

Now, one thing to notice about the whole book. The accuser runs the first two chapters. And then he is never mentioned again. Not in the arguments. Not in the whirlwind. Not in the ending. He asked for permission, he got a fence, he lost, and he vanished from the story. The man he came to break outlived him in the text by forty chapters.

The accuser needs permission. God never does.

That is the Old Testament's picture of the enemy, and the New Testament sharpens it. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the translators reached for a word for the satan, and the word they picked was *diabolos*, the one we get devil from. It comes from a verb that means to throw across, and it means a slanderer, somebody who throws accusations between two people to split them. Peter, the fisherman who once denied Jesus three times by a fire, uses it like this, writing to Christians who were about to lose everything.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

1 PETER 5:8 TO 9

A lion prowls. It does not negotiate. But read what Peter does not say. He does not say fight him. He does not say find him. He says be awake, and stand firm in your faith, and know you are not the only one. The same posture Job took in the ashes.

And the last book of the Bible tells you how the accuser's story ends, and it uses his job title to do it.

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

REVELATION 12:10 TO 11

Day and night. That is his whole career, the one he was walking the earth for in Job chapter one. And he is thrown down. Not by the people he accused being good enough. By the blood of the Lamb, which answers every charge, and by their testimony, which is just saying out loud what happened to them.

So here is where this session lands. There is an enemy. The Bible is not embarrassed to say so. He is real, he is personal, and his work is to stand in the room and make a case against you, day and night, usually in your own voice. And he has to ask permission. He gets a fence every time. He lost the oldest argument in the world to a man in an ash heap who never even knew he was there. And he has already been thrown out of the court.

The hedge was never the thing keeping you safe. The one who built the hedge is.

God brought your name up first. The accuser only answered. And when the whole thing is over, the one who sat in the ashes is the one who gets to say: now my eye sees you.

— WORD STUDY SPOTLIGHT

שָׂטָן

satan (*sab-TAHN*)

STRONG'S H7854

MEANING An adversary, an opponent, an accuser. The one who stands against you, especially in a court.

APPEARS 27 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" **JOB 1:7**

In Job it always comes with the definite article: the satan, the adversary. The word is used of ordinary human opponents elsewhere in the Old Testament, and in Zechariah 3 the same figure stands at the right hand of a priest to accuse him, until God says, The LORD rebuke you. It is a title before it is a name. That matters, because a title describes a job, and the job is making a case against you. The book of Job lets you watch him make it, lose it, and disappear.

διάβολος **diabolos** (*dee-AH-bo-los*)

STRONG'S G1228

MEANING A slanderer, a false accuser. The devil.

APPEARS about 37 to 38 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **1 PETER 5:8**

Built from a verb that means to throw across or throw between, so a diabolos is someone who throws words between two people to split them apart. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, this is the word the translators reached for when they came to the satan of Job and Zechariah. Peter pairs it with a plain legal word, adversary, your opponent in a lawsuit, and then tells you to resist him firm in your faith. Not to argue the case. The case was answered somewhere else.

מַלְאָךְ

mal'ak (*mal-AKH*)

STRONG'S H4397

MEANING A messenger. One who is sent. Of God's heavenly messengers, an angel.

APPEARS 213 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

PSALM 91:11

The Old Testament uses one word for the man who runs a message across town and for the beings who stand in God's presence. About half the time it is a human courier. The word tells you what an angel is for: not a decoration, not a guardian you pray to, but one who is sent, carrying what God said. The devil quoted this very verse to Jesus in the wilderness, which is worth remembering. The accuser knows the angel verses too. He just leaves out the part about all your ways.



emet (eb-MET)

STRONG'S H571

MEANING Truth, firmness, reliability. Faithfulness, in the sense of something you can lean your weight on.

APPEARS 127 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. **PSALM 91:4**

It comes from the same root as amen, which is why amen means something like "that holds." In Psalm 91 the thing that holds is a shield, and notice whose faithfulness it is. Not yours. His. The shield in that verse is God's own reliability, wrapped around a person the way a bird's wing wraps around a chick. Session two will meet the Greek word for truth on a soldier's belt. This is the Hebrew one, and it is a wing first.



hypomone (hoo-po-mo-NAY)

STRONG'S G5281

MEANING Steadfastness, endurance. Literally remaining under a weight rather than getting out from under it.

APPEARS 32 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. **JAMES 5:11**

James, the brother of Jesus, picks Job as the example of this word, which tells you what the word means. Job was not patient. He shouted, he argued, he demanded a hearing. What he did not do was leave. He stayed under it. Hypomone is not a calm face. It is staying put under a weight you cannot lift, and James says the point of it was the purpose of the Lord, which turned out to be compassion. You see that part at the end. You never see it from the ash heap.



magen (mah-GAYN)

STRONG'S H4043

MEANING A shield, the small round kind a soldier carries on his arm. Figuratively, a protector.

APPEARS 63 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." **GENESIS 15:1**

The first time the word appears in the Bible, God is calling himself one. Not giving one. Being one. Abram has just gone to war to rescue his nephew and turned down a king's reward, and he is afraid of what comes next, and God's answer is a sentence with I am in it. Every later shield in Scripture, including the one Paul hands you in session two, is a copy of this. The original is a person.

MEANING Whole, complete, intact. Blameless in the sense of having no crack running through you.

APPEARS 14 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright. **JOB 1:1**

Same root as tamim, the word for the Passover lamb without blemish that closed September. Not sinless; Job ends the book repenting in dust and ashes. Whole. The same man on the inside as on the outside. God says it about Job twice to the accuser's face, and the accuser never disputes it. His whole argument is that a whole man will crack if you take enough away. He is wrong, but notice he does not even try to say Job is a fake. He knows better.

— DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

Observation | What does the text say?

- In Job 1:6 to 12, who speaks first about Job? List every limit God places on the accuser. Who leaves the room at the end?
- Read Job 1:20 to 22 slowly. What does Job do before he worships? What does he say took his children, and what does he not say?
- In Job 42:7, what does God say about the three friends, and what does he say about Job? Which of them had been defending God?

Interpretation | What does it mean?

- The satan in Job is a title, not a name. How does it change the story to think of the accuser as a job description rather than a character? What is the job?
- God never tells Job about the conversation in chapter one. Why not? What did Job get instead, and is it better or worse than an explanation?
- Job's friends said true things about God's justice and were called wrong. Job said wild things to God's face and was called right. What is the difference?
- The accuser runs chapters one and two and then never appears again. What does that say about how much room he actually gets in a life God has his hand on?

Application | What do I do?

- Name the explanation you have been given for the hardest stretch of your life, by a friend, by a book, or by yourself. Does it sound more like the friends or more like God? How can you tell?
- Job's turn came when he prayed for the men who had hurt him. Who would that be for you? What would it cost to pray for them this week, out loud, by name?
- The accuser makes his case day and night, usually in your own voice. What is the sentence he says to you most? Write it down, and then write next to it who answered it, and how.

CROSS REFERENCES

Zechariah 3:1 to 2 The same accuser, standing at the right hand of a priest named Joshua to make his case, and God answering with one sentence: The LORD rebuke you. Is not this a brand plucked from the fire? The priest never says a word in his own defense.

Luke 22:31 to 32 Jesus tells Peter that Satan has demanded to have him, to sift him like wheat, and that Jesus has already prayed for him. The accuser is still asking permission, centuries after Job. And someone is still standing in the gap.

Psalms 91:3 He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler. The word for deliver is *natsal*, to snatch away, a word from March's rescue month. Delivery in Psalm 91 is not the trap failing to close. It is a hand pulling you out of it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION (SOLO JOURNALING)

- Write the prayer Job would have prayed if he had known about chapter one. Then write the one he actually prayed. Which one is closer to what you pray?
- When did you last say the rawest true thing you had to God? Job's version was called right. Write yours. It does not have to leave the notebook.
- Now my eye sees you. Write about a time you asked God why and got something else instead. What was it?

WEEKLY PRACTICE: SIT IN THE ASHES

This week, practice the thing the friends got right for seven days and then abandoned.

Day one. Write down the hardest thing in your life right now in one sentence. No explanation attached.

Day two. Read Job 1:20 to 22 out loud. Tear nothing, shave nothing, but say Job's sentence out loud after it: the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Even if you cannot finish it.

Day three. Find somebody who is suffering and sit with them for a set amount of time without fixing anything. Twenty minutes. Say almost nothing.

Day four. Read Job 38:1 to 7. Go outside at night, or early morning, and look at something you did not make. Stay there until you have run out of things to say.

Day five. Write down the accuser's sentence, the one he says to you most. Under it, write Revelation 12:10 to 11 by hand.

Day six. Pray for the person who hurt you most in this stretch of your life. Out loud. By name. This is Job 42:10 and it is the hardest day of the month.

Keep the paper. You'll want it in session five.

— CLOSING PRAYER PROMPT

As you close, pray about these three things. Out loud if the group is willing.

- The fence. Thank God that the enemy has to ask permission, and that God never has to ask anyone.
- The ash heap. Name to him the thing you are sitting in, without the explanation you have been attaching to it.
- The friends. Ask for the grace to pray for whoever has gotten your suffering wrong, and the honesty to admit when it was you.



SESSION TWO

The Armor

PAUL | EPHESIANS 6 AND ISAIAH 59 | WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

The most famous passage about spiritual warfare in the Bible was written by a man in custody, most likely chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier, looking at the man's uniform. This session tells how he got there, walks through the armor one piece at a time with the soldier standing right there, and then goes back seven hundred years to a prophet who saw God put the same armor on first. The word that shows up four times in four verses is not fight. It is stand.

— OPENING QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Think of the last time you felt genuinely outmatched. Not busy, not stressed, but up against something stronger than you. What did you reach for? What did you wish you had reached for?

— SCRIPTURE READING

Read aloud: Ephesians 6:10 to 20.

Reference passages: Acts 28:16 to 20 and 30 to 31 (the house in Rome), Isaiah 59:15 to 17 (God's armor), Isaiah 11:5 and 52:7 (the belt and the feet), Hebrews 4:12 (the sword), 2 Corinthians 10:3 to 5 (the weapons), Philippians 1:12 to 14 (what the chain did).

— THE STORY (READ ALOUD, 10 TO 15 MINUTES)

Picture a rented house in Rome, about thirty years after the resurrection. The man living in it cannot leave. Luke, the doctor who wrote down everything he could find out about the early church, describes the arrangement in one line.

And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

ACTS 28:16

By himself, with a soldier. That is the kind of custody Rome used for a prisoner who was waiting for a hearing before the emperor and was not considered dangerous enough for a cell. And by every account we have of how that custody worked, it meant a chain. A light one, running from the prisoner's wrist to the soldier's. Paul says so himself, speaking to the Jewish leaders of Rome a few days after he arrives.

For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.

ACTS 28:20

This is Paul. The same man who, before he was Paul, went by Saul and held the coats while a man named Stephen was stoned to death, and then went house to house dragging Christians to prison. The man a light knocked flat on a road to Damascus. The man who spent three years in Arabia and Damascus, and more in his hometown that nobody wrote down. The man who then walked most of the known world telling people about Jesus, got beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and finally arrested in Jerusalem, and appealed his case to Caesar because it was his right as a Roman citizen. So they shipped him to Rome, and the ship went down on the way, and he swam ashore on Malta and finished the trip three months later. And now he is here. Luke tells us how long.

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

ACTS 28:30 TO 31

Two years. By the accounts we have, guards like that worked in shifts, so soldier after soldier was chained to a man who would not stop talking about Jesus. Paul writes to another church from this stretch and says the whole imperial guard has found out why he is there. You can imagine why. There was no getting away from him.

And at some point in those two years, most scholars think, he writes to a church in Ephesus. A city on the coast of what is now Turkey where he had spent about three years, longer than almost anywhere. A city famous for its temple and its sorcery, where people who came to Jesus had once piled their spell books in the street and burned them. He writes them a letter that is mostly about who they are now, and about the church, and about marriage and children and work. And then, right at the end, he turns to the fight.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:10 TO 11

Whole armor. In Greek it is one word, *panoplia*, the complete kit of a heavily armed soldier, everything from the belt to the sword. It shows up only three times in the whole New Testament, and two of them are in this paragraph. Paul does not say grab a weapon. He says put on all of it. And he says whose it is. The armor of God. It means more than it sounds like, and the Old Testament is going to explain it.

Then he says the thing that keeps this passage from being a pep talk.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 6:12

Not flesh and blood. The person who is making your life hard is not the enemy. Your boss is not the enemy. Your ex is not the enemy. The guy in the comment section is not the enemy. Paul, chained to a Roman soldier who represents the empire that, by the accounts we have, would one day kill him, says the soldier is not the enemy. There is something behind the people, and it is the something Job met in session one, and it is organized.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

EPHESIANS 6:13

Now count. Stand against, in verse eleven. Withstand, in verse thirteen. Stand firm, in verse thirteen. And the next verse opens with it again: stand therefore. Four times in four verses. Three of them are the Greek *histemi*, to take your position and hold it, and the fourth, withstand, is the same word with against on the front. Paul never says advance. He never says attack. He never says win. The entire assignment, said four ways, is to still be standing where you were put when the evil day is over.

Then the pieces, and here is where the soldier matters. Paul is not making this up from a book. He is looking at a man.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

EPHESIANS 6:14

The belt first, because everything hangs on it. A Roman soldier's belt was wide and heavy; it held the sword, it gathered the tunic so he could move, and in the field, by the accounts we have, it was the first thing he put on and the last thing he took off. Paul calls it truth. *Aletheia*, what is actually the case, as opposed to what you have been telling yourself. You cannot fight in a lie. The belt is not your honesty, though that matters. It is reality, buckled on, the thing every other piece attaches to.

The breastplate is righteousness. *Dikaiosyne*. Being right with God, standing in the clear. Covers the chest, which is to say covers the heart, which is to say covers the exact place the accuser aims. When the voice says you are not good enough for this, the breastplate is the answer, and it is not your record. We are about to see whose it is.

and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

EPHESIANS 6:15

A legionary's boots were studded with iron nails on the sole, by the accounts we have, so that he could hold his ground on bad terrain. Paul puts the gospel of peace there. *Eirene*, peace, the Greek twin of shalom. Footing. What lets you stand still on ground that is trying to move you is the news that the war between you and God is already over.

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

EPHESIANS 6:16

Two things here. First, the shield. The Greek word is not the small round one; it comes from the word for a door, and it means the big rectangular shield a legionary hid his whole body behind, and historians tell us soldiers soaked them in water before a battle because the enemy fired arrows wrapped in pitch and set alight. That is the flaming dart. Second, what the shield is: faith. *Pistis*, trust. Not a feeling of confidence. Trusting the one who said I am your shield to Abram. Paul says it extinguishes all of them. Not deflects. Puts out.

and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

EPHESIANS 6:17

The helmet, over the head, over the mind, the thing that keeps you thinking straight, is salvation. The settled fact that you have been rescued. And then the only weapon on the list. The sword. In Greek it is *machaira*, and it is not a long sword. It is the short one, the stabbing sword a Roman carried on his belt for close work, the kind you use when the enemy is right in front of you. Paul says this one is the word of God. The writer of Hebrews uses the same word for it, sharper than any two-edged sword, and says it goes in between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It is the one piece on the list that does damage, and it is not a weapon you make. It is a book you open.

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

EPHESIANS 6:18

Prayer is not a seventh piece of armor. Paul does not say put on. It is the posture underneath all of it, the thing a soldier does while standing, at all times. And then the prisoner asks for prayer for himself, and tells them exactly what he is.

and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

EPHESIANS 6:19 TO 20

An ambassador in chains. An ambassador was supposed to be untouchable. Paul is in custody and calls himself the envoy of another kingdom. He asks not to be freed but to be bold. The chain is not the problem. Silence would be.

The whole assignment is to still be standing where God put you when the evil day is over. Not to win. He already did that.

Now go back seven hundred years, because the armor has a history Paul's readers would have known and most of us do not. A prophet named Isaiah, who spoke to Jerusalem for about forty years and saw the city sliding toward disaster, writes about a time when there is no justice anywhere and nobody left to stand up for the truth. And he writes what God does about it.

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

ISAIAH 59:16 TO 17

Hold that next to Ephesians 6. The breastplate of righteousness. The helmet of salvation. God put them on first. When there was no one else to fight, he armed himself and went. And the word for righteousness there is the Hebrew *tsedaqah*, which is the word Paul's Greek is translating. And Isaiah has the belt too, earlier, on the coming King: righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. And he has the feet: how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace.

So when Paul says the armor of God, he does not mean armor God hands out. He means God's own armor. The one he wore. You are not putting on equipment. You are putting on what God put on when he came to do the thing nobody else could do. Which is why none of it is yours to generate. The belt is his truth. The breastplate is his righteousness. The peace is his, the faith is in him, the salvation is from him, the sword is his word. Your part is to put it on and stand there.

Paul says it one more way, writing to a different church, in case anybody missed it.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3 TO 4

Weapons. The word is *hoplon*, the root of *panoplia*, the plain word for a soldier's kit. He says they are not of the flesh. Not your willpower. Not your cleverness. Not your temper. They have divine power, and they are for strongholds, which are the fortified places in a person's thinking where the lies have dug in.

And here is what the chain did, by Paul's own account to the church at Philippi.

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12 TO 14

The thing that was supposed to stop him turned into the thing that spread him. Soldier after soldier, shift after shift, chained to the gospel for hours at a time. The empire thought it was holding a prisoner. It was running a seminary.

The armor was God's before it was yours. You are not fighting in your own equipment. You are standing in what he wore when he came for you.

— WORD STUDY SPOTLIGHT

πανοπλία **panoplia** (*pan-op-LEE-ah*)

STRONG'S G3833

MEANING Full armor. The complete equipment of a heavily armed soldier, defensive and offensive together.

APPEARS 3 times in the New Testament: Luke 11:22, Ephesians 6:11, Ephesians 6:13

KEY VERSE Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **EPHESIANS 6:11**

Built from pas, all, and hoplon, a weapon or piece of kit. It is the whole set, and Paul says it twice in three verses because the temptation is to pick a favorite. A soldier with a breastplate and no helmet is a soldier with an exposed head. The only other time the word appears, Jesus uses it about a strong man guarding his palace in full armor until someone stronger comes and takes it all away. He is the stronger one, and the strong man has already been stripped.

ἀλήθεια **aletheia** (ah-LAY-thay-ab)

STRONG'S G225

MEANING Truth. What is real, what is actually the case, as opposed to appearance or illusion.

APPEARS 109 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth. **EPHESIANS 6:14**

To a Greek ear this word meant reality more than sincerity. Not just telling the truth but living in the truth, in what is actually so. Paul makes it the belt, the piece everything else hangs from, because a soldier fighting in a fantasy is a soldier about to die. Jesus said the devil does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. The accuser's whole method is unreality. The belt is the fact of things, buckled on first.

δικαιοσύνη **dikaiosyne** (dik-ab-yo-SOO-nay)

STRONG'S G1343

MEANING Righteousness. Right standing, being in the clear before God. Also justice.

APPEARS 92 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE And having put on the breastplate of righteousness. **EPHESIANS 6:14**

This is the Greek for the Hebrew tsedaqah in Isaiah 59:17, where God himself puts on righteousness as a breastplate before he goes to war. The breastplate covers the heart, which is where the accuser aims every charge. The piece that answers him is not your record. It is a right standing you were given, worn over the exact spot where you are most easily told you do not belong.

εἰρήνη **eirene** (ay-RAY-nay)

STRONG'S G1515

MEANING Peace. Wholeness, everything joined together as it should be. The Greek for shalom.

APPEARS 92 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **EPHESIANS 6:15**

The piece on the feet is footing, and Paul says the footing is good news about peace. The war between you and God is over; that is the gospel of peace. A soldier who believes that can hold ground that is trying to move him, because the one thing that could actually unsettle him has been settled. Session three will meet the Hebrew shalom, where the same word describes a kingdom that went quiet after a battle nobody in it fought.

πίστις **pistis** (PIS-tis)

STRONG'S G4102

MEANING Faith, trust, reliance. Also faithfulness. Leaning your weight on something.

APPEARS 243 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. **EPHESIANS 6:16**

The shield is faith, and the shield in Ephesians is the big one, shaped like a door, that a soldier hid his whole body behind. Faith here is not confidence in yourself. It is trusting the one who told Abram, I am your shield. Paul says it puts the flaming arrows out, not just blocks them, and the historical picture fits: soldiers soaked those shields in water. Trust is what the fire goes out in.

μάχαιρα **machaira** (MAH-khai-rah)

STRONG'S G3162

MEANING A short sword or dagger. The close combat weapon, as opposed to the long sword.

APPEARS 29 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **EPHESIANS 6:17**

The only weapon in the list, and it is the short one, the kind you use when the enemy is close. Hebrews 4:12 uses the same word: the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. Jesus used it in the wilderness; every answer he gave the devil began with "it is written." The sword is not your argument. It is a sentence of Scripture, said out loud, at close range.

ἵστημι **histemi** (HIS-tay-mee)

STRONG'S G2476

MEANING To stand. To take a position and hold it. To be set in place.

APPEARS about 153 to 155 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. **EPHESIANS 6:13**

Four stand words in four verses, three of them this one and the fourth its cousin anthistemi, to stand against, which is session four's word. Paul never says march, attack, or conquer in this passage. The entire objective is to be found still standing where you were placed when the evil day is over. In a month called Words of Battle, the central verb turns out to be the one that means do not move.

MEANING A weapon, a piece of military equipment. A tool or implement.

APPEARS 6 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. **2 CORINTHIANS 10:4**

The root of panoplia. Paul uses it three ways: for the weapons of warfare that are not of the flesh, for the armor of light we put on because the night is nearly over, and, in Romans 6, for your own body parts presented to God as instruments of righteousness. Your hands and your mouth are weapons. The only question is whose.

— DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

Observation | What does the text say?

- In Ephesians 6:10 to 14, count every form of the word stand. What is Paul telling the reader to do, and what does he never tell them to do?
- Go through the six pieces in verses 14 to 17. Which are defensive and which are offensive? Which piece covers which part of a body?
- Compare Isaiah 59:17 with Ephesians 6:14 and 17. Who is wearing the armor in Isaiah? Which pieces match?

Interpretation | What does it mean?

- Paul says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Who have you been treating as the enemy who is not? What changes about a conflict if the person in front of you is not the real opponent?
- The armor of God turns out to be armor God himself wore first. How does that change the way you read put on? What is actually yours in the list?
- The only weapon is the word of God, a short sword for close work. What does it look like to use Scripture at close range rather than as a general idea?
- Paul was chained to a guard for two years and calls himself an ambassador. What was the chain for, in the end?

Application | What do I do?

- Which piece are you fighting without? Be specific. Not "faith" in general, but the place where you are standing in a lie, or without footing, or with your head uncovered.
- Name a stronghold, a fortified lie in your own thinking that has been there long enough to feel like furniture. What sentence of Scripture is the sword for that one?
- Paul asked for boldness, not release. What have you been asking God to remove that he may intend to use? What would it mean to ask for boldness in it instead?

CROSS REFERENCES

1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul's earlier version of the same picture, written years before: a breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. The pieces move. The point does not. Cover the heart and the head.

Romans 13:12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. The same word, *hoplon*. You put the armor on because of what time it is.

Luke 11:21 to 22 The only other *panoplia* in the New Testament. A strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace until one stronger than he attacks him and takes away his armor in which he trusted. Jesus is talking about himself and the devil. The strong man has already been disarmed. The armor you wear is the stronger one's.

PERSONAL REFLECTION (SOLO JOURNALING)

- Write the lie you have been fighting in. The thing you tell yourself that is not actually the case. Then write what is actually the case, and buckle it on.
- Who is the soldier chained to you right now? The person or circumstance you did not choose and cannot leave. What would it mean for that chain to serve the gospel instead of stopping it?
- Where is the heart shot landing lately? The specific accusation that gets through. Write Isaiah 59:17 beside it and notice who was wearing the breastplate first.

WEEKLY PRACTICE: PUT IT ON OUT LOUD

A soldier put his kit on in order, every time. For six days, do this before you look at your phone.

Day one. Belt. Say one true thing about your situation out loud, the actual state of things, without spin in either direction.

Day two. Breastplate. Say out loud, I am right with God because of what Jesus did, not because of what I did. Say it until it does not feel like a slogan.

Day three. Shoes. Read Isaiah 52:7. Then write down one person who needs to hear good news from you this week and when you will say it.

Day four. Shield. Write down the flaming dart, the accusation that gets through most. Then write under it, I am your shield, Genesis 15:1, and leave it there.

Day five. Helmet. Read Ephesians 6:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Spend five minutes thinking about the fact that you have been rescued, and nothing else.

Day six. Sword. Pick one verse for one lie. Memorize it. Say it out loud the next time the lie shows up.

Then stand. That is the whole week.

— CLOSING PRAYER PROMPT

As you close, pray about these three things.

- The real enemy. Ask God to show you where you have been fighting flesh and blood, and to forgive you for it.
- The armor he wore. Thank him that every piece was his first, and ask for the humility to put on what you did not make.
- The chain. Name the thing you cannot get free of and ask for boldness inside it, not just rescue from it.



SESSION THREE

The Choir in Front of the Army

JEHOSHAPHAT | 2 CHRONICLES 20 | WEEK OF OCTOBER 20

Three armies are a day's march from Jerusalem and the king of Judah has no army big enough to meet them. So he calls the whole country to the temple courtyard, stands up in front of them, and prays a prayer that ends with the most honest sentence a leader ever said out loud: we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. What God tells him to do next makes no military sense at all. He puts the choir in front of the soldiers. This session tells the whole thing, and it is the month's clearest picture of what standing still actually looks like.

— OPENING QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

When was the last time you had to say "I don't know what to do" out loud, to another person? How did it feel? What happened after you said it?

— SCRIPTURE READING

Read aloud: 2 Chronicles 20:1 to 4, then 20:12 to 24.

Reference passages: 2 Chronicles 20:5 to 9 (the prayer), 2 Chronicles 7:12 to 15 (the promise he stands on), Exodus 14:13 to 14 (the first time anyone was told to stand still and watch), Habakkuk 2:4 and 2 Chronicles 20:20 (faith that holds), Isaiah 26:3 (perfect peace), Philippians 4:6 to 7 (the peace that guards).

— THE STORY (READ ALOUD, 10 TO 15 MINUTES)

About eight hundred and fifty years before Jesus, the kingdom David built had already split in two. The north, called Israel, had its own kings and its own golden calves. The south, called Judah, had Jerusalem and the temple and David's line on the throne. The fourth king on that throne after Solomon was a man named Jehoshaphat, and on the whole he was a good one. He sent teachers out through the cities with the book of the law. He set up judges and told them to judge for God, not for men. He was not perfect; he made a bad alliance with the north and nearly died in a battle that was not his, and a prophet told him so to his face. But he came home from that and kept going.

Then the messengers came.

After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi).

2 CHRONICLES 20:1 TO 2

Three peoples, coming together, around the south end of the Dead Sea. And they are already at Engedi, the oasis on the sea's west shore where David once hid from Saul in the caves. From there to Jerusalem is a hard day or two uphill. There is no time to raise an army, and the text makes it clear that even with time it would not have been enough.

Here is what the king does first.

Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

2 CHRONICLES 20:3 TO 4

He was afraid. The Bible does not hide it and neither should you. Fear is not the failure in this story. What he does with it is the story. He sets his face, which is a Hebrew way of saying he decides and does not undecide. And he calls a fast. The Hebrew word is *tsom*, and it is not a diet and it is not a performance. It is a whole nation putting down its bread so it can hold something else with both hands. They come from every town. They bring their children.

Then the king stands up in the temple courtyard in front of all of them and prays. It is one of the great prayers of the Old Testament and it has a shape worth learning. He starts with who God is.

"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."

2 CHRONICLES 20:6

Then what God has done. You drove out the nations before us. You gave this land to the descendants of Abraham your friend. We built you a house here. And then he reminds God of a deal.

'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you'

2 CHRONICLES 20:9

And he finishes the sentence: and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save. That is not Jehoshaphat's idea. That is Solomon's prayer from the day the temple was dedicated, about a hundred years earlier, when Solomon asked that if the people ever came to this house in trouble and prayed, God would hear from heaven. And God had answered him, in the night.

Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

2 CHRONICLES 7:15

The word there is *tefillah*, prayer, and it is the Old Testament's main word for it. Jehoshaphat is standing in the exact place God promised to listen, holding God to the exact promise. That is what prayer in the Bible so often is. Not inventing something to say. Finding what God already said and standing on it.

Then he lays out the problem. These are the very nations God would not let Israel attack on the way out of Egypt. Judah left them alone, and now they are repaying the kindness by coming to throw Judah out of its own inheritance. And then the end of the prayer, the sentence this whole session is built on.

"O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

2 CHRONICLES 20:12

We are powerless. We do not know what to do. A king said that, in public, with the army he did not have standing in front of him. And then the second half: but our eyes are on you. That is not a plan. He is admitting he has no plan. It is a direction to look.

Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

2 CHRONICLES 20:13

The whole nation, standing, waiting, with the kids. And God answers through a man nobody had heard of.

And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

2 CHRONICLES 20:14

A Levite from the family of Asaph, which is the family whose name sits on a dozen psalms. A musician's family. Remember that. And here is what he says.

And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's."

2 CHRONICLES 20:15

The battle is not yours but God's. Then he tells them where the enemy will be tomorrow, by name, the ascent of Ziz and the end of a valley by the wilderness of Jeruel. And then the instruction.

You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

2 CHRONICLES 20:17

Two Hebrew verbs sit back to back in that line. The first means take your stand, station yourselves. The second is *amad*, the plain word for stand, stay where you are. And then: see the salvation of the LORD. The Hebrew for salvation is *yeshu'ah*, the word March was built on, which shares its root with Jesus' own name. Any Israelite hearing this would have heard an echo, because Moses said almost the same thing at the Red Sea with Pharaoh's chariots coming: fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, the LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. Jahaziel is quoting the oldest victory in the nation's memory to a king who thinks he is about to lose.

**When you do not know what to do, you still know where to look.
Standing still is not doing nothing. It is refusing to leave the place
where God said he would act.**

And the king's response is the right one. He bows with his face to the ground, and all Judah with him, and the Levites stand up and praise God with a very loud voice. Nothing has happened yet. The enemy is still at Engedi. They are worshiping on the strength of a promise.

Then morning.

And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed."

2 CHRONICLES 20:20

In Hebrew that first sentence is a play on one word. Believe and be established are the same root, *aman*, the root that gives us amen. Trust him and you will be held firm. Lean on him and you will be leaned on. It is the same play Isaiah made to a frightened king a hundred years later: if you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. Faith in the Old Testament is not a feeling about God. It is putting your weight on something that holds.

And then the king does the thing this session is named for.

And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."

2 CHRONICLES 20:21

The singers go first. Not the archers. Not the cavalry. The choir, in the robes they wore for worship in the temple, walking in front of the soldiers toward an army three nations deep, singing one line over and over: give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever. That is the refrain from Psalm 136, the one the whole congregation would answer back. Steadfast love there is *chesed*, the word June was built on, the love that keeps its promises. They are singing a promise at the enemy.

The Hebrew behind "those who were to sing" is the verb *shir*, to sing, and it is the plainest word in the language for it. There is nothing mystical here. These are the temple musicians, doing the job they did every day, in a place where it looked like suicide.

And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

2 CHRONICLES 20:22 TO 23

When they began to sing. Not when they finished. The text never says who the ambush was. It says the LORD set it, and that the three armies turned on each other. Two of them wiped out the third, and then the two finished each other. By the time Judah reaches the lookout over the valley, there is nothing to do.

When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped.

2 CHRONICLES 20:24

It is a valley full of dead men. The Bible does not make war pretty, even a war God fought. What Judah does for the next three days is carry off the spoil, because there was more than they could lift. On the fourth day they stop in that valley and bless God, and the place gets a name, the Valley of Beracah, which means the Valley of Blessing. And then they walk home.

They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

2 CHRONICLES 20:28 TO 30

They came back to the house. The same courtyard where a king said we do not know what to do. The music went out ahead of the army and came home ahead of it too. And the last word of the story is quiet. Not shalom; the Hebrew word there means settled, undisturbed, the way a sea goes flat. But the thing underneath it is shalom, and Isaiah says where that comes from.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

ISAIAH 26:3

In Hebrew it says shalom shalom, the word doubled, which is how Hebrew says perfect. And it is kept by someone else. The mind that gets it is the mind that is stayed, leaned, propped on God. Our eyes are on you. That is the whole mechanism of the chapter in one verse.

Paul, writing from his own chain, says the New Testament version to a church he loved.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 TO 7

Prayer, *proseuche*, with thanksgiving. That is Jehoshaphat's whole morning: a prayer and a thank you, in that order, before anything had happened. And the word Paul uses for guard is a soldier's word. It is the word for a garrison, troops posted inside a city to hold it. The peace of God does not stand outside the walls and hope. It moves in.

One more thing about this story, because it is easy to make it a formula and it is not one. Jehoshaphat did not sing his way to victory. The singing did not do anything to the enemy. God did. The singing was what it looked like for a nation to believe, out loud, in public, in the dark, that the battle was not theirs. If you need a technique, this is the wrong story. If you need to know what to do when you do not know what to do, it is the right one. You tell the truth about how powerless you are. You put your eyes where they belong. And then you walk toward the thing, singing, and let God be the one who fights.

The battle is not yours. Your job is to stand where he told you to stand and sing like you believe it. He does the rest, and you walk home with music.

— WORD STUDY SPOTLIGHT

תְּפִלָּה **tefillah** (*teh-fil-LAH*)

STRONG'S H8605

MEANING Prayer. A plea, an intercession, a prayer offered to God.

APPEARS 77 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. **2 CHRONICLES 7:15**

This is God's answer to Solomon on the night after the temple was dedicated, and it is the promise Jehoshaphat stands on a hundred years later when he says we will stand before this house and cry out to you, and you will hear. The Old Testament's main word for prayer is tied to a place where God said he would listen. Under the new covenant that place is a person. The logic is the same: you pray where he said he would hear.

צִוּם **tsom** (*tsome*)

STRONG'S H6685

MEANING A fast. Going without food on purpose, to seek God.

APPEARS 26 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. **2 CHRONICLES 20:3**

The first thing a frightened king does is tell a whole nation to stop eating. Fasting in the Bible is never a trade, as if hunger could buy something. It is a way of saying with your body that there is something you need more than bread. Jehoshaphat is afraid and he fasts, in that order, and the fear becomes the reason for the fast rather than the thing that paralyzes him.

עמד **amad** (*ab-MAHD*)

STRONG'S H5975

MEANING To stand. To stay in place, to remain, to hold a position.

APPEARS about 525 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf. **2 CHRONICLES 20:17**

One of the most common verbs in the Old Testament, and here it is the whole battle plan. Jahaziel puts two standing words back to back, take your position and then stay in it, and follows them with the Red Sea sentence: see the salvation of the LORD. Paul's four stands in Ephesians 6 are the Greek echo of this. In both Testaments, the instruction to a person who is outmatched is the same. Do not run and do not charge. Stand where he put you and watch.

שיר **shir** (*sheer*)

STRONG'S H7891

MEANING To sing. The plain verb for singing, especially singing to God.

APPEARS 87 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE He appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army. **2 CHRONICLES 20:21**

The noun shir, a song, is this verb's twin and is the word in the titles of many psalms. There is nothing exotic about it. Jehoshaphat did not invent a weapon. He sent the ordinary temple singers to do their ordinary job in a place that made it an act of faith. The text is careful: the LORD set the ambush, when they began to sing. The singing did not defeat anyone. It was what trust sounded like, out loud, before the result was in.

אמונה **emunah** (*eh-moo-NAH*)

STRONG'S H530

MEANING Faithfulness, steadiness, firmness. Faith as something that holds its position.

APPEARS 49 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. **HABAKKUK 2:4**

Same root as amen and as the belt word emet, and the same root Jehoshaphat plays on in 20:20: believe, and you will be established. The clearest picture of emunah in the Bible is a pair of hands. In Exodus 17, when Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms until sunset, the text says his hands were emunah, steady. Faith is not a surge of feeling. It is a hand that stays up because something is holding it there.

שלום **shalom** (*shah-LOME*)

STRONG'S H7965

MEANING Peace, wholeness, completeness. Everything in its place and nothing missing.

APPEARS 237 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. **ISAIAH 26:3**

The Hebrew doubles it, shalom shalom, which is how the language says perfect or complete. Notice the verb. God keeps you in it. You do not generate shalom; you are kept in it, and the condition is a mind that is stayed, propped, leaned on him. That is Jehoshaphat's our eyes are on you, written as a promise. The quiet at the end of 2 Chronicles 20 is a different word, but this is what was underneath it.

προσευχή **proseuche** (*pros-yoo-KHAY*)

STRONG'S G4335

MEANING Prayer. A prayer directed toward God.

APPEARS about 36 to 37 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **PHILIPPIANS 4:6**

Paul puts prayer and thanksgiving in the same breath, which is exactly the order of Jehoshaphat's morning: a plea, then a choir, before anything had changed. And the promise that follows uses a military word. The peace of God will guard, garrison, post troops inside your heart and mind. In Ephesians 6 this same word closes the armor passage, praying at all times. Prayer is not the seventh piece. It is the posture the whole set is worn in.

— DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

Observation | What does the text say?

- In 2 Chronicles 20:3 to 4, what is the first thing Jehoshaphat feels, and what are the first three things he does? Who shows up?
- Read the prayer in 20:6 to 12. What is the order of it? Where does the problem come in, and what is the very last sentence?
- In 20:21 to 24, who goes first, what do they say, and at what exact moment does God act? What is left for Judah to do when they arrive?

Interpretation | What does it mean?

- Jehoshaphat says we do not know what to do in front of his entire nation. Why does the Bible record that as faith rather than failure? What would it have looked like for him to pretend?
- The battle is not yours but God's. If that is true, what is still yours? Be precise, from the text.
- The singers go in front of the army and the text says God acted when they began to sing. Is the singing a cause, a condition, or something else? What goes wrong if we make it a technique?
- The chapter ends with the kingdom quiet. What is the difference between quiet because the threat is gone and the peace Isaiah 26:3 describes? Can you have the second without the first?

Application | What do I do?

- What is the thing in your life right now about which the honest sentence is "I do not know what to do"? Say it out loud to the group, or write it down, without the plan you have been attaching to it.
- Jehoshaphat stood on a promise God had already made. What has God already said that speaks to your situation? Find the verse this week. Stand on it, literally, read it standing up.
- Where would it cost you something to give thanks before the result is in? Name one thing you will thank God for this week that has not happened yet.

CROSS REFERENCES

Exodus 14:13 to 14 The first time God's people were told to stand still and watch him fight. Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. Jahaziel is quoting it, and so is Paul.

Psalms 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. A psalm of David, Jehoshaphat's ancestor, for a king going out to battle. You will trust something. The only question is what.

Isaiah 7:9 If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. The same wordplay on aman that Jehoshaphat uses in 20:20, said by Isaiah to a very different king who refused to believe it. Session three's king did. December's king, Ahaz, did not.

— PERSONAL REFLECTION (SOLO JOURNALING)

- Write your own version of 20:6 to 12. Start with who God is, then what he has done for you, then the promise you are standing on, then the problem, and end with the sentence: I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on you.
- What would it mean to put the choir in front of the army in your situation? Not the strategy first, but the thanksgiving. Write down what you would have to believe to do that.
- Where have you been fighting a battle that was never yours? Write about what it has cost you to carry it, and what it would mean to put it down.

— WEEKLY PRACTICE: EYES UP

This week you are going to practice the one thing Jehoshaphat did that you can actually do.

Day one. Write the honest sentence about your situation: I do not know what to do. Do not add a plan. Add only: but my eyes are on you.

Day two. Skip one meal and use the time to read 2 Chronicles 20:1 to 30 out loud, all of it, slowly.

Day three. Find the promise. Search your Bible for something God already said that touches your situation. Write it on something you will see.

Day four. Stand up when you pray. Literally. Read your promise standing, and say, this battle is not mine.

Day five. Thank God for the thing that has not happened yet. Out loud. One specific sentence of thanks ahead of the result.

Day six. Sing. Alone in the car is fine. One song, all the way through, aimed at the thing you are afraid of.

— CLOSING PRAYER PROMPT

As you close, pray about these three things.

- The honest sentence. Tell God you do not know what to do, and mean it, and then tell him where you are looking.
- The battle that is not yours. Name the fight you have been carrying and hand it back to the one it belongs to.
- The choir. Thank him, out loud, for something he has not done yet, as an act of trust rather than a formality.



SESSION FOUR

The Hills Full of Fire

ELISHA | 2 KINGS 6 | WEEK OF OCTOBER 27

An enemy king cannot figure out who is leaking his plans, and the answer is a prophet who hears what he says in his bedroom. So he sends an army to arrest one man. The prophet's servant wakes up to find the town surrounded, and what the prophet prays for is not rescue. It is eyesight. This session tells the whole story, including the part where the army gets fed instead of killed, and it closes the month on four of the week's words: resist, overcome, hold on, and testify. Reformation Day falls on the Saturday of this week, and the session says one honest thing about it.

— OPENING QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Describe a time you were sure you were outnumbered and found out later you were not. What did you not know at the time? Who or what was there that you could not see?

— SCRIPTURE READING

Read aloud: 2 Kings 6:8 to 23.

Reference passages: 2 Kings 2:11 to 12 (the first chariots of fire), James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9 (resist), Romans 12:19 to 21 (feed your enemy), Exodus 17:8 to 16 (the hands on the hill), Joshua 1:9 (be strong), Revelation 12:11 (the word of their testimony), Colossians 2:13 to 15 (the parade).

— THE STORY (READ ALOUD, 10 TO 15 MINUTES)

Elisha was a farmer. When the prophet Elijah found him he was plowing a field behind twelve pairs of oxen, and he left the field, cooked a pair of the oxen for the people, and followed. Years later he stood on the far side of the Jordan and watched Elijah taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, and what separated the two of them in that moment was chariots of fire and horses of fire. He saw them. Keep that, because it is the reason he does what he does in this story.

Now it is some years on, in the northern kingdom, Israel, in the days when Syria was its constant enemy. Syria's king is never named in this part of the chapter, and neither is Israel's. What is named is the problem.

Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, "At such and such a place shall be my camp." But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there."

2 KINGS 6:8 TO 9

Every ambush Syria sets, Israel walks around. It happens more than once or twice. The Syrian king decides there is a traitor in the room.

And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."

2 KINGS 6:11 TO 12

The words you speak in your bedroom. There is no leak. There is a man in Israel to whom God tells things. So the king does the only thing a king knows how to do with a problem like that.

And he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him." It was told him, "Behold, he is in Dothan." So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

2 KINGS 6:13 TO 14

Dothan is a small town on a hill about ten miles north of Samaria, the capital, and it had been in the story once before. It is where Joseph's brothers sold him. An army, with horses and chariots, moving by night, to surround a village and arrest one man. That is how seriously the enemy takes a person God talks to.

And in the morning the prophet's servant goes out.

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

2 KINGS 6:15

What shall we do. It is Jehoshaphat's sentence again, from a much younger man on a much smaller hill. He is not wrong about what he sees. There is an army. It is all the way around. He has counted correctly. He has just not counted everything.

He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

2 KINGS 6:16

Do not be afraid. And then a sentence that must have sounded like madness to a young man looking at chariots: ours are more than theirs. Elisha is not being brave. He is being accurate. He saw the chariots of fire with his own eyes the day Elijah left, and he has never forgotten what is actually out there. So he does not pray for the army to leave. He prays for the servant.

Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 KINGS 6:17

Open his eyes. The Hebrew verb is *paqach*, and it is a word used almost only for eyes. It is the word for when God opened the eyes of Hagar, Abraham's servant, sent away into the desert with her son and out of water, and she saw a well that had been there the whole time. Nothing on the hill changed when the

servant's eyes opened. The chariots of fire were there before he saw them and would have been there if he never had. The prayer did not summon the army of God. It let one frightened man see what was already around him. Notice the geography too. The Syrians are around the city. The fire is around Elisha. There is a ring inside the ring.

You are not outnumbered. You just cannot see yet. The prayer that matters most is not get me out of here. It is open my eyes.

Now watch what Elisha does with an army of fire at his back. He does not use it.

And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, "Please strike this people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha.

2 KINGS 6:18

The word for blindness there is rare. It appears in only one other story in the Old Testament, when the men of Sodom were pounding on Lot's door and the angels struck them so they could not find it. It seems to mean a dazzled, confused sight more than total darkness, and that fits what happens next, because the Syrians can still walk.

And Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

2 KINGS 6:19

The man they were sent to arrest walks out to meet them, tells them they have the wrong town, and offers to take them to the man they are looking for. Which is true. He does. He leads an entire enemy army, blind, ten miles down the road and through the gates of Israel's capital. And then he prays the first prayer again, for the enemy this time.

As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

2 KINGS 6:20

Same verb. Open their eyes. And they open their eyes inside the walls of the city they were at war with, surrounded, the exact position the servant had been in that morning. The king of Israel cannot believe his luck.

As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?"

2 KINGS 6:21

Twice. He asks twice, the way a man asks when he already has the sword out. And Elisha's answer is the hinge of the whole chapter.

He answered, "You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."

2 KINGS 6:22

You did not capture these men, Elisha says. You did not win this. So you do not get to decide what happens to them. And what happens to them is dinner.

So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.

2 KINGS 6:23

A great feast. An army sent to arrest a man eats a meal at his king's table and walks home, and the raids stop. Not every war; a few verses later Syria comes back with a full siege, and the Bible is honest about that. But the raiding parties, the ambushes, the thing this story opened with, are over. The enemy was not beaten. He was fed, and he went home with nothing left to say.

Paul, writing to the church in Rome a few years before he ever saw the city, gives the principle and quotes a proverb to do it.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

ROMANS 12:19 TO 21

Overcome. The Greek is *nikao*, to conquer, to win. Paul uses it twice in one sentence, once for what evil wants to do to you and once for what you are to do to evil, and the weapon he names is good. Bread and water in front of the men who came to kill you. That is not weakness. It is the only kind of winning that ends a war instead of scheduling the next one.

John, the disciple Jesus loved, writing as an old man, uses the same word and tells you where the winning comes from.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

1 JOHN 5:4

And the victory that has overcome the world, he finishes, is our faith. The same word for conquer, and the same answer Paul gave in Ephesians 6: the shield is faith. You win by trusting the one who already won.

Which is why the New Testament's instruction about the devil is so short. James, the brother of Jesus, says it in one line.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

JAMES 4:7

Resist. The Greek is a form of *anthistemi*, to stand against, built from the stand word Paul leaned on four times in Ephesians 6. It does not say attack the devil or chase him or find out his plans. It says stand, facing him, and do not move, and he is the one who runs. Peter uses the exact same form in his letter: resist him, firm in your faith. The whole New Testament's strategy against the accuser from session one is two words. Submit, and stand.

Stand is the hard part, and the Old Testament has a word for the strength it takes. When Moses died and Joshua had to lead a nation across a river into a war, God said this to him.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

JOSHUA 1:9

Be strong. *Chazaq*. To be firm, to take hold, to hold on. It is the same verb the Exodus story uses when Pharaoh's heart was hardened, strength pointed the wrong way, so it is not a soft word. And notice the reason God gives. Not because you are strong. Because I am with you wherever you go. Moses had said the same thing to the whole people a few weeks earlier, and added: he will not leave you or forsake you. Chazaq is holding on to someone who is holding on to you.

And there is one battle in the Old Testament that shows what that looks like with your actual hands. Early in the wilderness, a people called Amalek attacked Israel, and Moses sent Joshua down to fight while he went up a hill with a staff, his brother Aaron, and a man named Hur.

Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

EXODUS 17:11 TO 12

Prevailed. The Hebrew is *gavar*, to be strong, to win, and it goes back and forth in that verse with the position of one old man's hands. The battle is in the valley. The outcome is on the hill. And when Moses cannot hold his own arms up, two men hold them for him, and the word for steady there is *emunah*, faithfulness, session three's word. Faith, in this verse, is somebody else holding your hands up. Moses built an altar afterward and named it The LORD Is My Banner, because the thing the army rallied to was never Moses. It was God, lifted up where everyone could see him.

Now, the Saturday of this week is October 31, and for most of the world that means costumes. For the church it is the day a monk and professor in Germany named Martin Luther, in 1517, by the best accounts we have, sent his archbishop a list of ninety five arguments about whether forgiveness could be sold for money at all. The tradition says he nailed them to the church door in Wittenberg that same day; historians still argue about the nail. Nobody argues about what it started. What grew out of those arguments over the next few years was the conviction that a person is made right with God by faith, through grace, on the authority of Scripture. In 1521, at a hearing in the city of Worms, he was ordered to take back what he had written, and the words tradition gives him are these: here I stand. The month's word, from a man who was outnumbered by an empire and a church and knew exactly what the fire on the hills looked like. Years later he wrote a hymn from Psalm 46, and the church still sings it: a mighty fortress is our God.

The last book of the Bible tells you what it is that actually beats the accuser, and the second thing on the list is what Luther did and what Job did and what you can do tonight.

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

REVELATION 12:11

Conquered, *nikao*, again. By the blood of the Lamb, which is not yours, and by the word of their testimony, which is. *Martyria*. The word a witness gives in court. Not a sermon, not a theory. What happened to you, said out loud. The accuser's case against you is answered by the blood and silenced by your saying so. That is why the servant's story got written down, and Job's, and Paul's. A testimony is a weapon the enemy cannot answer, because he cannot argue with what you saw.

And here is how the month ends. Paul, writing from prison again, to a church in a town called Colossae, reaches for a picture every Roman would have known: the triumph. When a general won a great war, the city gave him a parade, and he rode through the streets in a chariot with the captured enemy walking in the procession ahead of him, stripped of their weapons and in chains, for everyone to see.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

COLOSSIANS 2:15

Triumphing. The Greek verb is *thriambeuo*, to lead in a triumph, and Paul says the cross was one. The rulers and authorities, the same ones he said we wrestle against in Ephesians 6, were disarmed on the cross and marched through the streets in public. The accuser from session one, the one who had to ask permission and got a fence, is in that parade, and not as the winner. And in a second letter Paul says where you are in it: God in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession. You are not watching the parade from the curb. You are in it, with the one who won, and the enemy is on display.

Stand, and he flees. Open your eyes, and the hills are already full. Feed the enemy, and the war ends. And the one you were afraid of is walking in chains in a parade led by the one who loves you.

— WORD STUDY SPOTLIGHT

ἀνθίστημι **anthistemi** (*an-THIS-tay-mee*)

STRONG'S G436

MEANING To stand against. To resist, to oppose, to hold your ground facing someone.

APPEARS 14 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

JAMES 4:7

Anti, against, plus histemi, to stand, session two's word. The form James uses, antistete, is a command, and Peter uses the identical form: resist him, firm in your faith. Neither of them says fight, chase, or bind. The instruction is to take a position facing the enemy and not move, and the promise is that he is the one who leaves. Paul uses the same verb in Ephesians 6:13, withstand in the evil day. Four books, one strategy. Stand there.

פָּקַח **paqach** (*pah-KAKH*)

STRONG'S H6491

MEANING To open, almost always of eyes. To make someone able to see.

APPEARS about 20 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see."

2 KINGS 6:17

Hebrew has a general word for open; this is not it. This one is for eyes, and once for ears. It is the verb for God opening the eyes of Hagar, Abraham's servant, to a well in the desert that was already there, and for the eyes of the blind being opened when the Servant comes. Elisha prays it twice in one chapter, once for his servant and once for the enemy. Nothing on the hill changed when the servant's eyes opened. That is the whole point of the word.

νικάω **nikao** (*nik-AH-oh*)

STRONG'S G3528

MEANING To conquer, to overcome, to win the victory.

APPEARS 28 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. ROMANS 12:21

The verb behind the Greek word for victory, and the word Revelation uses over and over for the ones who hold out. Paul uses it twice in one sentence, once for what evil wants to do to you and once for what you do to evil, and the weapon he names is good: bread for the man who came to kill you. John says the victory that has overcome the world is our faith. In Romans 8:37 Paul puts a prefix on it, more than conquerors, through him who loved us. Not in your own strength. Through him.

חָזַק **chazaq** (*khab-ZAHK*)

STRONG'S H2388

MEANING To be strong, to be firm. To take hold, to hold fast, to strengthen.

APPEARS 290 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. JOSHUA 1:9

"Be strong and courageous" is two Hebrew verbs; this is the first one, and it means to grip, to hold on. The second, amats, is its companion. The same verb describes Pharaoh's heart being hardened, so chazaq is not gentle; it is strength with a direction. God says it to Joshua three times in four verses and gives the reason: I am with you. You are not told to be strong on your own. You are told to hold on to someone who is holding you.

גָּבַר **gavar** (gab-VAR)

STRONG'S H1396

MEANING To be strong, to prevail, to have the upper hand.

APPEARS 25 times in the Hebrew Bible

KEY VERSE Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. **EXODUS 17:11**

The verb goes back and forth in one verse with an old man's arms, and the word for held up is rum, to lift high. The battle is in the valley with Joshua; the outcome is on the hill with Moses, and when Moses cannot hold his own hands up, two men do it for him, and his hands are called steady, emunah. Prevailing in this story is not the strongest army. It is the hand that stays lifted because somebody is holding it, under a banner that is God himself.

μαρτυρία **martyria** (mar-too-REE-ah)

STRONG'S G3141

MEANING Testimony. Witness. What a person says in court about what they saw.

APPEARS 37 times in the New Testament

KEY VERSE And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. **REVELATION 12:11**

The word a witness gives, and the root of our word martyr, because so many of the first witnesses died for saying what they saw. Its sibling martyrion is the evidence itself. Revelation lists two things that beat the accuser: the blood, which is not yours, and your testimony, which is. The accuser argues cases; he cannot argue with what happened to you. Reformation Day lands on this word, and so does the oldest instruction in the church: tell somebody what he did.

θριαμβεύω **thriambeuo** (three-am-BYOO-oh)

STRONG'S G2358

MEANING To lead in a triumphal procession. To celebrate a victory in public with the defeated on display.

APPEARS 2 times in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 2:14 and Colossians 2:15

KEY VERSE He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. **COLOSSIANS 2:15**

The Roman triumph was a parade: the victorious general riding through the streets, the defeated enemy marched ahead of his chariot, stripped and chained, for the whole city to see. Paul says the cross was that. The powers Ephesians 6 says we wrestle against were disarmed there and put on display. And in his other use of the word he says God leads us in that procession. Last word of the month: you are not fighting for a victory. You are walking in one that was already won, and the enemy is in chains.

— DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

Observation | What does the text say?

- In 2 Kings 6:15 to 17, what does the servant see, what does Elisha say, and what does Elisha pray for? What is not in the prayer?
- Count the times eyes are opened or closed in verses 17 to 20. Who prays each time, and for whom?
- In verses 21 to 23, what does the king want to do, what does Elisha say he must do instead, and what is the result?

Interpretation | What does it mean?

- The chariots of fire were there before the servant could see them. What does that do to the way you think about prayer? What was Elisha actually asking God to change?
- Elisha had an army of fire at his back and used it for nothing except leading blind men to dinner. Why? What does it say about God's idea of winning?
- James, Peter, and Paul all say stand or resist, and never say attack. Why would the Bible's whole strategy against the devil be a posture rather than an action?
- Colossians 2:15 says the enemy was disarmed and paraded at the cross. If that is already true, what is the fight you are still in actually about?

Application | What do I do?

- Who is the enemy you have been counting? Name the thing that is around the city. Then ask, honestly, what you might not be seeing. Pray Elisha's prayer for yourself this week, out loud: open my eyes.
- Who could you feed? Not forgive in the abstract, but set bread and water in front of. Name one concrete act of good toward someone who has acted as your enemy, and when you will do it.
- What is your testimony? Not your doctrine. The thing that happened to you. Write it in four sentences this week and say it to one person.

— CROSS REFERENCES

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. David wrote it after escaping a king by acting insane. The ring around Elisha was not new. It is a standing arrangement.

2 Kings 2:11 to 12 Chariots of fire and horses of fire separated Elijah and Elisha, and Elisha cried, My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen! He had seen them before. When he told his servant not to be afraid, he was not guessing.

Proverbs 25:21 to 22 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. The proverb Paul quotes in Romans 12, and the policy Elisha followed in Samaria. Written by Solomon, kept by a prophet, commanded to a church.

— PERSONAL REFLECTION (SOLO JOURNALING)

- Write down what is around your city. All of it, honestly, the way the servant counted it. Then write: those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Sit with whether you believe it.
- When has God opened your eyes to something that had been there the whole time? Write what you saw and what changed, and what did not.
- Write your testimony. What you were, what happened, what is different. Keep it under a page. This is the word of your testimony and it is a weapon.

— WEEKLY PRACTICE: OPEN MY EYES

Six days of the prayer Elisha prayed for his servant and then for his enemy.

Day one. Count the enemy. Write down everything that is around the city right now. Be accurate; the servant was.

Day two. Pray Elisha's prayer for yourself, out loud: Lord, open my eyes that I may see. Then read 2 Kings 6:17 and Psalm 34:7 and say nothing else.

Day three. Hold somebody's hands up. Find one person whose arms are getting tired and do one practical thing that steadies them.

Day four. Read James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 to 9. Then stand, literally, and say the lie you are most tired of hearing, and answer it with one verse. Do not chase it. Stand.

Day five. Feed the enemy. One act of plain good toward the person who has made your life hard. Bread and water. No speech attached.

Day six. Reformation Day. Write your testimony in four sentences and read it to one person. Here you stand.

— CLOSING PRAYER PROMPT

As you close, pray about these three things.

- Open my eyes. Ask to see what is actually around you, and confess that you have been counting only the half you can see.
- The enemy at the table. Ask for the grace to feed someone instead of striking them, and for the honesty to admit which one you want to do.
- The parade. Thank God that the powers were disarmed at the cross, and that you are walking in the procession with the one who won.



SESSION FIVE

The Battle Is Not Yours

INTEGRATION | THE WHOLE MONTH | WHAT TO DO ON MONDAY

Four sessions, four people, four completely different pictures. An ash heap. A chain. A choir. A hill full of fire. This session steps back and asks what they have in common, and the answer is sitting in plain sight in what each person did with their hands. None of them swung a sword. Every one of them won.

— OPENING QUESTION (5 MINUTES)

Across all four sessions, what actually landed? Not the one you think should have been most important. The line, the word, or the question that stuck to you and came back later in the week. Start there and let everyone answer before anything else.

— THE THREAD (READ ALOUD, 10 TO 15 MINUTES)

Here is what we built, one week at a time. And underneath all of it, running the whole way through, is one thing nobody points at while it is happening.

Session one put you in an ash heap. Job, a whole man in a country nobody can find, lost everything in an afternoon because of a conversation in heaven he never heard. The one who started it had a title, not a name: *the satan*, the accuser, the one whose job is to make a case. He had to ask permission. He got a fence. And he lost the oldest argument in the world to a man scraping sores with a potsherd who said the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Then the accuser disappeared from the book for forty chapters. God answered Job out of a storm with no explanation and Job said, now my eye sees you. The friends who defended God were wrong. The man who yelled at him was right. And the restoration came when he prayed for the men who had hurt him.

Session two put you in a chain. Paul, in a rented house in Rome, wrist to wrist with a soldier, looked at the man's uniform and wrote the most famous passage about spiritual warfare in the Bible. Not flesh and blood, he said. Something behind the people. And then *panoplia*, the whole armor, one piece at a time: the belt of *aletheia*, the breastplate of *dikaioyne*, the footing of *eirene*, the door-shaped shield of *pistis*, the helmet of salvation, and one weapon, the short sword, the word of God. Four stands in four verses and not one attack. And then Isaiah, seven hundred years earlier, watching God put on the breastplate and the helmet himself when there was no one else to fight. The armor of God is the armor God wore.

Session three put you behind a choir. Jehoshaphat, with three armies a day or two away, called a fast, stood in the temple court, held God to a promise God had made to Solomon, and said in front of his whole nation: we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. A Levite from a family of musicians answered: the battle is not yours but God's. *Amad*, stand, and see the salvation of the LORD. So the king put the singers in front of the soldiers, and when they began to sing the enemy destroyed itself, and Judah walked home with harps. The kingdom went quiet. Shalom shalom, Isaiah called it, kept by someone else for a mind that is stayed on him.

Session four put you on a hill. Elisha, who had seen chariots of fire the day Elijah left, woke up in a town surrounded by an army sent to arrest him, and prayed for his servant's eyes, not for rescue. *Paqach*. Open his eyes. The hills were already full. Then he led the whole enemy army blind into the capital and had them fed instead of killed, and the raids stopped. *Anthistemi*, resist, stand against, and he will flee. *Nikao*,

overcome evil with good. *Chazaq*, hold on, because I am with you. *Gavar*, prevail, with two men holding your hands up. *Martyria*, the word of your testimony. And *thriambeuo*, the parade, with the powers disarmed and marched through the streets in chains.

Now here is the thread.

Go back and look at what the person in each story actually does with their hands.

Job's hands hold a piece of broken pottery. He never touches the accuser. He never knows he is there. He tears his robe and falls on the ground and worships, and later he lays his hand on his mouth, and at the very end he prays for three men who had called him a liar. He never fights.

Paul's hand is chained to a soldier's. He cannot lift it without lifting a Roman's. The only weapon in his whole list is a book, and the only thing he asks the church to pray for is that he would open his mouth. He never fights.

Jehoshaphat stands in a courtyard and prays. Then he bows with his face on the ground. Then he appoints a choir. The text goes out of its way to say it: you will not need to fight in this battle. He never fights.

Elisha prays three times in one chapter, and two of the three are for the enemy. Then he leads a blind army down the road to the city, and then to a table. He never fights.

Four stories. Not one sword drawn by the hero. And in every single one, the enemy loses.

That should be the strangest thing in a month called Words of Battle, and it is actually the whole point. The Bible is not embarrassed to say there is a war. It is very careful about who fights it. In every story, the one who wins is not the one in trouble. The accuser is answered by God. The powers are disarmed on the cross. The three armies are routed by an ambush the LORD set. The chariots of fire were there before anyone prayed.

So what is left for you to do? September gave you two words, stay and look. October gives you two more.

Stand. Histemi, amad, anthistemi. Paul says it four times in four verses. Jahaziel says it twice. James and Peter say it once each and then say the devil runs. It means do not leave the place God put you. Not advance, not retreat. Be found there when the evil day is over.

Pray. Tefillah, proseuche. Jehoshaphat's whole battle plan. Elisha's whole chapter. The thing Paul puts under the armor and the thing Job did at the end for the friends. Pray is what standing sounds like out loud.

Stand, and pray. That is the entire assignment. Everything else in this study is something done for you by somebody else.

The battle is not yours. Stand where he put you, pray like you mean it, and let him be the one who fights. He already has.

And there is one more thing sitting on top of all four, which is where this session gets its name, and it is the hands again, but not the hero's this time.

Count the other hands. God's hand building a hedge around a man before anything went wrong. God's own arms putting on a breastplate and a helmet because there was no one else to intercede. Two men on a hill holding up an old man's arms until the sun went down. A king's hands setting bread and water in front of the men who came to kill his prophet. And a pair of hands nailed to a piece of wood, which is where Paul says the powers were disarmed and the parade began.

Different stories. An ash heap, a chain, a choir, a hill. Same hands, all month, doing the fighting.

And notice where the month starts and where it ends, because it is a straight line.

It starts on October sixth with an accuser standing in the court of heaven, asking permission to make his case against a man, day and night.

It ends on November first with that same accuser disarmed, put to open shame, and walking in chains through the streets in a parade led by the one who beat him, a parade you are in.

That is not two topics. That is a trial and its verdict. The case against you was real. It was answered somewhere you were not, by someone who was not you. And the only thing the court still needs from you is your testimony.

— THE WORDS OF THIS MONTH

The Accuser | Session One

satan, the adversary, a title before it is a name. **diabolos**, the slanderer, the one who throws words between. **mal'ak**, a messenger, the one who is sent. **emet**, faithfulness that holds, a wing before it is a belt. **hypomone**, staying under the weight. **magen**, a shield, which God called himself before he ever gave one. **tam**, whole, intact, the same man on both sides.

The Armor | Session Two

panoplia, the whole kit, not a favorite piece. **aletheia**, what is actually the case, buckled on first. **dikaiosyne**, right standing, over the heart, where the accuser aims. **eirene**, peace, which is footing. **pistis**, trust, the shield the fire goes out in. **machaira**, the short sword, which is a sentence of Scripture at close range. **histemi**, stand, four times, and never attack. **hoplon**, a weapon, which your hands and your mouth already are.

The Choir | Session Three

tefillah, prayer, in the place God said he would hear. **tsom**, a fast, putting down bread to hold something else. **amad**, stand, and see the salvation of the LORD. **shir**, to sing, the ordinary job done in the dangerous place. **emunah**, faith as a hand held steady by someone else. **shalom**, doubled, kept by God for a mind stayed on him. **proseuche**, prayer with thanksgiving, which garrisons the heart.

The Hills | Session Four

anthistemi, stand against, and he flees. **paqach**, open the eyes, to what was already there. **nikao**, overcome, with good. **chazaq**, hold on, because he is with you. **gavar**, prevail, with your hands held up. **martyria**, the word of your testimony. **thriambeuo**, the parade, with the enemy in chains.

— INTEGRATION QUESTIONS (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

- Four pictures: an ash heap, a chain, a choir, a hill full of fire. Which one is where you are right now? Which one would you least want to be in, and why?
- In every story the hero never fights and the enemy still loses. Say honestly how that lands on you: as relief, as frustration, or as something you do not quite believe yet.
- Job never knew about the accuser. Paul said we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Elisha's servant could not see the chariots. How much of your fight is with things you cannot see, and how much have you been aiming at things you can?
- The month gives you two verbs, stand and pray. Which of the two are you worse at? What does that cost you in practice?
- September's verbs were stay and look. October's are stand and pray. Put them together. What does a life built on those four words look like on an ordinary Tuesday?
- Look at the hands: the hedge, the breastplate God put on, Aaron and Hur, the king's table, the cross. Which pair do you most need to believe is at work for you right now?

— MONTH LONG REFLECTION

- What is the single thing you are carrying out of these five sessions? Not the most impressive one. The one that changed something in how you pray, think, or act.
- Go back to the paper from session one, where you wrote down the hardest thing in your life in one sentence. Read it again. Is it still the hardest thing? What would you write underneath it now?
- Which word from this month has most changed the way you read Scripture? If somebody asked you to explain it in thirty seconds, what would you say?
- How has your picture of the enemy changed? And how has your picture of God changed: the one who builds hedges, wears the armor first, sets ambushes, fills hills with fire, and feeds the men who came to kill his prophet? What kind of God is that?

— GOING DEEPER

The Screwtape Letters, C. S. Lewis A senior devil writes letters to a junior one about how to ruin a man. If session one's accuser, making his case day and night in your own voice, was the thing that got you, this is the book that will help you hear him coming.

The Lord of Psalm 23, David Gibson A short, careful book on the shepherd who prepares a table in the presence of enemies. Read it if session four's feast in Samaria would not leave you alone.

A Praying Life, Paul Miller On prayer as the ordinary, honest, often messy conversation of a child with a father. If the month's second verb is the one you are worse at, start here.

— NEXT MONTH: WORDS OF GRATITUDE

October asked what you do when something fights back. The answer was that somebody else fights, and your part is to stand and pray. November asks what comes out of a person on the other side of that.

Because something does. Everyone in this month's stories ended up at a table, or a temple, or a valley with a new name. Job's family came and ate bread with him. Judah walked home with harps. An enemy army ate a feast. The month after a battle is the month you find out whether you are grateful, and the Bible has a whole vocabulary for that: thanks, praise, offering, song, feast, enough.

Words of Gratitude begins on Tuesday, November 3, with a woman named Hannah, who prayed with her lips moving and no sound coming out, and got what she asked for, and gave it back.

The battle was never yours. The thank you is.

October, Day by Day

One word a day, Tuesday through Sunday, in the week it belongs to. Mondays are dark on purpose.

This page is the bridge between the guide in your hands and the daily videos. Every word below gets its own short teaching video the morning of, plus a second short that puts you inside the story, a longer story video on Wednesdays, and a podcast episode on Sundays. Everything lands permanently and free in the library at library.faithlabz.com, usually the same night it airs, so if you are reading this early in the month the later entries are still on their way. You can use this page with no screen at all. Read the word, read the verse, carry the sentence.

Week One | Job | The Accuser

DAY	WORD	VERSE	WHAT IT LEAVES YOU WITH
TUE 6	satan	Job 1:6 to 12	The accuser needs permission. God never does.
WED 7	diabolos	1 Peter 5:8	He throws words between you and God. Stand there anyway. The case was answered somewhere else.
THU 8	mal'ak	Psalms 91:11	An angel is somebody sent. The devil knows the angel verses too; he leaves out all your ways.
FRI 9	emet	Psalms 91:4	The shield is his faithfulness, not yours. It is a wing before it is armor.
SAT 10	hypomone	James 5:11	Job was not patient. He stayed under it. That is the word.
SUN 11	magen	Genesis 15:1	The first shield in the Bible is a person. I am your shield.

Monday, October 12. Dark. Nothing posts. Rest is part of the plan.

Week Two | Paul | The Armor

DAY	WORD	VERSE	WHAT IT LEAVES YOU WITH
TUE 13	panoplia	Ephesians 6:11	All of it. The soldier with no helmet is a soldier with an open head.
WED 14	aletheia	Ephesians 6:14	You cannot fight in a lie. Buckle on what is actually so.
THU 15	dikaiosyne	Ephesians 6:14	The breastplate covers the heart, and God wore it first.
FRI 16	eirene	Ephesians 6:15	Peace is footing. The war with God is over, so you can hold your ground.
SAT 17	pistis	Ephesians 6:16	The shield puts the fire out. Trust is what the arrows go out in.
SUN 18	machaira	Ephesians 6:17	One weapon on the list, and it is a short sword. A sentence of Scripture, up close.

Monday, October 19. Dark.

Week Three | Jehoshaphat | The Choir in Front of the Army

DAY	WORD	VERSE	WHAT IT LEAVES YOU WITH
TUE 20	tefillah	2 Chronicles 7:15	Pray where he said he would listen. Hold him to what he promised.
WED 21	amad	2 Chronicles 20:17	You will not need to fight. Stand where he put you and watch.
THU 22	shir	2 Chronicles 20:21	The choir goes first. Singing is what trust sounds like before the result is in.
FRI 23	emunah	Habakkuk 2:4	Faith is a hand held steady by somebody else.
SAT 24	shalom	Isaiah 26:3	Perfect peace is kept, not made. Keep your eyes where they belong.
SUN 25	proseuche	Philippians 4:6	Prayer with thanks, then the peace of God moves in like a garrison.

Monday, October 26. Dark.

Week Four | Elisha | The Hills Full of Fire

DAY	WORD	VERSE	WHAT IT LEAVES YOU WITH
TUE 27	anthistemi	James 4:7	Resist means stand facing him. He is the one who runs.
WED 28	nikao	Romans 12:21	Overcome evil with good. Feed the man who came to kill you.
THU 29	chazaq	Joshua 1:9	Be strong means hold on. You are holding somebody who is holding you.
FRI 30	gavar	Exodus 17:11	The battle is in the valley. The outcome is on the hill, in hands held up.
SAT 31	martyria	Revelation 12:11	The word of your testimony is a weapon he cannot answer. Reformation Day.
SUN NOV 1	thriambeuo	Colossians 2:15	The cross was a parade. The enemy is in chains, and you are walking with the one who won.

November's theme, Words of Gratitude, opens on Tuesday, November 3, with Hannah.

A note on the first week of the month: October 1 to 4 finish the Moses story from the September guide, Words of Transformation. A story week does not stop at a calendar boundary, which is why Words of Battle opens on Tuesday, October 6.

Appendix: The Complete Word Glossary

Every Hebrew and Greek word taught across the five sessions, in alphabetical order.

Use this as a quick reference during personal study, in a group when somebody asks what a word was again, or whenever one of these turns up in your own reading. Occurrence counts are given as sources report them, and where two standard sources disagree the range is shown rather than a false precision.

ἀλήθεια **aletheia** (*ah-LAY-thay-ah*)

GREEK | G225 | 109 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

Truth, reality, what is actually the case. The belt, the piece everything else hangs from. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:14*

תָּמַד **amad** (*ah-MAHD*)

HEBREW | H5975 | ABOUT 525 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

To stand, to stay in place, to hold a position. The whole battle plan at the ascent of Ziz.

Key verse: 2 Chronicles 20:17

ἀνθίστημι **anthistemi** (*an-THIS-tay-mee*)

GREEK | G436 | 14 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To stand against, to resist. Anti plus histemi. The command in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9. *Key verse: James 4:7*

חָזַק **chazaq** (*khab-ZAHK*)

HEBREW | H2388 | 290 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To be strong, to take hold, to hold fast. The first verb of "be strong and courageous." *Key verse: Joshua 1:9*

διάβολος **diabolos** (*dee-AH-bo-los*)

GREEK | G1228 | ABOUT 37 TO 38 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

A slanderer, one who throws words between. The devil. The Greek translators' word for the satan.

Key verse: 1 Peter 5:8

δικαιοσύνη **dikaioyne** (*dik-ab-yo-SOO-nay*)

GREEK | G1343 | 92 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

Righteousness, right standing. The breastplate, which God put on first in Isaiah 59:17. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:14*

εἰρήνη **eirene** (ay-RAY-nay)

GREEK | G1515 | 92 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

Peace, wholeness. The Greek for shalom. The footing on the feet. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:15*

אֱמֶת **emet** (eh-MET)

HEBREW | H571 | 127 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

Truth, firmness, faithfulness. From the root of amen. His faithfulness is a shield. *Key verse: Psalm 91:4*

אֱמוּנָה **emunah** (eh-moo-NAH)

HEBREW | H530 | 49 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

Faithfulness, steadiness. The word for Moses' hands held steady. The righteous shall live by it.

Key verse: Habakkuk 2:4

גָּבַר **gavar** (gab-VAR)

HEBREW | H1396 | 25 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To be strong, to prevail. Back and forth with Moses' hands in one verse. *Key verse: Exodus 17:11*

ἵστημι **histemi** (HIS-tay-mee)

GREEK | G2476 | ABOUT 153 TO 155 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

To stand, to hold a position. Three times in Ephesians 6:11 to 14, and never attack. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:13*

ὅπλον **hoplon** (HOP-lon)

GREEK | G3696 | 6 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

A weapon, a piece of kit. The root of panoplia. Also your own body presented to God.

Key verse: 2 Corinthians 10:4

ὑπομονή **hypomone** (hoo-po-mo-NAY)

GREEK | G5281 | 32 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

Steadfastness, remaining under a weight. The steadfastness of Job, who was not patient and did not leave.

Key verse: James 5:11

μάχαιρα **machaira** (MAH-khai-rah)

GREEK | G3162 | 29 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

A short sword, the close combat weapon. The only weapon on Paul's list, and it is the word of God.

Key verse: Ephesians 6:17

מָגֵן **magen** (*mah-GAYN*)

HEBREW | H4043 | 63 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

A shield, the small round kind. God calls himself one the first time the word appears. *Key verse: Genesis 15:1*

מַלְאָךְ **mal'ak** (*mal-AKH*)

HEBREW | H4397 | 213 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

A messenger, one who is sent. Human couriers and angels, the same word. *Key verse: Psalm 91:11*

μαρτυρία **martyria** (*mar-too-REE-ah*)

GREEK | G3141 | 37 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

Testimony, witness, what you say about what you saw. The root of martyr. *Key verse: Revelation 12:11*

νικάω **nikao** (*nik-AH-oh*)

GREEK | G3528 | 28 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To conquer, to overcome. Twice in one sentence in Romans 12:21, and the weapon is good.

Key verse: Romans 12:21

πανοπλία **panoplia** (*pan-op-LEE-ah*)

GREEK | G3833 | 3 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

Full armor, the complete kit. Luke 11:22, Ephesians 6:11 and 13. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:11*

פָּתַח **paqach** (*pah-KAKH*)

HEBREW | H6491 | ABOUT 20 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To open, almost always of eyes. Elisha prays it twice in one chapter, for his servant and for the enemy.

Key verse: 2 Kings 6:17

πίστις **pistis** (*PIS-tis*)

GREEK | G4102 | 243 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 2

Faith, trust, faithfulness. The door-shaped shield the fire goes out in. *Key verse: Ephesians 6:16*

προσευχή **proseuche** (*pros-yoo-KHAY*)

GREEK | G4335 | ABOUT 36 TO 37 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

Prayer directed to God. With thanksgiving, and then peace garrisons the heart. *Key verse: Philippians 4:6*

שָׂטָן **satan** (*sab-TAHN*)

HEBREW | H7854 | 27 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

An adversary, an accuser. In Job always "the satan," a title before a name. *Key verse: Job 1:7*

שָׁלוֹם **shalom** (*shah-LOME*)

HEBREW | H7965 | 237 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

Peace, wholeness, completeness. Doubled in Isaiah 26:3 to mean perfect. *Key verse: Isaiah 26:3*

שִׁיר **shir** (*sheer*)

HEBREW | H7891 | 87 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

To sing. The verb; its twin noun is a song. The temple singers sent in front of the army.

Key verse: 2 Chronicles 20:21

תָּם **tam** (*tahm*)

HEBREW | H8535 | 14 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 1

Whole, complete, blameless. Same root as September's tamim. What God calls Job twice. *Key verse: Job 1:1*

תְּפִלָּה **tefillah** (*teh-fil-LAH*)

HEBREW | H8605 | 77 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

Prayer. The Old Testament's main word for it, tied to the place God promised to hear. *Key verse: 2 Chronicles 7:15*

θριαμβεύω **thriambeuo** (*three-am-BYOO-oh*)

GREEK | G2358 | 2 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 4

To lead in a triumphal procession. The cross as a Roman victory parade. *Key verse: Colossians 2:15*

צוֹם **tsom** (*tsome*)

HEBREW | H6685 | 26 OCCURRENCES | SESSION 3

A fast. A frightened king's first move: put down the bread. *Key verse: 2 Chronicles 20:3*

About FaithLabz

The goal is simple and it is not modest: to make the depth of Scripture reachable by anybody, without watering it down and without assuming you already know the stories.

The Bible is not a book of religious slogans. It is a library of ancient documents written in real languages by real people, and the further you go into those languages, the more alive the text gets. That is the whole idea behind the daily word. One Hebrew or Greek word, sitting exactly where the Bible puts it, in the story it belongs to.

And the stories get told. All the way, from the beginning, every time. If you have sat in church for thirty years and could not actually say what happened to Job after the ash heap, or why there were singers in front of an army, that is not a failing on your part. It is a gap in how the stories usually get taught. Nothing here will assume you already know.

— WHERE TO FIND EVERYTHING

The free library. Every word study ever made, searchable, at library.faithlabz.com. No login, no email required, nothing for sale on the other side of it.

YouTube. Two shorts a day Tuesday through Sunday, a longer story video on Wednesdays, and the podcast on Sundays. Mondays are dark.

The monthly Bible studies. A new one like this every month, free, at faithlabz.com.

Everything else. faithlabz.com, and @FaithLabz on the usual places.

— HOW THIS STAYS FREE

This study cost you nothing and it is going to stay that way. So did the library, and the videos, and the study before this one.

There are a few things for sale at faithlabz.com. A 365 day devotional called The Whole Story in a Year. Devotional coffee mugs you scan in the morning. AR Bible cards that bring the people in these stories up off the table. The Prayer Candle. Some shirts and hoodies. Whatever gets bought is what keeps everything else free for the people who cannot pay for it.

That is the entire pitch. If something here helped you and you want to stand with the work, that is how. And if you cannot give anything, take all of it anyway. That is not a line, it is the arrangement.

— SHARE THIS STUDY

If a session in here landed on somebody in your group, or on you at eleven at night when you could not sleep, send it to one person. Not a broadcast. One person you actually thought of while you were reading. That is how this work grows, and it is how most of the people reading this found it in the first place.

One Last Thing

You are not going to finish this month having won anything. That was never the plan. Job did not beat the accuser. Paul did not break the chain. Jehoshaphat did not swing a sword. Elisha did not use the army of fire. Every one of them was standing somewhere God put them, with their hands doing something other than fighting, when the thing they were afraid of fell apart.

Stand where he put you, and pray. The battle is not yours.

Onward, and God bless you.

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