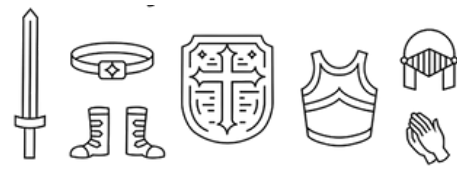


# Midweek Bible Study

## SESSION 5: THE SHIELD OF FAITH



### Key Scripture: Ephesians 6:16 (ESV)

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

### Objectives:

1. Understand the Context and Purpose of the shield of faith
2. Recognize the need for God's protection using The Shield of Faith & personal application

### Time Of Open Prayer

-Begin with a prayer asking God to open your hearts and minds to His Word, to understand the importance of the shield of faith and to be equipped with the full armour of God.

### Overview of the Shield of Faith:

- In the context of Ephesians 6, Paul outlines the "armour of God," equipping believers for spiritual battles. The shield of faith is one part of this armor, designed to protect believers from spiritual attacks by the “evil one.”
- Roman soldiers used large, protective shields that covered them entirely. Likewise, faith in God provides comprehensive protection from spiritual assaults.
- **Purpose of the Shield of Faith:**
  - Paul emphasizes faith as a shield because it represents trust and confidence in God's promises, which guard us against doubt, fear, and temptation.
  - Faith is not passive; it requires action and a deep trust in God’s truth, despite the visible circumstances or challenges believers may face.

### Context and Background

In Chapter 6, Paul advises believers on living a life in alignment with God’s will, culminating in his well-known passage about the "armor of God." Written during a time of Roman occupation, Paul draws from the image of a Roman soldier, whose armor was both practical and symbolic, signifying strength, protection, and resilience. For his audience, the image of a soldier would have been vivid, as Roman soldiers were a visible part of daily life.

### The “Shield” in Context

The shield Paul refers to would have been similar to the scutum, a large rectangular shield that covered most of the Roman soldier's body. Unlike smaller shields used in hand-to-hand combat, the scutum was designed to deflect incoming projectiles, providing extensive protection. This large shield required trust; the soldier had to hold it up under pressure, trusting it would cover and save them from enemy fire.

In Paul’s metaphor, faith operates similarly, deflecting spiritual “attacks.” Faith here is both belief in God’s nature and the reliance on His promises, which help believers withstand periods of doubt, temptation, or fear.

## The “Flaming Arrows”

Paul’s phrase “flaming arrows of the evil one” could refer to anything that disrupts, discourages, or weakens a believer’s spiritual strength. In ancient warfare, flaming arrows were often meant to intimidate and cause soldiers to scatter, damaging their morale. Paul’s metaphor suggests that the believer’s faith serves to absorb and extinguish these attacks, no matter how severe, making them ineffective.

### Practical Implications and Interpretations

Exegetically, the shield of faith implies both defensive and proactive aspects of faith:

- **Defensive Protection:** Faith protects by instilling confidence and reassurance, helping believers remain steadfast.
- **Proactive Trust:** This trust is not passive; it involves active reliance on God, even in adverse situations.

Some theological traditions also interpret the shield of faith communally, seeing the church as a protective body where the collective faith of believers acts as a “shield wall” of sorts, reinforcing one another’s faith.

### Applications in Personal and Communal Life

For personal devotion, this image emphasizes reliance on God over self-reliance, especially in hardship. For communities, it highlights the importance of collective support, where each individual’s faith strengthens the whole. When individuals within a community struggle with their faith, the collective “shield” of support can provide encouragement, effectively absorbing and lessening the impact of doubts and difficulties.

### Practical Application:

- 1. Guarding Against Doubt and Fear:** When facing challenges or uncertainty, the Shield of Faith reminds us to trust in God’s promises and not to be overwhelmed by fear. Instead of fixating on worst-case scenarios or self-doubt, hold to a belief that God is with you, helping to overcome obstacles. This can be as simple as reciting scriptures about God’s faithfulness or recalling past instances where faith brought you through a tough time.
- 2. Deflecting Negative Influences:** The world is full of negativity—criticism, pessimism, and media that can subtly erode faith. By consciously choosing to focus on uplifting, faith-affirming content and surrounding yourself with people who build your faith, you shield your heart from negativity. For example, take breaks from social media when it feels draining or deliberately engage in conversations that uplift rather than tear down.
- 3. Overcoming Temptation:** Faith can act as a barrier against temptation by focusing on the bigger picture. When tempted to engage in actions or thoughts that go against your beliefs, use the Shield of Faith to recall the strength and guidance of God in helping you make wise choices. Practically, this might mean turning to prayer or consulting a trusted friend to stay grounded in faith-centered values.
- 4. Protecting Against Discouragement:** Life’s setbacks—failures, losses, or betrayals—can easily lead to discouragement. Using the Shield of Faith here involves remembering that hardships are temporary, and faith provides hope and resilience. In practice, this can look like daily affirmations rooted in faith, a gratitude journal, or simply praying for strength to get through discouraging times.
- 5. Building Confidence in Purpose:** Faith isn’t just defensive; it also empowers. By trusting in God’s purpose for your life, you can approach goals with confidence, even when others doubt you or obstacles arise. Practically, this might mean setting small, faith-driven goals and taking consistent steps toward them, trusting that God will guide the way.
- 6. Reinforcing Patience and Endurance** Faith helps cultivate patience, especially when results aren’t immediate. The Shield of Faith in this case helps fend off impatience and frustration, reminding you to trust God’s timing. To apply this practically, use prayer and meditation on scriptures that speak to patience, or practice deep breathing exercises when impatience arises.

The Shield of Faith, in essence, is about intentionally using faith to manage life’s mental, emotional, and spiritual battles, focusing on God’s guidance and promises for strength, direction, and hope.

## Reflection & Discussion

1. What does Paul mean by "the flaming darts of the evil one"? Can you identify situations in your life where you felt under spiritual attack?

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2. How do you define "faith"? What aspects of your faith serve as a "shield" in daily challenges or struggles?

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3. Why is it important for the shield of faith to be taken up "in all circumstances"? How does faith equip us for both big and small battles?

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4. How can faith protect us from fear, doubt, and anxiety? What are some practical ways to "take up" faith in those moments?

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5. What are some "flaming darts" that commonly target believers today, and how can a strong faith help deflect them?

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6. How do other aspects of the "armour of God" (Ephesians 6:10-18) complement the shield of faith? How are they interrelated?\*

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7. In what ways have you seen God's faithfulness in your life, and how does remembering this help you trust Him in difficult times?

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8. How can the church community help reinforce and strengthen your "shield of faith"? Who in your life has encouraged you in your faith walk?

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9. How can we actively build and strengthen our faith daily? What disciplines help you stay grounded in God's promises?

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10. What would you say to someone struggling to take up the shield of faith due to disappointment or unanswered prayers? How would you encourage them?

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## Closing Prayer:

Ask for God's continued guidance and strength to maintain a strong, active faith. Pray for protection against the attacks of the enemy and that the shield of faith will be a present, active part of each person's life.

**Personal Reflection:** Read Ephesians 6:10-18 several times this week.

- Meditating on what it means to use The Shield of Faith.
- Reflect on how each piece of the armour, particularly the shield of faith, protects you in daily spiritual battles.