

God's Protection from the Enemy

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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 6:10-12 ESV

Most people will agree, we are in a spiritual war, and how to protect ourselves from attacks from the enemy is described perfectly by Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, with reference to putting on the 'full armour of God'. Most experienced and mature Christians will know this scripture very well and will know how to apply the teaching appropriately. And for 'young' Christians it is key advice that needs to be learned rapidly to avoid stumbling before the walk with Jesus has even begun.

But what else should we do that enables us to find His protection, to grow closer to Him, and to develop our understanding of what He wants and expects. There are so many opportunities to mess things up! It's as though we're trying to negotiate our way across a minefield, with Satan and his minions trying to push us

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righteousness, so that the man or woman of God may be capable and fully equipped for every good work". 2

Timothy 3:16-17

There is no doubt, some parts of the Bible are difficult to understand, but God rewards persistence and study, and provides insight and revelation when it is needed. The key is to keep going and trust that the Lord will reveal meaning at the appropriate time. Pray before reading that the Holy Spirit will open your mind and heart to whatever scripture you are reading, and to deepen your understanding. And a key point to remember, is that whatever is taught in church by a pastor, or discussed in fellowship, should always be viewed through scripture and diligently checked. If in doubt, "what does it say in scripture"?

We should all reflect on the above components of our Christian life and, as individuals, be honest with ourselves about our exposure to them. Are we weak in any area, or worse, is anything missing? Are we missing church, avoiding fellowship, not reading the Bible on a regular basis, therefore missing out on crucial spiritual food and protection? Jesus is our Shepherd and protects us. But we still need to play our part and learn how to follow Him.

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off course to destruction. The start point is to acknowledge that we simply can't do this alone.

In our Christian life there are four building blocks that are fundamentally important for our protection and growth. These are: 1. Strong Church leadership, 2. Regular fellowship, and 3. the Bible, all of which must be supported by, 4. an active prayer life. There must be exposure to all, as they are all connected, and they all need to be in harmony. Which doesn't mean they have to be in equal amounts, but that at any time or circumstance they need to work together. If any are missing or insufficient, it will have a detrimental effect on how we live and develop as Christians. It can lead to us being unfulfilled, following incorrect doctrine, feeling isolated and therefore vulnerable to attacks from the enemy, and being disobedient to our Heavenly Father. But what does this mean in practice?

Firstly, strong Church leadership, where the fruits of the Spirit are permanently in evidence, can be an incredible influence. This could be in giving advice, deciphering complex scripture, teaching key messages to the congregation, helping to avoid pitfalls of incorrect doctrine, pastoral care, managing conflict, providing historical context to the Bible, and so on. Having a good Pastor is an absolute blessing which should never be taken for granted. We should pray for

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the protection of our church leaders, their wisdom, and for all their messages and advice to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, regular fellowship plays a key role in supporting each other, sharing ideas, edifying, building each other up, providing unconditional practical support and so on. Fellowship is not a suggestion or an option, it is an instruction: **“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**
Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

The result from healthy fellowship should be a strengthening of relationships, understanding the challenges we each face and helping each other with them, gaining insights, and ultimately drawing closer to God. We should pray for the Holy Spirit to be active in our meetings, guiding us and helping us learn together and how to be together as Jesus would wish.

Thirdly, thank the Lord for His Word! Where would we be without the Bible? It is utterly foundational to us:

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