

LIFE IN THE FAMILY  
*SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN  
THIS WORLD*



I've found that learning how to fight my spiritual battles God's way here on earth has brought me *hope* since I've learned that I'm not on my own. I'm so glad He's made this truth available as we live our *Life in the Family*.

*Margie Martin*

### *Introduction - Hope*

**Hope in this life comes from knowing how to live with Jesus in God's kingdom here on earth as we face the hard times of mental, physical, and emotional challenges that come our way. These hard times can be both everyday occurrences and major events.**

I love to observe (not judge) people as they navigate through life, especially older believers, so I can learn from them. My heartbeat is for young believers (younger in faith and younger in years) who haven't learned about the basics of life in the kingdom of God that Jesus has provided for us.

What is the kingdom of God and what does it have to do with me and you? It's so easy to think that this world is my home, and it was before I became a follower of Jesus. When I decided to take on this new life, I learned that my citizenship was in another place, and I was an ambassador here on earth. Ambassadors are official representatives from one country to another; in this case, we're God's representatives to those here on earth.

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21*

The author of Hebrews wrote about Old Testament saints who admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth because they were looking for a country of their own.

*All these people [Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob] were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:13-16*

The promise in these verses has encouraged me over the years: if we (I) long for a better country, a heavenly one, God is not ashamed to be associated with us (me) and be called our God. He wants to be called the God of Margie, Barney, and \_\_\_\_\_ (you).

In my early years as a believer (in my 20s), I was taught about spiritual warfare, spiritual gifts, and how to grow up to be a mature believer (mature in age and mature in how to live). Fortunately, I was surrounded by maturing believers who were examples to me, and I was taught the scriptures by wise and thoughtful teachers who made sure we knew about these concepts.

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

The truth I learned and put into practice gave me *hope* as I started navigating the life Jesus had for me in His family. I really *could* learn what this new life was all about that seemed so strange in the beginning. While some of the studies I'll be doing are for how we live in this new life with other believers, spiritual warfare is all about how we live.

The topic of *spiritual warfare* in this study was the first of the concepts I learned, because I needed it so much. You too?

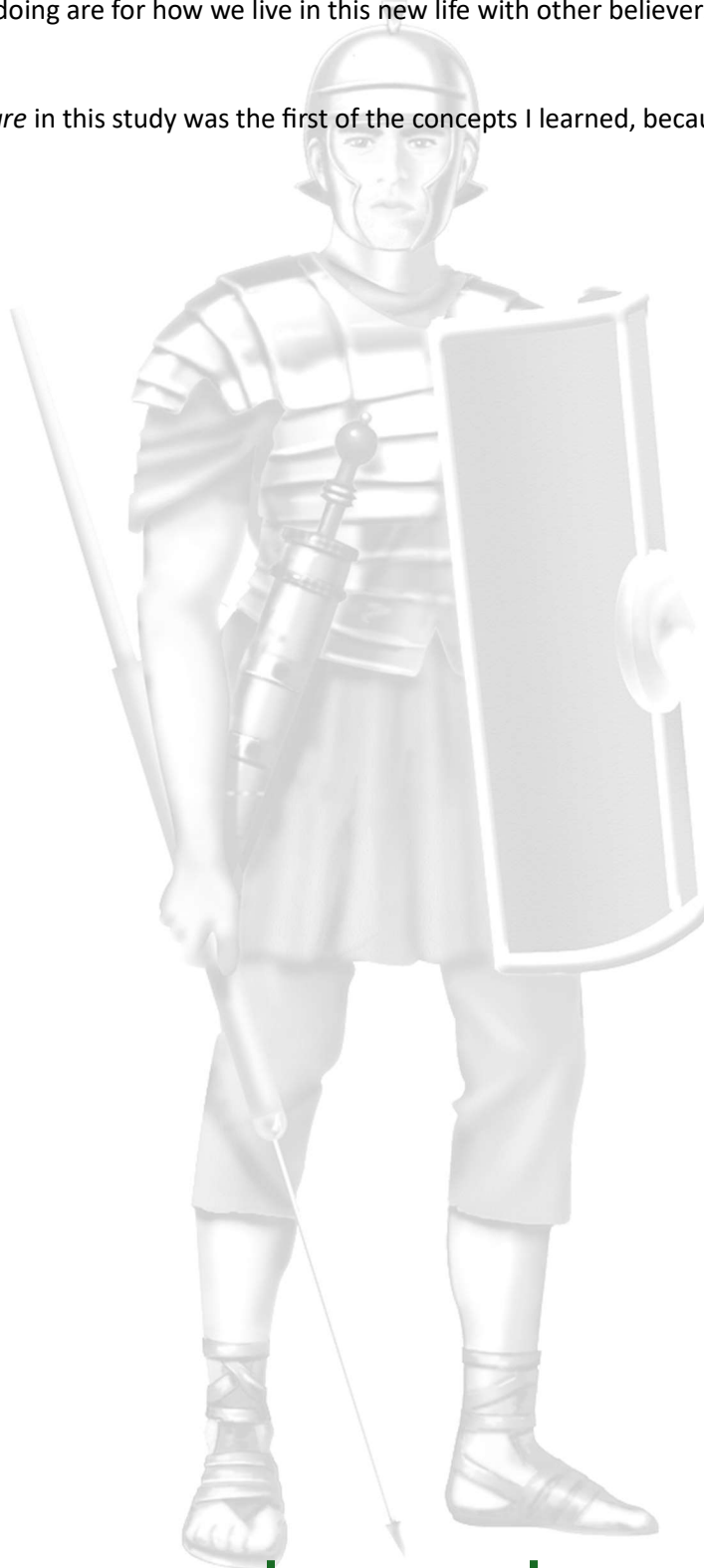


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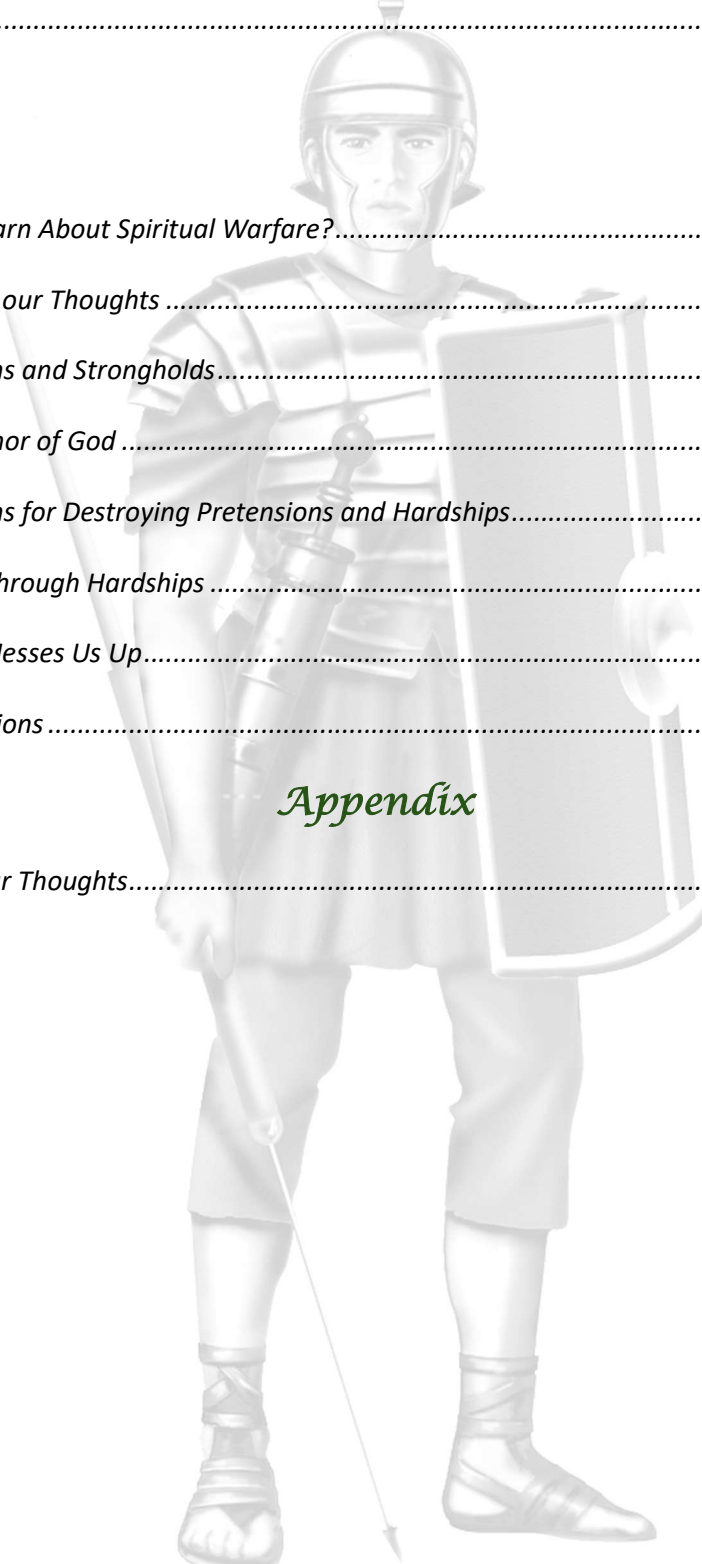
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### *Part 1: Why Learn About Spiritual Warfare?*

Before we get into the details of this study, let's look at the big picture of why Paul would have thought that this topic was important.

Paul met Jesus personally on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. After Paul got his sight back, he started preaching in all the city's synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. He created such a stir that the Jews planned to kill him, so Paul's friends lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. He took off for Jerusalem where Barnabas stood up for him with the disciples (the men who had known Jesus personally), but again Paul's preaching stirred up the Hellenistic Jews, and he had to run for his life again. The believers got him out of town quickly and sent him to his hometown of Tarsus in Turkey, where he stayed for a number of years.

But what did Paul do during this time in Tarsus (around 14 years) away from all the activity? He tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:8 that Jesus appeared to him directly. I think Paul took this time to review all he knew from being a Pharisee and all he knew from the scriptures compared what he had learned when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Since Paul had been forced to run for his life twice that we know of (I'm sure his pride had taken a big hit each time), he had to relearn all that he had known. His success with the Gentiles came from his rethinking what he had known during this time. He had to learn how to operate out of his born-again nature instead of his born-with nature.

When we come to know Jesus and begin to follow Him, we also have to rethink all we've known and the truth we've lived by so we can live by our born-again natures. We also learn that we have an enemy, just as Jesus has an enemy that had been around from the beginning of time. Because of his enemy and ours, we have to learn how to fight the multiple battles of the war that will be won when Jesus returns.

In fighting these battles, we have to figure out our strengths, understand who this enemy really is, come to the grips with the tactics that the enemy uses, and know who our enemy isn't. (If you're unfamiliar with *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, you'll want to read this creative story to learn how our enemy thinks.)

When we learn the lessons in this study, we'll also be learning how to live the life that Jesus has for us.

## Judge Our Thoughts

One of the first lessons I learned as a new believer during the Jesus Movement in the 1970s was to be aware of each thought that come into my head and decide how long it would stay there. A friend told me about this truth based on 2 Corinthians 10:

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* 2 Corinthians 10:5 (emphasis mine)

Being aware of each thought that comes into our minds and deciding whether Jesus would want it to stay there is one of the most difficult and exhausting thing we'll ever do. I learned that my litmus test of what I should be thinking about comes from Paul's words in Philippians 4:

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable**—if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy**—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.* Philippians 4:8-9 (emphasis mine)

If a thought doesn't match up with this standard, it should be discarded and **replaced with a new thought**—every time. We may not be responsible for every thought that pops into our heads since many thoughts come from what we read and see (TV and movies, for example), but we are responsible for how long that thought stays in our mind. Why? Because whatever thought we don't evaluate and judge, that thought we'll put into action.

This process is really a battle, because our enemy wants us to think his thoughts and not God's. This battleground of our thought life is where we fight our most fierce battles. It's exhausting to be aware of our thoughts and judge them, but the process is so worth the effort.

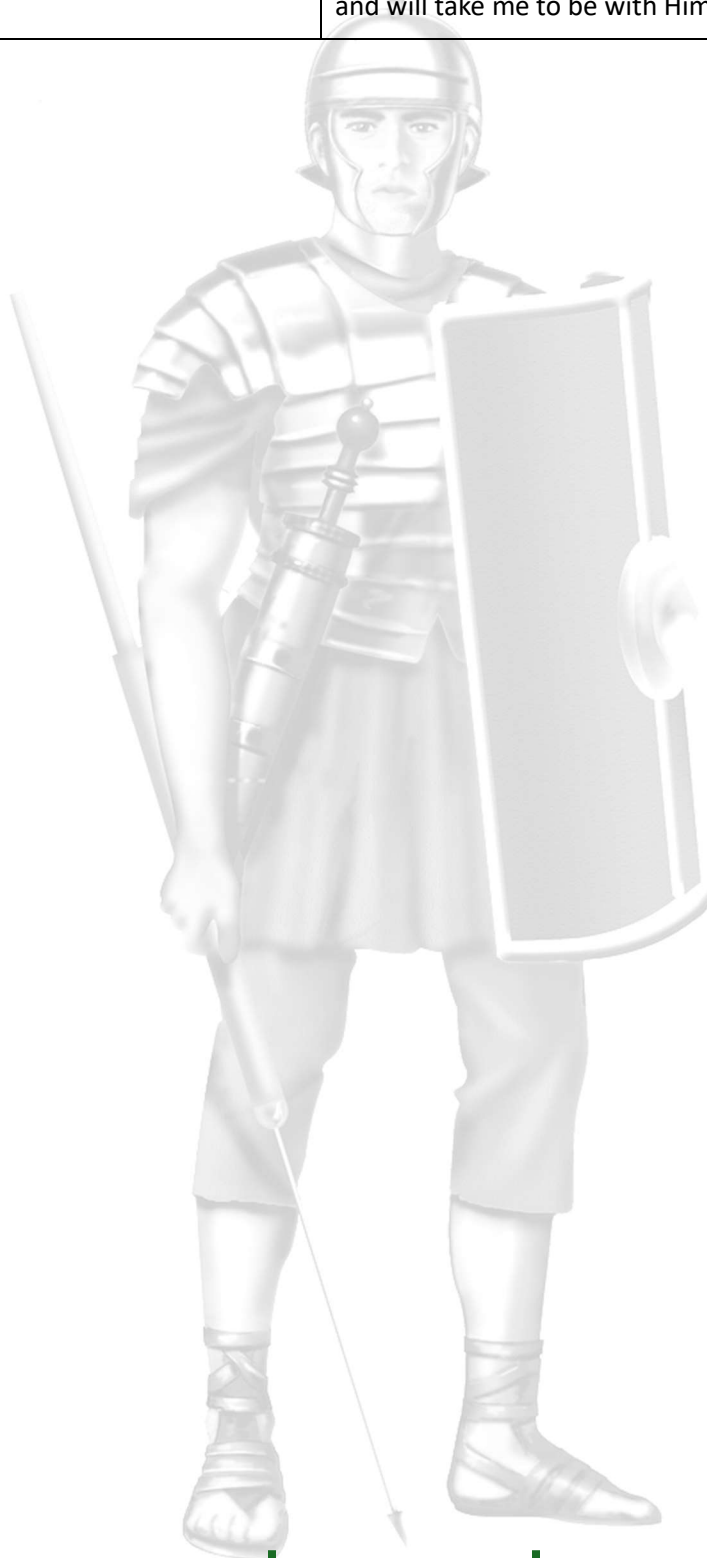
What's been going through your mind recently that you need to evaluate and judge? What I've learned to do is capture the thought on the left side of this chart and add the new thought or scripture truth I should be thinking on the right. Then I can choose which thought sticks around. Here's what my chart looks like and a sample of what it could look like. Often my New Thought just requires me to give another person the benefit of the doubt.

Original Thought	New Thought
The women in my small group have planned an activity without me; what's wrong with me?	God has the right to choose my friends and my activities. Maybe He has something else for me to do at that time.
The driver on the highway who just cut me off is such a jerk.	Maybe he/she has to get to the emergency room or has to find a restroom.

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

Why did I just get a cancer diagnosis? Is this my time to die?

Jesus is the Great Physician who can heal, will be with me the whole way, will bring along the right doctors, and will take me to be with Him at the right time.

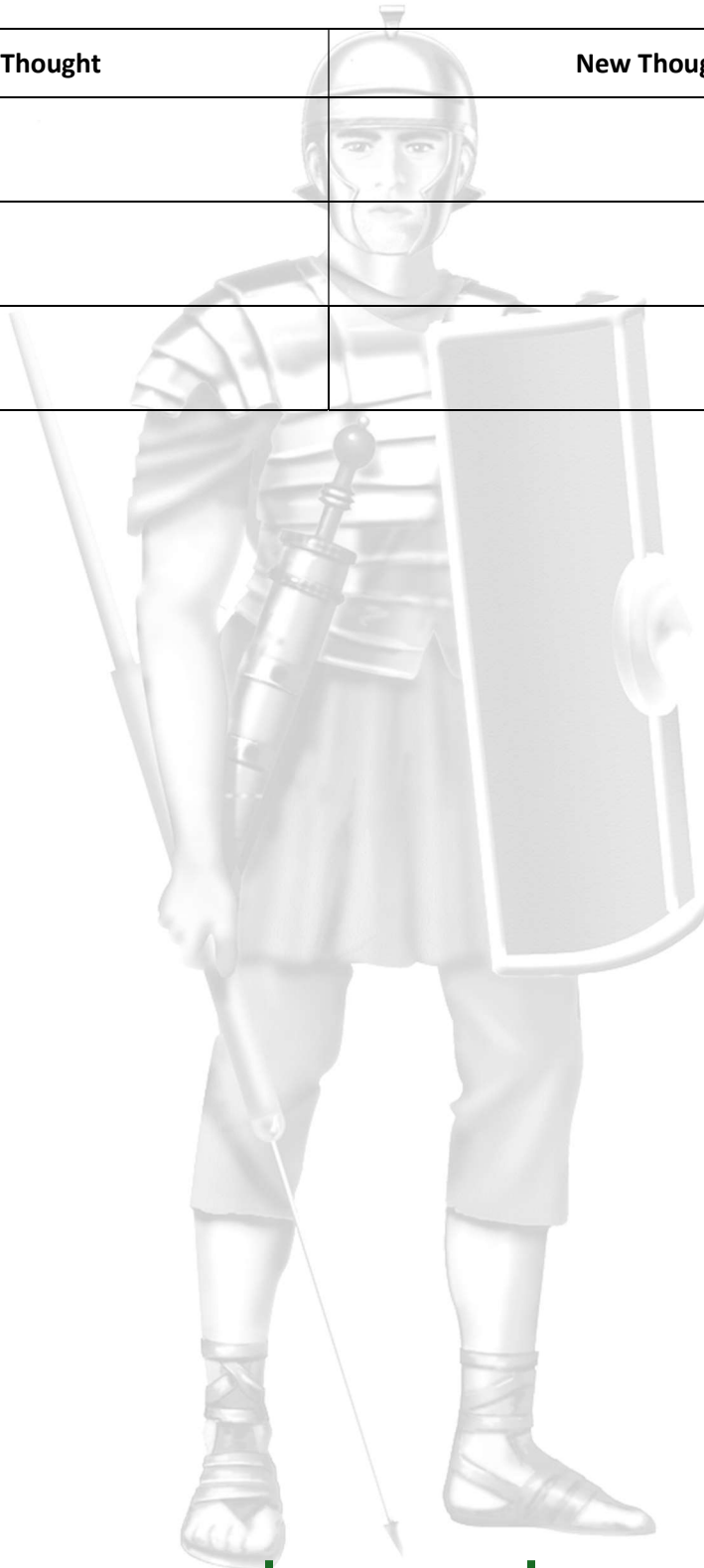




# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

Want to add a thought today that you want to evaluate and replace? I'll add this chart to the end of this study in case you want to print it out and use it for evaluating what hangs out in your mind.

Original Thought	New Thought





Part 2: Weapons and Strongholds

What Paul told the Corinthians (and us) in 2 Corinthians 10 was that how we're to think and act in the kingdom of God is not to be as we did before we knew Jesus. It's 180° different. Interesting that the enemy we fight is not a human enemy but are ways of thinking.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 [emphasis is mine]

So what are these weapons that are unlike what the world uses, and what are the strongholds that need to be demolished? The weapons are described in Ephesians 6 that we'll look at on the next page, but the strongholds are the arguments and pretensions that keep us from the knowledge of God.

Let's start with strongholds. What arguments and pretensions keep a grip on how you think and act? Think about how you view yourself, your family, your bosses, and those in charge of the government. What are the thoughts that make you always right and everyone else always wrong. This way of thinking are your strongholds.

Here are some possible arguments that might help you think about yours: God doesn't care. God isn't powerful enough to change what's happening around me or in my life. If I don't stand up for myself, no one else will. One of my strongholds that I have to fight every day is that I have the right to eat whatever I want, whenever I want.

And then here are some pretensions that keep us from living freely in the kingdom of God: I'm so important in my home, work, social life that I don't have to humble myself. If I keep talking about what others do wrong, I won't have to own up to my own shortcomings.

What arguments and strongholds do you need to demolish, like an army bringing down a fort?

Three sets of horizontal lines for writing answers.

# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

## *Part 3: The Armor of God*

In Ephesians 6, Paul describes the armor of God that we're to put on every day to protect us. Paul wrote this letter while in Rome under guard to the believers in Ephesus. Roman soldiers were around him day in and day out, so the armor description he uses comes from what was in front of him.

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:10-13*

What do you see in this passage that will help you "stand firm," and what does it mean to you? Here's a start:

Be strong in the Lord's mighty power	
Stand against the devil's schemes	
After all is done, just stand	

If you need more space, turn the page over!

# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

## *Weapons for destroying pretensions and strongholds!*

Now, what does the armor look like that is to protect us? Paul tells us how each piece of armor can protect us from our enemy's attacks. "Put on the full armor of God so when the day of evil comes, you can stand your ground."

Ephesians 6:13-18

Stand firm then, with the:

- *belt* of truth buckled around your waist
- *breastplate* of righteousness in place
- *feet fitted* with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace
- take up the *shield* of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one
- take the *helmet* of salvation
- take up the *sword* of the Spirit, which is the word of God
- *pray* in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.
- after you have done everything, *to stand* (v. 13)

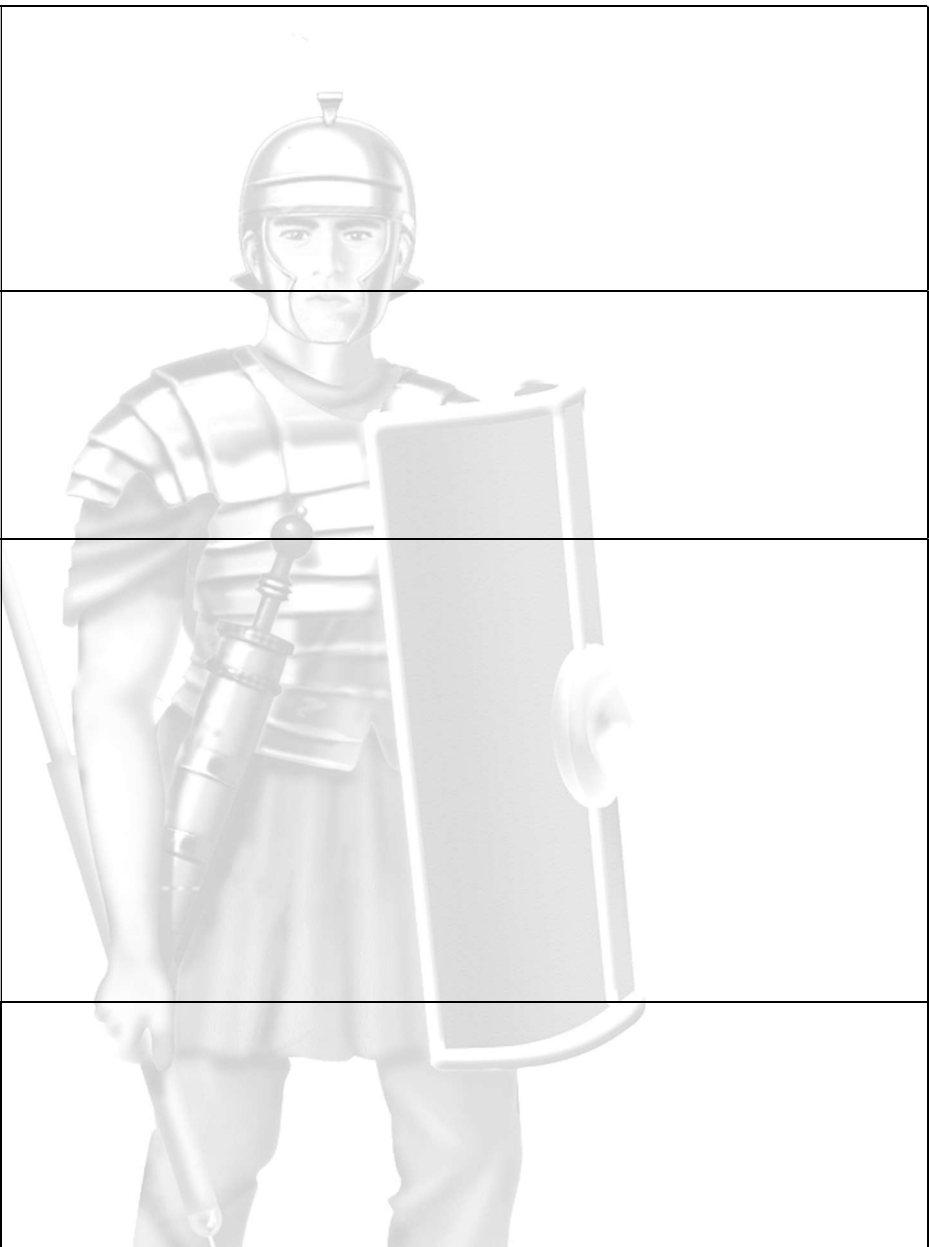


(free picture from Pixabay)

What does each piece of armor protect on a believer's body? What does this mean to you?

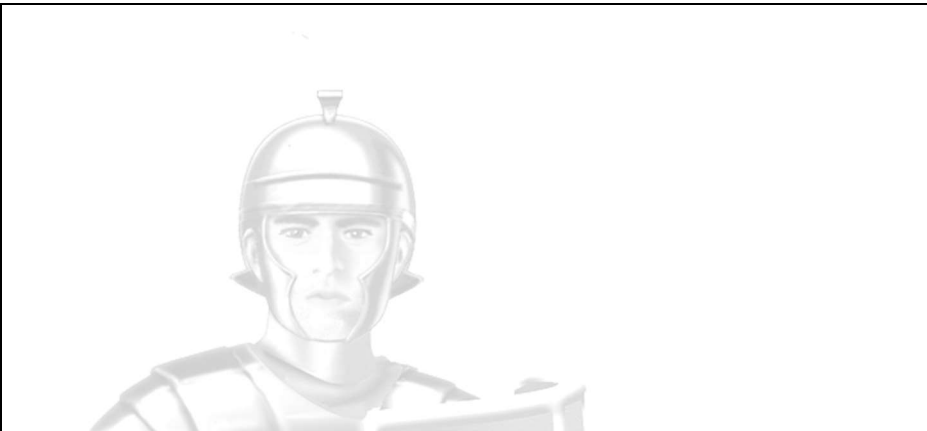
<p><i>Belt of truth</i> (You may want to look online to learn about the importance of this belt for a Roman soldier.)</p>	
<p><i>Breastplate of righteousness</i> (Even our military men and women wear breastplates. What do they protect? Why does understanding our righteousness important for what's being protected?)</p>	

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

<p><i>Feet fitted</i> - The sandals worn by Roman soldiers weren't like those you and I wear today. You may want to look online for a description of them. How could they help us to "stand firm"?</p>	
<p><i>Shield of faith</i> - Roman shields are large so they can protect one soldier or a whole army. What could the flaming arrows of the evil one be that faith could stop?</p>	
<p><i>Helmet of salvation</i> - What does the helmet protect? Why is knowing about our salvation important for this protection? Salvation is our initial coming to Jesus, our learning how to live in His family, and our confidence of what happens when we die (or fall asleep as we learned in the Notes from the Left Behind series.)</p>	
<p><i>Helmet of salvation</i> - The sides of the helmet helped to protect another part of a soldier's head during battle. Why could this be important for us?</p>	
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# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

*Sword of the Spirit* - The sword is our only offensive weapon for spiritual warfare. How can the using the word of God be an offensive weapon? You may want to read Matthew 4:1-11 when the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil and Jesus used the word of God to respond to these temptations.



Paul ends his description of how to spiritually protect ourselves with praying and standing firm.

*Pray in the Spirit* - When you pray, do just say words, or do you pray with the Spirit in charge? I think Paul is thinking about how the Spirit helps us pray in our weaknesses as he wrote in Romans 8:26-27.



*Stand firm* - after doing everything we've been talking about, how do we stand firm like the Roman soldier and why is it important?



*Praying* may not seem like a smart way for you to do battle, but Paul tells the Ephesians that he depended on their prayers. He knew that just his own prayers weren't enough.

*With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*  
Ephesians 6:18-20

Praying may not seem all that important, certainly it doesn't seem all that proactive, but if Paul (and Jesus) depended on talking with the Father during hard times (and good times), then who are we (who am I) to decide that praying is a waste of time.

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

I looked up on Bible Gateway the phrase “Jesus prayed” and found these descriptions

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35*

*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16*

Do you have a solitary place to pray, especially when you’re dealing with difficult times? Do you put your cell phone on mute and out of sight during these times? Usually we just try to pray in our own home or at work, but then find ourselves distracted by what’s around us. If you don’t have a solitary place that’s away from the crowds and where you won’t be distracted by your phone and those walking around, why don’t you find one and document its location:

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So what is praying and how do we do it? Let me share with you my story of how I learned what prayer was all about; this process didn’t happen all at once, but rather it evolved over the years.

1. As a young Christian in the faith, I listened to older brothers and sisters talk to God. Often their words were fairly formal and fancy, and they’d often go on for a while. While it was tempting to follow their examples, I knew this style wasn’t for me.
2. About 6 months after becoming a Christian, I was invited to sit in with the leadership team of a mixed Bible Study Fellowship group that met at 6:00 a.m. each Saturday. The leader never invited us to share our prayer requests because he said we could share our needs and the needs of others as we talked out loud to our heavenly Father. And when we did talk to God, we could only use one sentence, and we usually took turns going around the circle.
3. At some point in another study I was in, we looked at how Jesus taught His disciples to pray in Matthew 6 and Luke 11; if you haven’t read Jesus’ instructions to them in these two places, you may want to do so now.
4. As a single woman until I was almost 40, I decided to have dates with Jesus. We’d meet in coffee shops or diners and talk about what was going on in my life. If I needed His point of view, I’d make a list of what was bothering me, and He’d give me His input. Usually these answers came from Paul’s letter to the believers in Ephesus. After being married for some 30 years, I still love having these dates with Jesus. They are so fulfilling!
5. When in a study of Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome, I came across the following passage that told me the Spirit would translate my longings in wordless groans so I could talk to God according to His will.

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. Romans 8:26-27*



## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

6. In the letter to the Hebrew believers who weren't standing firm in their faith, the author gives us a picture of how we're to approach God when we want to talk to Him:

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Hebrews 4:14-16

7. At one point in my life, I was in conflict with another believer, and since we were both close to many around us, I wasn't able to share with any of our friends about what was going on. So I started having lunch with Jesus every day because He was the only one I could talk to honestly. Eventually I realized that all I was doing was telling Him about my problems. If that was all I talked about with friends, we probably wouldn't be friends for very long. That realization started my conversations with Him about neat things that happened during the day (even though He already knew about them) and laughed about funny things that happened. I could also ask Him for His input on what I was going through, but that was only a small part of our conversations.

*Are you comfortable with talking to God, either just the two of you or out loud in a group? If not, you may want to ask our heavenly Father to teach you how to talk with Him and listen to what He has to say. The Spirit will help you in this process. Why don't you talk to Him now?*

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# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

*Standing firm* is an interesting way to do battle; what does it mean to you? To me it means to:

- Protect my emotions and what I'm thinking about using His armor, so God's truth covers what I'm feeling and what I'm letting wander around my thinking.
- Find a solitary place where I can't be interrupted or distracted so I can spend time praying in the Spirit, being honest, listening to Jesus speak to my heart and mind about what He wants and what He's thinking.
- Then I can choose to hold on to the truth God's shown me and not waver in my thinking; I'm not to be wishy-washy, going back and forth about what I think is true and what I *should* do.

Is this what *standing firm* means to you, especially as you live through hardships that we'll be looking at next? Remember, warfare means we have an enemy who wants to destroy us, battles (plural), weapons of all types. Victory is assured when we fight with Jesus His way; but victory may not look the way we think it should.

Why not let God know how you're responding to *praying* and *standing firm* as a way of doing spiritual warfare?

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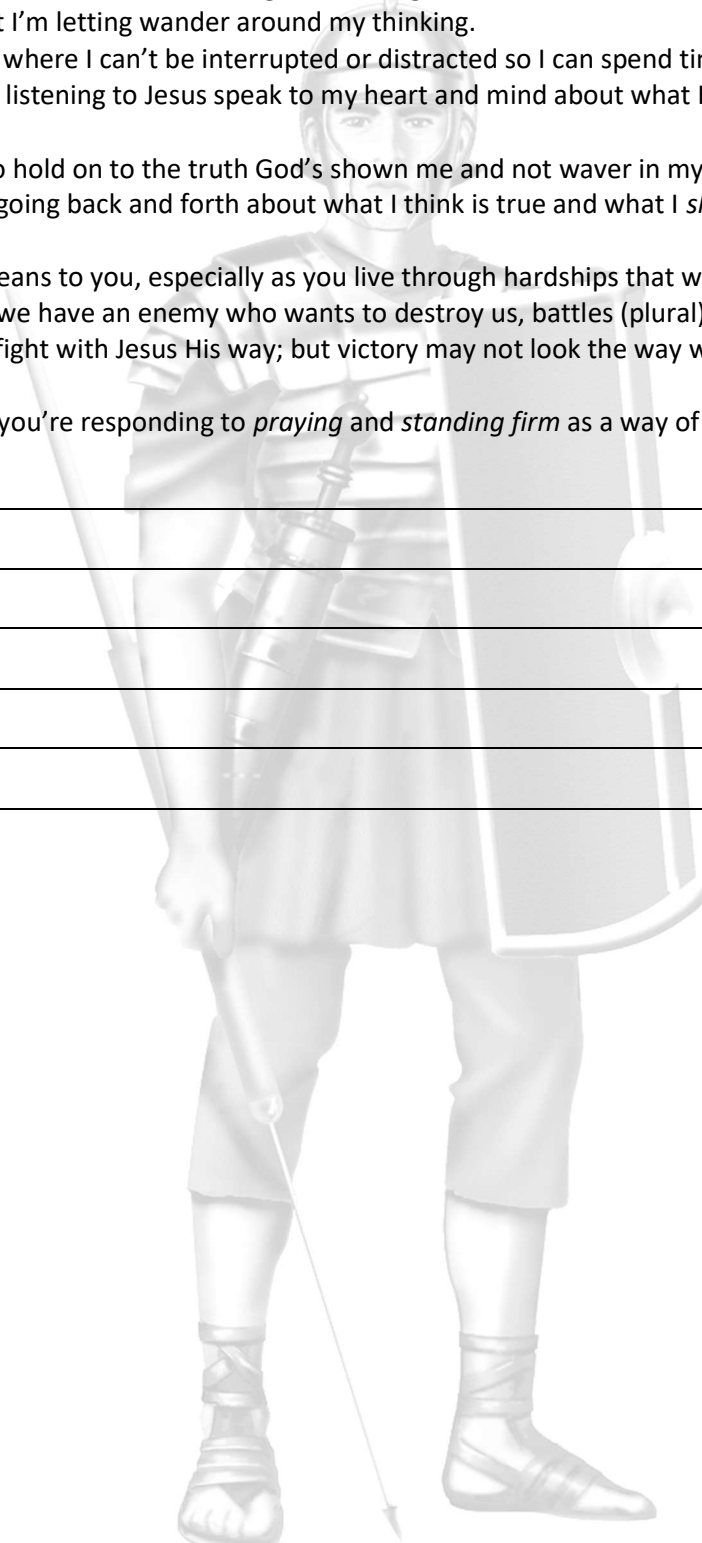
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Part 4: Living Through Hardships

Why are we including this section as we talk through spiritual warfare? Because these are the areas of life that cause us to forget about Jesus and walk our own way down a dangerous path. Let's learn from our teacher Paul about his hardships and difficulties and what he learned along the way.

Paul's life before meeting Jesus was comfortable and prosperous; he was well thought of among his peers and the Gentiles in Israel probably didn't even know his name. After Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, Paul's life was filled with hard times, starting with blindness (Acts 9). Jesus chose him to bring the good news to the Gentiles, but many people didn't want that to happen. I think as hard as his life was, the joy he felt when the believers chose to walk by faith and share their faith with those around tipped the scales between the hardships of his life and joy.



In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul tells the Corinthians (and us) what his life was like. I don't think he included this information to pat himself on the back; rather he wanted us to understand that his life was probably a lot harder than what we have to go through as we follow Jesus:

*We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10*

What do you see about Paul's challenges during his ministry?

Three horizontal lines on the left and three horizontal lines on the right, providing space for a student's response.

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

It's easy to see what his challenges were, but what sustained him during these times?

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Seems like Paul had to choose between concentrating on his challenges or choosing to talk about what sustained him.



Sometimes we have to frame our circumstances so how we think and talk about them are based on God's truth and not our emotions. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul gives us some examples of how to frame what comes our way. He says that our lives here on earth are like the inexpensive and common jars of clay that were used everywhere in his day. But instead of holding grains or water, Paul says these jars (our bodies) are holding the treasure of the resurrected life of Christ that is from God and not from us.

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

- *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;*
- *perplexed, but not in despair;*
- *persecuted, but not abandoned;*
- *struck down, but not destroyed.*
- *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*
- *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.*
- *So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

Is this passage a little confusing? Maybe this chart will help you as you reframe what you're going through.

This	Or This
Hard pressed on every side	But not crushed
Perplexed	But no in despair
Persecuted	But not abandoned
Struck down	But not destroyed
Always carrying around the death of Jesus	So the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body
Death works in us	But life is at work in you
Always being given over to death for Jesus' sake	So his life may also be revealed in our mortal body

Do you *feel* like you are somewhere on the left side of the chart? First, put your feelings into words.

This	What circumstances are making you feel this way?
Hard pressed on every side	
Perplexed	
Persecuted	
Struck down	
Always carrying around the death of Jesus	
Death works in us	
Always being given over to death for Jesus' sake	

# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

Then you may want to figure out the reality of where you are on the right side of the chart because Jesus hasn't forsaken you.

What's a new way of talking about your circumstances?	To reflect this truth
	But not crushed
	But not in despair
	But not abandoned
	But not destroyed
	So the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body
	But life is at work in you
	So his life may also be revealed in our mortal body

Finally, it's time to write your Father about how you're going to frame your thinking and share with others what God is doing in your life.

Father, I'm pretty miserable right now because . . .

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But You tell me that . . .

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And this is what I'm going to believe. Thank you, your son/daughter

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*Part 5: What Messes Us Up*

So your life seems to be messed up and overwhelming. Why does this seem to happen so often? In 1 John 2, the apostle John wrote about how loving the world and all that is in it can take us down the wrong path of living. Do you so love your home, your family, your job, and your successes that you'd do anything to keep living the same way? But what happens when one of these areas falls apart? Is that when you call out to Jesus? Good, but part of the restoring of a relationship with Him is figuring out what took you (me) down the wrong path to begin with. Please be honest; Jesus already knows your heart, but we have to own up to our thought life and what we call "precious."

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17*

The world's influence	The world's influence on me
Lust of the flesh	
Lust of the eyes	
Pride of life	

The solution? Love the Father (day by day and step by step), and do his will as we've talked about in this study. Then we'll live with Him forever.

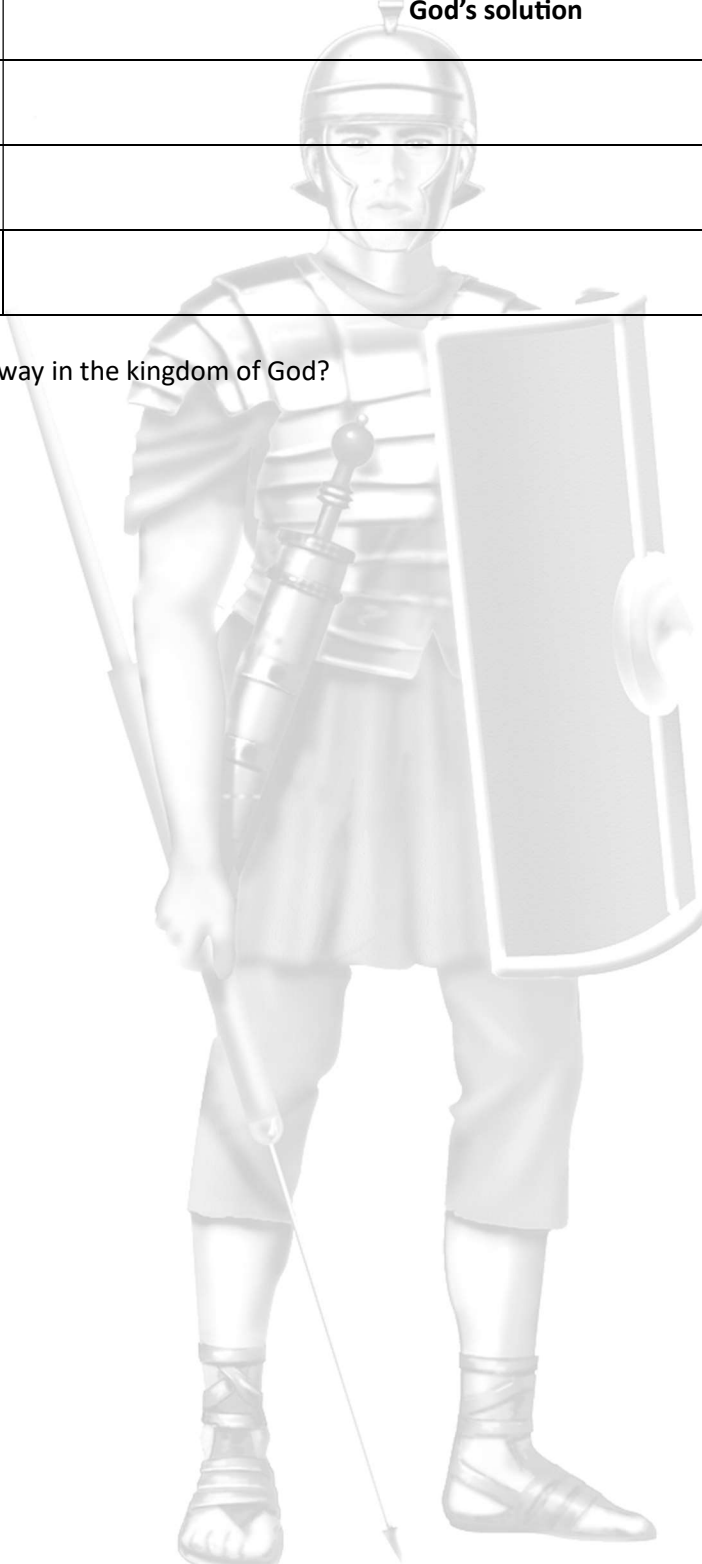
Now it's time to fill out the following chart to figure out *your* solution. Want an example? One of my pastors at a singles group told us years ago that when he saw a beautiful girl (and he was married with teenage sons), instead of lusting over her, he'd thank God for making such a beautiful young woman. What do you think of this example?

# LIFE IN THE FAMILY: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE?

Go ahead, be honest.

The world's influence	God's solution
Lust of the flesh	
Lush of the eyes	
Pride of life	

Are you're ready to live this way in the kingdom of God?





*Part 6: Conclusions*

Is this information about spiritual warfare new to you? If so, it's so important, and we're so fortunate to have the apostle Paul tell us about it. I don't know how I could have managed living as a new follower of Jesus, and even living now as a woman who has lived as a follower of Him for years, if I hadn't known about and put into practice this truth. Maybe it's time to tell the Father how you want to implement this truth.

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Our final conclusion?

**Put on the Armor of God  
and  
Stand Firm**



*Appendix*

If you want to work some more on evaluating your thoughts that we looked at in Philippians 4:8-9, you may appreciate this chart that you can print.

Original thought	New thought

