



WEEK 4

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

We can stand strong together.

THE BIBLE

Ephesians 6:10-20

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Squad War: Round 4

- We're back for Round 4 of Squad Wars! Remember, you're playing for a prize for you and your squad this week!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, find short videos that contain unexpected endings. You will need one video for every round you choose to play. Videos should be short (not more than 30 seconds each) and should be an "action" video with an unexpected ending. For each round you decide to play, choose one player from each team to come to the front. For each round, show the video and stop it just short of the unexpected ending and challenge students to shout out what they expect as the ending of the videos. The first person to correctly guess the answer scores a point. Play for as many rounds as you'd like, and keep track of the winners! At the end of the game, add more marbles, ping pong balls, or colorful liquid to the winning team's container. **To close your Squad War competition, announce the winning team and their prize (like an ice cream sundae party, s'mores bar, or pizza), and then add this twist: "But wait — this whole series is about coming together as a team and a family. So everyone actually gets to enjoy this prize . . . but our winners will get to go first."***

VIDEO | Roller-Skating Fails



- We've been talking a lot about how important it is for a squad to stick together, but that's never more true than when life gets a little chaotic — and it does sometimes.
- Have you ever gone ice skating, roller skating, or rollerblading? Sometimes life can feel as out of control as you probably felt the first time you put on a pair of skates. It feels like gravity is against you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show a video [like this one](#) of roller skating fails. Try to include a few with couples or people holding hands.
- If you've never skated before, here's a tip: don't try to hold a friend's hand. This might seem like a good idea, but it's not. One person is in the groove skating along while the other is pulling you both down. Not only is it uncomfortable, but everyone nearby is watching you struggle together.

QUESTION | Has a friend ever tripped you up (literally)?

- In our friendships, we tend to stand or fall together — sometimes literally. Whether you were roller skating, sledding, or just walking down a flight of stairs, **has a friend ever tripped you up (literally)?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond and share funny stories.
- Other people can trip us up, which is fine when the results are funny (and only slightly painful). But sometimes people can trip us up in more important and destructive ways, like when we . . .
 - Are influenced to make poor decisions.
 - Adopt others' negative attitudes or perspectives.
 - Change our beliefs or values to imitate someone else's.
- Sometimes people can trip us up, and sometimes we can trip others up too.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. **The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.**
 - Tell us your biggest wipe-out story.
 - Think about a time a friend influenced you, for good or bad. Tell us about it.
 - ❖ How do you know when to stand strong in what you believe, instead of going along with someone else?

VIDEO | Dad Wins

- Because we're all imperfect people, our relationships with each other can feel like a losing war with gravity. We pull each other down, or let ourselves be pulled down, instead of helping each other stay standing.



- But what if our relationships felt less like a roller skating fail and more like one of these "dad wins"?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play a video [like this one](#) of dads reacting to save their kids from danger.
- Wouldn't it be amazing if you could trust the people around you to have your back, look out for your best interest, and intervene when you're in trouble, and they could trust you to do the same?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. **The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.**
 - ❖ Talk about a time someone had your back when you needed them. What did they do for you?
 - ❖ What are some situations where we might need people to help or protect us?

STORY | Talk about a time godly friends protected or helped you.

- There are so many reasons why we need people to have our back, like when ...
 - We do something dangerous or unwise.
 - We're struggling, hurting, or feel alone.
 - We're questioning what we believe.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time godly friends helped you (or you helped each other) during one of the situations listed above. Be sure to share specific examples of how your friends in this story intervened or supported you.
- Jesus-followers aren't perfect, and God's family often has a lot of issues to work out, but I share these stories because we need to be reminded how the Church can function when it's at its best.

SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 6:10-20

- Today we'll finish our journey through the book of Ephesians and our conversation about how God's family is supposed to work when it's at its best. But first, a quick recap ...
 - Remember, when we talk about "the Church," we're not talking about a building or an event. We're talking about people all over the world who follow Jesus.
 - This book we're reading was originally a letter, written by a man named Paul, who wanted to help early Jesus-followers figure out how to be God's family — both in how they related to God and how they related to each other.
 - This letter was written to a whole community of people! It was meant to be read together and discussed, kind of like we're doing today.



- Today we're going to look at chapter 6, where Paul had one final word for the Jesus-followers in Ephesus. Here, he reminded them that, if they were going to stand strong in their faith, they were going to need some protection.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ephesians 6:10–20.*
- Paul talked a lot about protection from our enemy, but what do we need protection from? How does our enemy attack us? We mentioned some of those ways earlier. We might need protection from . . .
 - Doing something dangerous, destructive, or unwise.
 - Experiencing hopelessness, fear, or loneliness.
 - Losing or walking away from our faith in Jesus.

OBJECT LESSON | The Armor of God

- In the Greco-Roman world of the first century (when Paul was writing this letter) Rome had conquered much of the world, so there were Roman soldiers everywhere — and since they were the invaders and conquerors, most people didn't like them.
- For early Christians, Roman soldiers were disliked for even more reasons:
 - The Roman government had played a role in Jesus' crucifixion.
 - The Roman soldiers were actively imprisoning, threatening, harming, and even killing followers of Jesus.
- With that in mind, Paul did something interesting. He used the imagery of Roman armor (an image early Christians would have associated with their enemy) to tell the Church they needed some armor of their own. But it wasn't the kind of armor they might have expected.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, set aside a suit of [costume armor](#). You can label each piece ("truth," "righteousness," "peace," etc.) if you'd like. Begin with the armor in a basket or tote so the pieces are not visible. As you talk about each one, hold it up, explain it, but then carelessly toss it behind you — when you begin talking about the importance of actually wearing this armor, pick up each piece from where you threw it. If you'd like, you could add a little humor at the end of this section by assembling the armor on yourself, a student, or a large stuffed animal — but only if it looks ridiculous, so it doesn't come across as cheesy.*
- Here are the pieces of "armor" Paul tells us to wear . . .
 - The **belt of truth** is a reminder to keep God's truth close, where we can always reach it. The belt is the part of the armor that holds the other pieces of armor in place. God's truth can protect us.
 - The **breastplate of righteousness** is a reminder to follow Jesus not just in our words, but in our actions. When we choose what's wrong instead of what's right, we leave ourselves vulnerable to serious damage. But we can be protected by choosing to act righteously, and receiving God's gift of righteousness through Jesus.
 - The **shoes of peace** remind us that we always need to be ready to share the good news of Jesus — that we can all know God through Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - The **shield of faith** keeps us protected from lies that try to tell us Jesus isn't who He says He is or that He won't do what He says He will do. Sometimes we can believe lies not only about God, but about ourselves too. Maybe someone's words or actions have turned into messages you continue to replay in your mind about your identity,



worth, or purpose. But because you have the shield of faith, you no longer have to believe lies about God or about you.

- The **helmet of salvation** is a reminder that our thoughts can be one of our greatest battlegrounds, but God has already won that battle for us. Because salvation comes through Jesus, we can believe and trust that our battle against sin has already been won — even when we're struggling to stand strong.
- Finally, let's talk about **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God. In an actual life-or-death situation, where the early Christians were being imprisoned and murdered by their enemies, isn't it interesting that Paul says their greatest weapon is the word of God? No matter what attacks we face, Paul tells us we can protect ourselves by holding tight to everything God has said and the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.
- Paul told us to "put on" every piece of this armor. Maybe that's because he knew we would tend to ignore or toss them aside.
- Imagine what would happen if we were all in a battle, but had forgotten some or all of our armor. Even the best trained armies wouldn't survive very long without protection. If you're running around with just a belt and a helmet, and I'm next to you with only my shoes and a sword, we don't stand a chance. If we're going to stand strong, we all need all of our armor.

SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 6:18-20

- Did you notice that the armor of God doesn't say anything about protecting our backs? Maybe that's because we were never meant to go into battle alone.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *Ephesians 6:18-20*.
- Paul asked his fellow Jesus-followers to pray for him. He knew he needed his squad! And, remember, this isn't a letter written to just one person — it's written to a whole group of people. None of Paul's instructions can be fully put into practice without a community.
- Paul is calling *us* to stand strong in our faith. And if we want to stand strong in our faith, no matter what our enemy throws at us, **we can stand strong together**.

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

STAND STRONG TOGETHER

- I don't know the details of every battle currently being fought by the people in this room, and I don't know what kinds of battles we will face this year. But no matter what challenges come our way, I believe we can face them together, because that's what God's family does.
 - If you're fighting a battle you're not sure you can win, let's hear it. We can hold you up and guard your back.
 - If you think you've already lost whatever battle you've been fighting, don't give up yet. Remember, Jesus has already won your battles for you.



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- And if you see someone else in God's family fighting a battle, you know what to do.
- Here are three ways we can stand strong together:
 - **PUT ON YOUR ARMOR.** Don't just toss it aside or ignore it. Suit up every day in God's protection. You're not the only one at risk if you don't — we all are. We need each other. And don't be afraid to ask for help if you're struggling to get your armor on.
 - **HELP SOMEONE ELSE WITH THEIR ARMOR.** If you see someone else on the battlefield who seems to have forgotten a piece of their armor, help them.
 - **PRAY.** Like Paul asked the Ephesians to do, pray for each other. A prayer-less life is a powerless life, and we're called to live a life fueled by God's power. You don't have to pray long, but don't go long without praying.
- Sometimes we'll all face battles that seem overwhelming or even impossible. But no matter what kind of battle you face, I hope you remember this:
 - You don't have to fight your battles alone.
 - Someone needs you to fight alongside them.
 - Jesus has already won the war, and we're on the winning team.
- Because of what God has done to rescue and equip us, **we can stand strong together.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What are some situations where we might need God's armor? Are you in any of those situations right now?**
 - ❖ **Who is at risk if we fail to put on God's armor? Why?**
 - **How would you "put on" each piece of God's armor?**
 - Belt of truth
 - Breastplate of righteousness
 - Shoes of peace
 - Shield of faith
 - Helmet of salvation
 - Sword of the Spirit
 - **How can you help someone else put on their armor?**
 - **Read Ephesians 6:18-20. What are some specific things we can pray for each other? Do you have anything you'd like us to pray for?**

ACTIVITY | Squad Party (and The Table Talk Challenge)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *To close your series, have a squad party with the prize you announced at the beginning of this week. If you'd like, use The Table Talk Challenge from your Grow Discipleship Strategy to cue conversations between your students.*