



TONY EVANS



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A KID'S GUIDE TO THE ARMOR OF GOD

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Let's Get Ready!

Did you know that there's an invisible war happening all around you? It's a huge war. It started at the beginning of time—when the world was first created—and it's being fought all throughout the earth. Yet nobody has ever seen it. It's a *spiritual war*.

A spiritual war might sound like it's imaginary—like a made-up war in a book or a movie—but it *is* real. And it affects everyone in the world—even kids like you!

So, what exactly is spiritual warfare? Spiritual warfare is a battle fought between God and Satan that goes on in the invisible, spiritual world—the world you *can't* see—while playing out in the visible, physical world—the world you *can* see—at the same time.

In spiritual warfare God and Satan are battling each other for control of your life. Now, it's important to remember that God is the One who is truly in control. He's already won the battle! But Satan wants to make you think that he's the one in control, so he tries to get to you in any way he can. He likes to play games with people—even kids. He loves to make you feel worried or scared or angry.

Why does Satan do this? Because when you start thinking his way, you stop thinking about God. And that's Satan's main strategy in the spiritual war. The devil wants you to believe that he—not God—is in control. He wants to make your life miserable, and he wants you to think that there's nothing you can do about it.

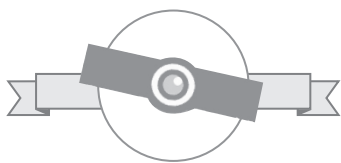
Don't believe Satan for a second!

When things go wrong in your life, God wants you to turn to Him. He wants to hear your prayers, comfort you, and help you through your troubles. As you turn to Him, you get to know Him better and discover His amazing plan for your life. Satan, however, wants to turn you away from God and keep you from doing what God has planned for you to do. That's the heart of spiritual warfare—Satan trying to tear you away from God.

That's a lot to think about, isn't it? But there's good news! God has already given you the perfect guide to help you understand the spiritual battles you face. This guide is God's Word. His Word tells you exactly what you need to do to win the spiritual war. And in His Word, God reveals that He has already given you six tried-and-tested pieces of armor that will help you win the battle.

In this book we're going to take a look at the six pieces of armor—the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit—and see how each one helps you fight Satan's sneaky schemes. When Satan tries to get you to worry, think bad thoughts about yourself, or make wrong choices, you can suit up in the armor of God and stand strong.

So, let's get going. It's time to put on God's armor and prepare to win the war!



1

The **Belt** of Truth



Playing at your favorite amusement park! Backpacking in the mountains! Body surfing on the beach!

No matter where you go or what you do, vacations are amazing! You and your family have fun spending time planning the trip, dreaming about the sights you're going to see, the things you're going to do, even the food you're going to eat.

But before you go on your trip, there's something pretty important that you need to do—you need to pack. You can't just show up at the airport or head out to your car with the clothes you have on and expect them to last for the entire vacation. Instead, you fill your suitcase or your duffel bag with all the clothes and belongings you'll need for the entire trip.

You also need to look at the weather forecast to see what kind of clothes you'll need to pack for your vacation. A summer trip to Hawaii is going to call for very different clothes than a fall campout in the mountains. Where you are going will determine what you pack for the trip.

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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:13-17).

In the Bible God has given you clear instructions about the specific articles of clothing that you not only need to wear but also need to have packed and ready to put on if you are going to have victory in spiritual warfare. This list of armor can be compared to a travel guide that you read when you're going somewhere new. For example, if you're going to summer camp, the camp brochure often includes a checklist of things to bring—a swimsuit for the pool or lake, long pants and closed-toe shoes for horseback riding, and a warm jacket for chilly nights around the campfire.

Where is your favorite place to go on vacation?

What kind of clothes do you pack when you go there?

Why is it so important that you know what to wear? *Because you are in a battle.* And the battle isn't against flesh and blood. It isn't against other people. The root of the battle lies in the spiritual world, so you need a spiritual wardrobe to fight this battle.

If you go through life as a follower of Christ, but you're dressed all wrong for a spiritual battle, you'll never be able to win the battle and live the amazing life God designed you to live. You'll be missing out on the best experience ever!

TIED TO A LEASH

Have you ever been to an amusement park or a public place where there are a lot of children? Occasionally, when I go to one of these places, I'll see a mother or a father with a leash around his or her wrist. Naturally my mind thinks that the leash is going to be attached to a dog. But then I look and notice that the leash is actually attached to a child! Apparently some children need more than their parent's words to keep them nearby.

Unfortunately the same is true for many Christians as well! God has already told you in His Word how to find your greatest source of strength—it's your closeness to Him. It is in this location—right next to Christ—that you are supposed to “stand firm.” You're supposed to live your life right beside Jesus, not wandering away like the child at the amusement park.

Time to Get Dressed!

Now, let's get to our first article of clothing—the belt of truth.

A belt? Do people even wear belts anymore? you might think. Sure they do! And while you probably don't wear belts with most of your outfits, a belt can actually be quite useful.

Ephesians 6:14 says, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...” In Bible times Roman soldiers always wore belts. In fact, a Roman soldier's belt was a very useful tool. First of all, it was a place where he could hang some of his other armor, like his sword or his dagger. If you've ever watched a movie that takes place in Roman times, you've seen the men dressed in long robes, which were called tunics. (Aren't you glad *that* fashion trend is over?) When the soldier was ready to head into battle, he could reach down and pick up the part of his tunic that was hanging down near his feet and tuck it into the belt. Now he could move his feet freely and head into the action! See how useful that belt was?

So, what can a belt do for *you*? One thing a belt can do is hold up your pants or skirt. The second thing it can do is keep your shirt tucked in (like when you're dressing up for something). A belt can also make a fashion statement, but most importantly a belt holds together whatever else you're wearing.

A belt is designed to hold your outfit together by keeping your items of clothing in their proper order—pants held up and shirt tucked in. The belt of truth holds the rest of your *spiritual* armor together.

Satan, however, wants to mess up your outfit. He wants

to unbuckle your belt of truth so that your pants fall down and your shirt comes untucked. Of course he doesn't *literally* want your clothing all messed up. He wants to create chaos and disorder in your life so that you lose your focus on God and worry about the things going on all around you.

The enemy does this because he's all about lying. Jesus is all about truth. Jesus said in John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Here's an important thing to remember: Just reading the truth or seeing the truth doesn't set you free. Rather, it is the truth that you "know" that will set you free.

So what is truth? Truth, at its core, is God's view of a matter. And truth is so powerful that it changes lives both right at this moment and *also* for all eternity. The presence of God's truth brings understanding and victory, but the absence of it brings confusion and defeat. Truth is powerful, isn't it?

THREE THINGS ABOUT TRUTH

1. Though truth is made up of information and facts, it also includes God's original intent—or purpose. This makes it the absolute standard by which we can measure everything else.

Let me tell a story to help explain this to you. A man went fishing one day and brought home 20 catfish. He told his wife, "Honey, I caught 20 catfish today." That was a fact. He had brought home the 20 catfish he'd caught.

His wife, however, knew he wasn't a very good fisherman, so she asked him, "How did you catch 20 catfish?"

He answered, "Well, I went to the fish market and asked the guy to toss me 20 catfish, and I caught them all!"

This man gave his wife the facts, but he didn't give her the truth. In fact he hid the facts in his "truth." Truth always includes more than facts. It includes the goal—or purpose—behind the facts.

2. Truth has already been predetermined—or decided in advance—by God. Truth doesn't change with the latest fashion or fad. Truth is reality in its original form.

One plus one equals two. One plus one has always equaled two. It will always be so. Even when I don't feel like one plus one should equal two, and I really feel like I want it to equal three, one plus one will still equal two. Even if I hope, believe, and claim that one plus one should equal three, one plus one will never equal three because you can't change the laws of mathematics!

Truth is a powerful reality predetermined by God. And your thoughts and actions need to line up with God's truth.

3. What is true of you on the inside needs to be true of you on the outside. Your actions, decisions, conversations, and choices need to reflect what's

inside of you. Being honest with who you are and figuring out why you do the things that you do—why you choose certain friends, how you react when something goes wrong, what you decide to spend your time on—is something you need to do when you buckle on the belt of truth.

God knows when you're faking it. After all, He already knows everything about you. He knows when you're hiding something from Him. You can't shock God. You can't surprise God. He already knows it all.

God knows the past, present, and future of everything—your thoughts, your actions, and even what you want to do that you don't do. When you get real with God, you will find it much easier to get real with yourself.

Figuring Out the Truth

Here's one question I want you to ask yourself about truth: How will you figure out what is true?

How do you know if something is true?

Do your feelings tell you what is true? Feelings change—sometimes you're up, sometimes you're down, sometimes you're happy, and sometimes you're sad.

What if I told you I was going to give you a million dollars? Your feelings might fly high! You'll be rich! You'll be able to buy anything you want! But then what if I told you that the million dollars was in play money? You'd probably scream or get pretty upset with me!

You need to understand your feelings because they are real, but you should never use them as your main guide to figuring out the truth.

What about using your intelligence to figure out what's true? I know that you're smart, but do you know absolutely *everything*? Of course not! Nobody does (except God!). Have you ever learned something and then found out some new information that changed your opinion? God is the only one who has *all* the information.

What about using your morals—your sense of right and wrong—to figure out the truth? You might think you have a pretty good sense of right and wrong, but even that can change with your feelings, new information, the influence of other people, and just general growing up.

So what will you choose to figure out if something is true? Will you use your feelings (which are constantly changing), your intelligence (which is limited—you don't know it all), or your sense of right and wrong (which you can never quite figure out on this earth)? Or will you choose God to show you the truth?

Only God is the creator of truth. Knowing Him and His Word is the only way to know how to use the belt of truth because only God can say what is entirely true.

What Is Real?

Have you ever been to an amusement park and seen the mirrors that make you look fat, tall, short, or skinny? The

mirrors *distort*—or change—your real image. Did you know that your soul has become distorted like these mirrors? It's all because of sin. Sin has gotten into your soul and twisted it so it no longer looks how it was created to look.

A person looking into a carnival mirror couldn't accurately describe the true person who is being reflected in the mirror. Neither can you accurately say what truth is when you look through the distorted mirror of your soul. The soul within you—how you see a matter—needs to be restored. You do this by exchanging your thoughts for God's truth.

How can you swap out your thoughts (which by now you know you can't always trust or rely upon) for God's truth? You do this by asking for help from the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. (The other two are God the Father and Jesus, who is God the Son.) First Corinthians 2:10 says, "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." This means that part of the Holy Spirit's work is to continually—which means all the time—examine everything. Even all things about God!

Isn't that terrific? The Holy Spirit—who was sent by God to this earth to be your helper—can give you the ability to know God. By knowing God, you receive the truth that lets you walk in victory in your daily life—on your very best day *and* on your very worst day!

The belt of truth is hanging in your closet ready to go! Satan, though, doesn't want you to wear it. In fact he'll do anything to keep you from putting it on. "God's truth doesn't look good on you," he might whisper. "That belt of truth doesn't fit you. It's not your style."

His wrong thoughts—another name for them is *lies*—pop into your mind until you're not sure who's right, who's wrong, and what in the world you should believe.

Wrong thoughts aren't just whispered directly into your mind by Satan. Sure, they can show up that way, but the enemy can also get to you in other ways. It might be something as harmless as a teacher giving an opinion about what you should do or think. It could be what your friends or the media—in the form of popular songs, movies, or TV shows—are persuading you to do or believe. It could even be what you read in a hard-to-put-down novel that changes your way of thinking and pulls you away from God's truth.

What are some ways that wrong thoughts could be put into your mind?

Here's another *really* important thing to remember: Satan doesn't care if you mix some of God's truth in with the rest of the "truth" you've gathered from all of your other sources (like friends, books, and movies) because he knows that if he can twist what you believe to be true, that's enough to prevent you from putting on the belt of truth and really knowing God.

DANGEROUS LASAGNA AHEAD!

One day a restaurant chef prepared a pan of lasagna. He sliced up the tomatoes, boiled the noodles, fried the meat, and added some chopped onions and garlic along with cheese and sauce.

Then just as he was about to put the pan in the oven, he sprinkled poison all over the top.

Would you eat that lasagna? No way! But that's what Satan does to strip you of the belt of truth. He says, "Go to church. Read your Bible. Memorize your verses. But at the end of the day, sprinkle in a little bit about what the world says, what your teachers say, how your friends think, what television or movies show, or whatever else you feel, desire, or want to believe." Satan knows that when you've done that, you've taken off the belt of truth. And do you know something crazy? Satan didn't have to take it off for you. You took it off all by yourself!

Avoid the dangerous lasagna! Stick to a dish that you know all the ingredients. Eat at a restaurant where the chef tells the truth!

Before we move on to the next article of clothing, let's review the three principles of truth. First, truth is made up of information and facts, but it also includes God's original intent, which makes it the absolute standard by which you can measure everything else. Second, truth has already been predetermined—decided ahead of time—by God. And third, what is true of you on the inside needs to be true of you on the outside.

When you put on the belt of truth and align your mind, your heart, and your emotions with God's truth, He will then give you all the power you need to fight your spiritual

battles. And you'll be well on your way to experiencing victory over anything or anyone who seeks to overcome or defeat you.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Why is the belt of truth the first piece of armor you need to put on?



How is the world's truth different from God's truth? How can you learn to measure things by God's truth?

What are some good ways to discover God's truth?
