

# T R A N S I T I O N S

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## ARMS AND ARMORS

*Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Ephesians 6:13

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has a permanent exhibit on display *Arms and Armors*. *Arms and Armors* made quite an impression on me the first time I saw it years ago. It is a display of ornate and heavy battle equipment used by warriors. Helmets, shields, breastplates, swords, armors with full regalia, and various accessories, are magnificent to view. Considering the weight of these items, one wonders how men fought in such bulk metallic protection. But they did, winning and losing. This armor is manmade; Christians wear armor of a different sort.

Are you dressed for battle? If you believe in Jesus Christ, you will engage in spiritual warfare each day. If you know that, you are already prepared. If you do not, it is time to suit up with the Word of God. God tells us in His Word, *The Enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy* (John 10:10). He attacks the lives of Christians in subtle and clear ways. Because the Lord knows we will contend with the Adversary, Satan, He gives to us an outline in Ephesians as to how we can arm ourselves to combat dark forces that seek to defeat us. Because of Jesus, we have the great victory and yet we must be on guard against Satan, the roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan strikes when we are going through times of physical, spiritual, emotional or mental weakness. Grief seasons are times of weakness. They are draining episodes of experience that are weighty and encumber us in our daily walks of faith. Grief is a universal experience, however, until it happens to one personally—and it will if it has not already—the magnitude of its power is incomprehensible. Once a loss is met, felt, faced, and survived, a loss of significance etches itself on a heart such that it remains an unforgettable season in life, even after healing occurs.

In today's culture, our young people need tremendous love, fervent prayer, and our abiding presence to aid them in their times of grief, which can be times they combat the Foe. Society is filled with readily available choices that are easily addictive and destructive. These choices become habits but their genesis can be disguised as fun, recreational, comforting, and entertaining. Among our youth, every drink taken, drug ingested, sexual act performed, lie told (to themselves and to others), has the potential to be harmful and chip away at the foundation of integrity and self-worth. When this happens, Satan smiles. Satan accommodates. For this reason, it is imperative elders give careful attention to the young within their sphere of influence, and to those unseen youth needful of fortifying prayer.

Spiritual warfare is real. Scripture informs us that we do not war against flesh and blood but against principalities of the air (Ephesians 6:12). This is where the war is waged but we see the spoils and casualties of war all around us. Blessedly there are young people who are intentionally living for Christ who daily put on their armor ready to live, thrive, serve, and witness. But some are not. Some cannot. Some young people do not have models about them to put pure physical arms of love around them and arm them with The Word of God and the covering of prayer. Young people need, seek out, and find places of acceptance and love—even if it is false and temporary. Those temporary answers can be painful. Even violent.

One place youth are turning is to gangs. Gang membership is on the rise. Gangs are a structured and notorious reality. The breakdown in family and use of the internet are two significant reasons for gang proliferation. Involvement in this kind of life robs them of today and tomorrow, and steals the future from us all. Our young people must have sound assurance that we shall continue to be a shield and bulwark for them in an increasingly dark world.

Jesus, precious and faithful Jesus, is the Light of the World (John 8:12). He continues to shine brilliantly and vividly for all who keep their eyes on Him. The world will be as it is but those in Christ are told *you are the light of the world* (Matthew 5:14). Bolstering our youth so they live encouraged through and after a season of grief or brokenness, and live free and clean from Satan's lure, is possible by the might of Christ. He is the One who fills us with light and hope to equip us on a daily basis to encourage others. Christ will champion our cause to care for our youth when they grieve, grow despondent, become wayward, and when they return. Christ will champion our cause to care for them because He loves our young people more than we do, and more than we are capable of loving them. With His arms of perfect love and the armor of His Name and His Word, He steadies steps and fosters optimism for the future. He proved His love on Calvary. He wants people to have life and to have it more abundantly. Because He lives, He wants all to live armed and armored—in His victorious and endless love.

*Lord Jesus, some of our youth are in pain today. They feel sorrow and anxiety over deaths, divorces, endings of relationships, academic concerns, bullying, addictions, fitting in, letting go, and contemplation of leaving this world. Lord Jesus, help. Help them. Help us. You see their every need, and You hear every word of truth these young ones speak in their hearts. Lord, help them to know that You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Govern those around them by the presence of You, Holy Spirit. May we who surround them be granted Your wisdom, stamina, patience, and comforting love to encourage them today and for all of their tomorrows. Thank You, Jesus, for Thy certain presence among us all. How we need You. How we love You, Amen.*