

## The Armour Series: Week 5 Devotions

In week 5 of the Armour Series we explored the Shield of Faith.

### Day One

I'm sure at some point in life, we all either watched movies about war or played games that involved war. Some of you are still playing such games today. Either way, war is not something that is unfamiliar to any of us.

So the next thing I will ask you to do shouldn't be so strange. Well, I hope not...

Let's paint a picture in our minds. You are in the middle of a war. You can hear the sounds of explosions going off all around you. The ground vibrates with each one. You can hear the sounds of people fighting all around you. You know you are a soldier. So what are the things you are wearing? What are the things you hold in your hands? Got it?

This scenario is a reality. There is a war right now in the spirit (Ephesians 6: 12). And the price, in case you didn't realise, is your soul. Yup, believe it or not. God knows this very well, that's why He has given us ways to defend ourselves. By this point, you have learnt a bit about armour. But not just any armour but the Armour of God described in Ephesians 6:14-17.

This week, we will be digging into the Shield of Faith. We will be looking at what faith is, how it can be a shield and how to use it. So put on your seat belt and let's go!

While you read through these devotions this week, think of a situation in your life that you are trusting in God for. And every day pray that God helps you increase your faith in these situations. Write them down, stick them on your bedroom wall or somewhere you can see them and pray for an increase in faith. Don't be shy! That impossible situation is possible through the lenses of faith in God.

### Day Two

Faith is a word that we use all the time. I'm sure you have heard people saying "We walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). The word 'faith' is mentioned about 336 times in the New King James Version. Why? Imagine having a long conversation with someone and mentioning something 336 times! Clearly this thing is important. But do you understand what faith is? Take a moment to think about it. What is faith?

Are you struggling? If so, it's okay. You won't be struggling for much longer.

The Oxford dictionary defines faith as "complete trust or confidence in someone or something." Ok. This kind of makes sense, I think. But let's look at this word through the lenses of Christ.

Hebrews 11: 1 says: "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Amplified version says: "Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed) and evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality – faith comprehends, understands or takes as fact what cannot be experienced by physical senses]."

Wow, those were a lot of words! But let me break it down for you.

Faith is the confidence or complete trust in things hoped for. Faith takes the things we are hoping for as real even though they are not physically there. Sounds crazy, right?

So faith says that high mark for that subject you struggle with, is yours in Jesus' name. That sickness that has been bothering you from childhood, is gone in Jesus' name. All it takes is faith. But what is this thing that we completely trust in? It's God! We completely trust that God is good and that He loves us, no matter what.

In the Bible, Jesus is described as "amazed" in two situations. The first is in Mark 6: 5 -6 and the second is in Matthew 8: 1 – 13. In both situations, what amazed him related to faith; a lack of faith (in Mark 6: 5 – 6) and the great amount

of faith (in Mat 8: 1-13). Again, clearly this faith thing is important. Faith is something we can all have. Ask yourself: Are there situations in your life right now that need you just to have a bit of faith?

## Day Three

A shield is a normal part of a soldier's weapons. But what is the point of having a shield, besides making the whole outfit look really cool.

A shield is defined as a piece of defensive armour carried in hand or strapped to the arm of soldiers to protect them from the attacks of the enemy. They come in different shapes and sizes but they are all used to cover the vital areas of the body. A shield is used to protect a warrior during close contact attacks and to protect them from the attack of the enemy from a distance such as arrows or missiles.

In Ephesians 6: 16 (AMP), it reads "above all, taking up the shield of faith with which you are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Sounds awesome, right? But what does this mean? And how can you do this in your life?

Do you remember what faith is? Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." You didn't say it, did you? Say it out loud!

This faith, this complete confidence, this trust in God acts as a shield. This means that those thoughts of negativity in your life can't get to you when you stand on the fact that God is good, He loves you and He wants the best for you. And here is a tip. Those negative thoughts and those difficult situations that seem impossible ARE the fiery arrows of the enemy. Yes, those negative thoughts about your weight, your face, your intelligence are not yours! Nor are they true! Trust me. I myself have struggled with the way I view myself for a long time. But when I go back to who God is and how He made me with His hands, in His image (Genesis 1: 26; Jeremiah 1: 5) and choose to believe what He says, those thoughts melt away. And that's what faith does...

What fiery arrows have come your way today? Where is the confidence you are standing on?

## Day Four

One thing that I have learnt in my life so far is that nothing worth doing is ever easy. It needs me to decide where I stand and stick with it. This isn't easy... You make a choice, then you find that you have to stick to this decision. The year is coming to an end and New Years is coming. Have you ever made a New Years resolution? "This year I am going to stop leaving my assignments for the last minute." Or "I'm going to eat more veggies." "I'm going to spend less time on video games and more time on school work." Sound familiar? Feeling guilty? It's ok, Jesus still loves you.

My point is if you don't stick to your decisions, if you don't hold on to that decision, it's pointless. Which brings me back to Ephesians 6: 16. Notice that Paul says: "take up the shield of faith," the NLT version says, "hold up the shield of faith..." Have you ever tried to hold your arms out straight in front of you for more than 10 seconds? If you haven't, try it. Hold your hands out straight in front of you and see if you can last 10 minutes. Never mind, if you are carrying something like a bag!

It's hard! It takes a lot of energy. It needs you to keep making that choice. It's the same with the Shield of Faith. You can have it but never use it because you never hold it up. In life, you need to keep choosing to hold it up, you need to keep choosing to use it. A weapon that is never used is pointless.

Where in your life right now, do you need to hold up the Shield of Faith?

## Day Five

Its exam time. I know you guys are freaking out about them and you're worried about passing. This is not the greatest feeling in the world. So what are you all doing in this time? Studying, revising, going over the work that you have covered this year, right? You are preparing yourselves for the exam; the moment of testing. Let me ask you something. Would you ever go into an exam without studying or preparing for it? Would you ever go into an exam without a pen or pencil, a maths exam without a calculator? No?

Then why is it that some of us live this life without the proper tools? As you now know as we spoke earlier, this is war. Is a warrior without his armour and weapons ready to go to war? He is definitely not.

Then why do some of us do the same thing?

Life gets tough sometimes. “Ku rough,” as we would say. But ask yourself, where is my Shield of Faith? Am I holding it up or have I forgotten to use it. Let’s just be honest, sometimes we forget we are in the middle of a battlefield. This is because we can't see what’s happening in the spirit. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, can we see it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you are not holding up your Shield of Faith. It might feel strange at first but trust me, God our Father wants us to be battle ready, He wants us to be victorious. That’s why He sent Jesus. In 1 John 5:4 (NLT), it says, “For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.”

## Day Six

“Better together”

We humans are strange and wonderful things. We are created to be together. No one can survive on their own. We need each other. Why is that? Because God made us in His image. He is in relationship within Himself; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So we also need to be in community. Where is this community found? With those around you; your friends at school, your teachers, your family, your neighbours. You get the point. We are built to be together.

So when it comes to faith, we cannot walk alone either.

Armies back in the day developed an effective way to defend themselves from the enemy. They would create a dome or rectangular wall by holding up their shields. The Romans called it the testudo formation, meaning the ‘tortoise’ formation, for obvious reason. The Greeks called it Phalanx formation. This formation would protect not only one warrior but several warriors. In this strategy, each warrior protects not just himself but the warriors on his right and left.

It's the same with our Shield of Faith. With your faith, your complete confidence or trust in something that you can physically see, you can protect your brother or sister beside you. We all know that life gets difficult sometimes. But when someone comes and shares their faith with you, it can increase your own faith. When someone comes and says “I

know that God wants me to go into marketing, He wants to use me for A, B, C. I don't have the money to study. But God will make a way! He does not speak in vain. What He said will happen, will happen." And you think, "wow, He does say that in His the Bible in Isaiah 55: 11." And suddenly your faith increase.

So are you a lone ranger or are you a part of the Phalanx in faith?

## **Day Six**

This week you have learnt a thing or two about faith. By now you should know what it is (\*say it out loud again), you should understand what Paul meant when he referred to it as a shield and you should know how to put it into practice.

So today, we are going to do something different and we are going to do it together.

The main question I am asking you is, where is your faith? I want us all to share what we are trusting in God for. Don't be shy, we are all family so let us stand together and shield each other. You can also share what you are struggling to trust God for. Then I want us to go back to the Bible and share verses that God will lay on our hearts for each others situations.

Let me go first.

I am trusting that God will lead me through this season and into the next season in life. I am a marine biologist but I live and work in Johannesburg where there is NO OCEAN. When I first arrived here I struggled to find what God wants me to do here. What is the purpose of me being here? Then God started showing me that actually He wants to work on my identity. He's taking the focus off what I do for His glory and focusing on my heart. It's TOUGH, y'all! I am trusting in the process that God is doing through me right now and trying not to make my own plans. Because it would be so easy for me to say actually, I'm going to Cape Town and being a marine biologist. That would be the comfortable choice. Doing something that I know and being comfortable. But comfort and destiny are never hand in hand. So I have faith that He is in control.

What's your faith story?