

The Armour Series: Week 6 Devotions

In week 6 of the Armour Series we explored the Helmet of Salvation.

Day One

God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. It is the Holy Spirit's job to produce Christ-like character in you. The Bible says, "As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. This process of changing us to be more like Jesus is called sanctification, and it is the third purpose of your life on earth. You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year's resolutions, will power, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives. The Bible says, "God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him." Mention "the power of the Holy Spirit," and many people think of miraculous demonstrations and intense emotions. But most of the time the Holy Spirit's power is released in your life in quiet, unassuming ways that you aren't even aware of or can't feel. He often nudges us with "a gentle whisper." Christlikeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation. We allow Christ to live through us, "For this is the secret: Christ lives in you." How does this happen in real life? Through the choices we make. We choose to do the right thing in situations and then trust God's Spirit to give us his power, love, faith, and wisdom to do it. Since God's Spirit lives inside of us, these things are always available for the asking. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work. Throughout the Bible we see an important truth illustrated over and over: The Holy Spirit releases his power the moment you take a step of faith. When Joshua was faced with an impassible barrier, the floodwaters of the Jordan River receded only after the leaders stepped into the rushing current in obedience and faith.' Obedience unlocks God's power. God waits for you to act first. Don't wait to feel powerful or confident. Move ahead in your weakness, doing the right thing in spite of your fears and feelings. This is how you cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and it is how your character develops. The Bible compares spiritual growth to a seed, a building, and a child growing up. Each metaphor requires active participation: Seeds must be planted and cultivated, buildings must be built-they don't just appear-and children must eat and exercise to grow. While effort has nothing to do with your salvation, it has much to do with your spiritual growth. At least eight times in the New Testament we are told to "make every effort" in our growth toward becoming like Jesus. You don't just sit around and wait for it to happen. Your character is essentially the sum of your habits; it is how you habitually act.

Day Two

Read:

Who are you surrounding yourself with? "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers..." (Psalms 1:1)

Engage:

I actually find God so loving, that he actually blesses those who are intentional about who they surround themselves with. He blesses you for protecting yourself from the arrows of the enemy that do come through the people whom we spend time with. There's a saying that is well known, that says, 'Surround yourself with people who are on the same missions as you are'. Who are you spending your time with? Who is in your inner circle? Who is feeding your mind and influencing you? These are questions we have to ask ourselves because the people we spend time with influence our decisions, and our thought processes. Not only does God speak through the counsel around us, but if we don't have people who add value to our lives — the devil will take that inch and run a mile with it. There's another quote that I like that says, 'Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are'

Challenge:

Check your circle and if they don't add value into your life... They need to be cut off.

Prayer:

Lord, I surrender all to you and I don't withhold anything from you. Take over my life, and may you lead me in the path of righteousness. May you give me peace through my troubles and may you remove the people who are not supposed to be in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Three

Read:

Then Job replied: 2 "Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. 3 If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! 4 I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. 5 I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say to me. 6 Would he vigorously oppose me? No, he would not press charges against me. 7 There the upright can establish their innocence before him, and there I would be delivered forever from my judge. 8 "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. 9 When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. 10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. 11 My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. 12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. 13 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. 14 He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. 15 That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him. 16 God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. 17 Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face. (Job 23)

Explore:

Job was spiritually attacked by the enemy, stripped off all of his belongings and his pride. He was physically weak because of the sickness he got and at that time he had the right reasons to leave God, to forsake him and stop worshipping him. But one thing that Job did was treasure the words of the Lord more than food, he did not depart from his commands. When his wife told him to curse God and die, he did not listen but he knew that God had his reasons. It's honestly hard to continue serving God when things just continuously go wrong, but God wants him to remain in him. Know that you are his child, know that you have been reading his word. Stay rooted in him, and he will help you overcome. For everything the enemy stole, God blessed Job double over what he had. Because he remained I God's word. It's not always going to be a smooth road when following Christ, but at the end of the race — it will be worth it. When your roots are deep in God's word, you will not be shaken, your faith will not be shaken and you will not conform to the ways of the world. Question to consider : Do I doubt God?

Challenge:

Are you spending time in God's word? If not, I challenge you to start studying his word on a daily basis.

Day Four

Read:

Read Psalm 23.

Explore:

Submit to God and resist the devil; and he will flee away from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Hmm that's something easier said than done — Am I right or am I right? I personally love Psalm 23, it's a verse I've known off by heart since I was a kid, and I always used to recite it, just looking at it from the surface but if you actually take time to meditate on it, to dig deeper, you'll find that it's deeper than what we see. It starts off by saying, 'The Lord is my Shepard, I shall not want'. A sheep will surrender its whole being and trust that the Shepard leading it, will protect it, feed it and guide or direct it. In the same way, Jesus is our Shepard, and when we choose to journey with him, he offers his love, his protection, his provision, and above all his guidance. BUT he only offers it, if you surrender

your whole being to him. Surrender your life, your heart, mind, soul, body, studies, family, hobbies — everything. Again, it's easier said than done but the protection from the spiritual attacks from the enemy comes automatically when we trust in him and surrender to him.

I like being in control of my life, knowing what I'm supposed to do, why this is happening, and what time I'm supposed to have this done. BUT God had to keep me home for TWO years instead of going off to varsity to deepen my roots in him. To show me that I CANNOT micromanage my life and expect him to manage my life as well. I had to just give him everything, and do what he wants me to do. I'm still to see how my life turns out, but I know he will do exceedingly abundantly above all I can ask of him according to the power, that works through him.

God wants us to depend on him, in everything. He wants us to surrender everything to him. He wants us to resist the enemy, and resisting the enemy means resisting the world. We cannot be friendly with the world and with God. There can only be one master. Something to consider : Who is on the throne of your life?

Challenge:

Surrender your whole life to God.

Day Five

*It is the fire of suffering that
brings forth the gold of godliness.*

Madame Guyon

God has a purpose behind every problem.

He uses circumstances to develop our character. In fact, he depends more on circumstances to make us like Jesus than he depends on our reading the Bible. The reason is obvious: You face circumstances twenty-four hours a day.

Jesus warned us that we would have problems in the world.' No one is immune to pain or insulated from suffering, and no one gets to skate through life problem-free. Life is a series of problems. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Not all of them are big, but all are significant in God's growth process for you. Peter assures us that problems are normal, saying, *"Don't be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you."*

God uses problems to draw you closer to himself. The Bible says, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit."* Your most profound and intimate experiences of worship will likely be in your darkest days-when your heart is broken, when you feel abandoned, when you're out of options, when the pain is great-and you turn to God alone. It is during suffering that we learn to pray our most authentic, heartfelt, honest-to-God prayers.

When we're in pain, we don't have the energy for superficial prayers.

Joni Eareckson Tada notes, "When life is rosy, we may slide by with knowing about Jesus, with imitating him and quoting him and speaking of him. But only in suffering will we *know* Jesus." We learn things about God in suffering that we can't learn any other way.

God could have kept Joseph out of jail, kept Daniel out of the lion's den, kept Jeremiah from being tossed into a slimy pit, kept Paul from being shipwrecked three times, and kept the three Hebrew young men from being thrown into the blazing furnace-but he didn't. He let those problems happen, and every one of those persons was drawn closer to God as a result.

Problems force us to look to God and depend on him instead of ourselves. Paul testified to this benefit: *"We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us."* You'll never know that God is all you need until God is all you've got.

Regardless of the cause, none of your problems could happen without God's permission. Everything that happens to a child of God is *Father filtered*, and he intends to use it for good even when Satan and others mean it for bad.

Because God is sovereignly in control, accidents are just incidents in God's good plan for you. Because every day of your life was written on God's calendar before you were born, *everything* that happens to you has spiritual significance. Everything! Romans 8:28-29 explains why: *"We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son."*

UNDERSTANDING ROMANS 8:28-29

This is one of the most misquoted and misunderstood passages in the Bible. It doesn't say, "God causes everything to work out the way I want it to." Obviously that's not true. It also doesn't say, "God causes everything to work out to have a happy ending on earth." That is not true either. There are many unhappy endings on earth.

We live in a fallen world. Only in heaven is everything done perfectly the way God intends. That is why we are told to pray, *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* To fully understand Romans 8:28-29 you must consider it phrase by phrase.

"We know": Our hope in difficult times is not based on positive thinking, wishful thinking, or natural optimism. It is a certainty based on the truths that God is in complete control of our universe and that he loves us.

"that God causes": There's a Grand Designer behind everything. Your life is not a result of random chance, fate, or luck. There is a master plan. History is *His story*. God is pulling the strings. *We* make mistakes, but God never does. God *cannot* make a mistake because he is God.

"everything": God's plan for your life involves *all* that happens to you—including your mistakes, your sins, and your hurts. It includes illness, debt, disasters, divorce, and death of loved ones. God can bring good out of the worst evil. He did at Calvary.

Everything that happens to you has spiritual significance.

"to work together": Not separately or independently. The events in your life work *together* in God's plan. They are not isolated acts, but interdependent parts of the process to make you like Christ. To bake a cake you must use flour, salt, raw eggs, sugar, and oil. Eaten individually, each is pretty distasteful or even bitter. But bake them together and they become delicious. If you will give God all your distasteful, unpleasant experiences, he will blend them together for good.

"for the good": This does not say that everything in life is good. Much of what happens in our world is evil and bad, but God specializes in bringing good out of it. In the official family tree of Jesus Christ, four women are listed: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Tamar seduced her father-in-law to get pregnant. Rahab was a prostitute. Ruth was not even Jewish and broke the law by marrying a Jewish man. Bathsheba committed adultery with David, which resulted in her husband's murder. These were not exactly sterling reputations, but God brought good out of bad, and Jesus came through their lineage. God's purpose is greater than our problems, our pain, and even our sin.

"of those who love God and are called": This promise is only for God's children. It is not for everyone. All things work *for bad* for those living in opposition to God and insist on having their own way.

"according to his purpose": What is that purpose? It is that we **"become like his Son."** Everything God allows to happen in your life is permitted for that purpose!

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Day Six

Explore:

One of the most powerful things the Lord gave us was our mind and the gift of free will. The enemy knows how powerful your mind is and that's why the mind is the devil's workshop. But because you're saved, you were brought out of darkness into God's light. And because of that we were given control over our thoughts. Sure, a thought can enter your mind but you can choose for it to manifest itself or you can cut that train of thought. If you let your thoughts fester, they become a reality, if they are negative they become strongholds that seem almost impossible to defeat. Your mind is the battleground of your life. Things like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, Addictions or being oppressed by demons — these come from our thoughts and the doors we leave open in your lives. Because if you give the enemy an inch, he will take a mile.

Something to consider:

What are you feeding your mind? What doors gave you left open in your life?

Verse to remember:

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

Day Seven

You want to kill yourself?

It's 10:53 pm on a Sunday night. You've already said goodnight to your parents and siblings. They think you're sound asleep. You sit at your desk twirling a pen in your hand. You stare at the blank piece of paper as the tears refill your eyes for the fifth time tonight. You don't want to do it without writing a goodbye letter. You want to make sure your family knows why you did it. The tears fall onto the paper and you can't help the frustration as the droplets begin to ruin the paper. You crumble it up and break down even harder. You realize you can't write the letter, so you look in the mirror once more & watch as your final tear falls. Only a couple moments later your heart stops and the blood escapes your body to create a puddle on the floor. But nobody is going to care, right?

It's now 6:47 am Monday morning. Your mother waits downstairs in the kitchen to give you your lunch money. She's already late for work but she doesn't want you to stress about making lunch for yourself. She doesn't know what's taking you so long. She yells your name a couple times, but there's no response. She has no idea your cold dead body is lying in your bedroom. She thinks you slept in.

so she runs up the stairs and knocks on your door. But still, there is no answer. She opens the door and screams, horrified. She runs to you and holds your body. The tears seem like a waterfall, everlasting. She sits there with you cradled in her arms for a good hour, until she has the strength to get up and call your father. Your father rushes home, and they cry together. They pick up your siblings from school and try to explain to them what has happened. Your older brother runs out of your room and into his. He slams the door. He thinks it's all his fault. He's always picked on you, calling you names and starting arguments just to push your buttons. He punches his walls and allows the tears to pour out of him. Your little sister doesn't understand. She asks if it's because she always tries to steal your stuff or because she never leaves you alone when you have your friends over. It's hard to explain something like this to a six year old. But she probably wouldn't care anyways, right?

It's now Wednesday and your mom finally goes to your school. She hasn't left the house since you took your life, but she knew she had to go. She enters your classroom to only see the teacher sitting at her desk grading papers. It's

12:19pm so your classmates are sitting in lunch. Your teacher greets her and asks where you've been. Your mother bursts into tears and your teacher automatically is astonished. She has no idea what's wrong, but she tries to comfort your mother. Your mom begins to explain what had happened, and your teacher cries too. She begins to have flashbacks of all the times she yelled at you for not paying attention and not doing your homework. She thinks it's her fault for being too hard on you. Your classmates return and are confused. A couple students recognize your mom and want to say hi, but they sense something is wrong. Your teacher calls the vice principal and principal in and your mom explains. Everyone in the classroom is now crying. Even the annoying boy that sat behind you and threw gum in your hair is crying, thinking it's his fault. Even the popular girl that wouldn't give you the time of day is crying, thinking it's her fault. Even the nerd that wouldn't let you copy his homework is crying, thinking it's his fault. They're probably all faking, because nobody actually cares, right?

A week has gone by and it's time for your funeral. Nobody has ever seen one this large. Almost every kid in your school and their families are there. Actually almost anyone you've

come into contact with has come. It's like a pool of black as one looks over the people sitting in the chairs as your dead corpse lies in the casket. Everyone goes up to speak. And after every speech everyone begins to cry even harder. Even the emotionless jock is in hysterics. The funeral lasts many hours; nobody wants to get up, to move on, to accept what has happened is real life. All of them are just too lazy to get up, because they obviously don't actually care, right?

It's now been a month since your death. None of your family members have been in your room. The door remains shut. Your mom goes up to your dad and whispers, "it's time". Your dad looks at her with his lifeless eyes, nods, and slowly rises from the kitchen table. They enter your room slowly. Just stepping inside of it gives your mother the chills. Your father holds your mom as she begins to tear. He's trying to be strong, but he can't, soon the tears swell up in his eyes as well. They begin to pick up your clothes, dust your shelves, and make your bed. The stain on your carpet from your blood has been covered with a rug. Neither of them goes near it. They clean in silence for the next hour. They don't care that you're gone; they just didn't want a messy room, right?

Another week goes by. Your brother passes your room and hears crying coming from inside. He opens the door to see your little sister sitting on your bed clutching your favourite pillow. He runs to her and they cry together. Soon your mother and father have joined them. Your father jokes, "this bed is not big enough for four of us" and everyone laughs. You know, that's the first time your family has laughed since you died. The first time a smile has even crept on their faces. They hug each other and your mother says, "we'll get through this, someday..." You thought nobody would care? Well, you were wrong.

Nobody wanted you to take your life. Nobody wanted to wake up and find your body. Nobody wanted this, wished for this, could have imagined this. Some people knew you've been down lately, but they never thought this would happen. They never thought this could happen. They never thought they would go through this pain. They never wanted to have to face the agony, the guilt, the frustration, the depression, & the heartache they have been forced to encounter.

Now, before you kill yourself think about it. You matter so much to so many people. There are so many people that will

miss you. Your smile, your laugh, the way your eyes light up when you're happy. Do you want to take that away from everyone? From yourself? Never get to smile again, or see the person that makes your heart skip a beat, never get to live? Don't do that to yourself. You have so much to live for. If you haven't already, do you really want to miss the opportunity to meet your true friends? Have your first kiss? Fall head over heels in love? Get your heart broken time and time again? Go to college? Get an A+ on that final you studied for days on end for? Get married? Have your own children? What would you do if you walked in to your 14 year old daughter's room and saw her lying there with no heartbeat, surrounded by a pool of blood. It would be no big deal right? You'd shrug and clean up the blood with a smile on your face as you hum your favourite song that's been in your head for the past couple days. No. you'd cry and clutch her lifeless body in your arms and cry. Cry, and cry and cry. You'd think it was your fault and a million thoughts would go through your mind. Why would she do this? Is it my fault? Why didn't she tell me she was depressed? Why didn't I stop her? How couldn't I have known? But she was thinking the same thing you were as a child. You know, that nobody would care?

think twice. Take a deep breath. You're worth more than this. Nobody should have to think that taking their life is the best thing to do. Anything you're going through is temporary; the feeling won't last forever. You'll get through this. No matter how long it takes you need to know, you will get through this, and you don't have to face it alone. There are so many people you can talk to. Family, friends, neighbors, teachers, counsellors, hotlines, me, etc. I will be here for you, no matter what. I will try my absolute hardest to help you. So please; do not ever, EVER, write that letter, or even think about suicide. Life is full of ups and downs for a reason. It makes us stronger, shows us what we can get through. It builds and shapes up into the next generation of parents, grandparents even. You might not see the light at the end of the tunnel yet, but I promise it's there. You just have to keep walking towards it.