

THE  
**PURSUIT**

 **FUGECamps**

2012

# PARENT DEVOTIONS

## ABOUT THE WRITER



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# INTRODUCTION

## HEY, PARENTS!

Thanks for sending your child to camp this week! We have worked diligently throughout the year to ensure a quality program, well-trained staff, and an environment where God can do His work. Whether you have one child or multiple children, your house will surely be quieter this week. We hope you are able to not only check off a few things on your to-do list, but that you will also take this opportunity to spend some quality time with God.

Use these devotions as a resource to allow the Lord to speak to you through the same Scriptures that He is using to speak to your child. This material will help you better understand what your child is studying and experiencing this week. Use it to ask questions when you talk with him on the phone and/or when she returns home.

To become familiar with specific information applicable to camp, check out our Web site, [www.fuge.com](http://www.fuge.com). Click on Group Leader Information and then choose your child's camp program, camp location and date. From there you will find a "Parent Pack" that includes a daily camp schedule, Bible study overview, location details, and many other important tidbits.

Also, check out [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) and click on the "LifeWay Students" icon at the left for student and parenting resources and tips.

We pray this will be a life-changing experience for your child and for you!

The Fuge Office

# DAY 1: ANYTHING BUT A TRIVIAL PURSUIT

**Theme Verse:** “And He put everything under His feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church” (Ephesians 1:22).

**Life Question:** Does Christ have complete authority over your life? How are you responding to His sovereignty? What evidence exists that He is Lord of your life?

Well, after a bus/van ride that may or may not have included flat tires, overheated engines, or a student with appendicitis (all of which happened on THE SAME TRIP the first time I went to youth camp as a teenager), your son or daughter made it to Fuge. The group was met by an enthusiastic (and maybe a little intimidating) camp staff who guided them through the registration process. Tonight, they participated in the opening night Worship service, where they were introduced to the theme of the week: “THE PURSUIT.”

At its most basic meaning, pursuit means “following after.” For Americans, it’s written into our Declaration of Independence that we have the right to “pursue” happiness. The Supreme Court allows police officers to cross jurisdictional lines if they are in “hot pursuit” of a bad guy. We talk about leisure pursuits (or is that leisure suits?), the pursuit of justice, and Trivial Pursuit®. Built into the definition of the word is the idea that the whole purpose of a pursuit is to catch something or someone. As I write this, I am just hearing the news that after a 10-year pursuit of Osama Bin Laden, Navy Seals finally found him. Pursuits that don’t result in obtaining that which is being pursued are ultimately labeled “trivial pursuits.”

So, if a pursuit is valuable when it results in a catching, then people who pursue are looking for something to catch. It can be the pursuit of knowledge—the quest to find a cure for cancer, for example. It can be for the possession of a treasure or a relic, like the quest for the Holy Grail. Alexander the Great, Marie Curie, Lewis and Clark, Marco Polo, and Neil Armstrong were all in pursuit of something.

This week, why not add your teenager to that distinguished bunch? This morning, you put him on a bus headed for a brave new world known as camp. What do you think he is pursuing? It may be nothing more than a camera full of great pictures. He may spend the week in pursuit of a girl’s e-mail address or Facebook® friend status. Or, he may be in a pursuit for the purpose of possessing a greater knowledge of God.

**Based on what you know about your teenager, what is he or she going to be looking for at camp this week?**

**What are you hoping he or she will find? Write it down:**

You know, it's perfectly OK for someone to find something even if it wasn't the purpose of the original pursuit. Christopher Columbus was looking for a faster way to get to India when he bumped into a whole new continent. Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin when he accidentally left some Petri dishes on the counter over the weekend, instead of putting them back in the refrigerator. And Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton was looking for a cure for headaches when he first mixed together the ingredients we now know as Coca-Cola®.

Even if your teenager didn't head to camp for a life-changing encounter with Christ, don't worry; the Holy Spirit has been planning for this week long before you, your youth minister, or your own child has been.

**Read the following passage and underline or highlight every phrase that gives you a hint as to what Paul's quest was in his life:**

"My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

Your child may have articulated the desire to know God better when he set off for camp this week. Praise the Lord for that! But when you read Paul's words in Philippians, you see pretty quickly that knowing God is just the starting point in Paul's quest. Along the way, Paul sought several other things as well.

**Please underline or highlight every conjunction in the passage you just read. (You remember your conjunctions, right? "And," "but," "or" are the big three.)**

That should have been pretty easy. There is really only one conjunction: AND. If we seek to know Christ, then we don't get to pick and choose from the rest of the items on this list the way we pick desserts at a cafeteria.

To know Christ is to pursue conformity with Him, to fellowship in His sufferings, and to grasp the power of His resurrection.

**Pause for a minute and consider all the implications of the previous sentence. What if your child really started to take this seriously? Write down your hopes and fears for your child.**

The biggest thing you can pray for your teenager this week is that he or she won't end the pursuit with just "getting to know God better." Pray that he or she will see (and seek) the entire package.

## **PRAYER TIME**

**For your child (print his or her name here):**

**For your youth leader:**

**For as many adults on the trip as you can think of:**

Now pray for yourself, because guess what . . . God wants to impact you this week as well. Will you let Him?

# DAY 2: PURSUE

**Learning Concept:** Authority/Salvation/Trinity

**Teaching Aim:** Students will learn that God is sovereign, that Christ died for the forgiveness of their sin, and that their redemption is sealed by the Holy Spirit. They will discover that God pursues them and they are to pursue Him in return.

**Scriptures:** Ephesians 1:3-10                      Adopted through Christ  
Ephesians 1:11-14                      Sealed with the Spirit

**Key Verse:** “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

**Life Questions:** What is God's sovereignty? Does your life reflect this truth? How have you submitted to Christ as master of your life? Do you ever experience doubts about your salvation? Do you practice the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life on a daily basis?

Each day this week at camp will be full of activities. At Centrifuge or XFUGE, your teenager will spend the mornings in Bible Study and Recreation, playing games that help him or her get to know the group better, as well as reinforce some of the points made in Bible Study. In the afternoons, he or she will participate in activities off-campus or in one or two Track Times based on individual interests. Some of them are sports-related, some are performance-related, and some are more oriented to deeper Bible study, arts and crafts, or other activities.

At M-Fuge or XFUGE on Mission, your student will spend time in Bible Study and then go into the community to do hands-on ministry. Perhaps he will play games with children, stock shelves with food items, or paint a house. In whatever way she ministers, your child will show the love of Christ this week. Maybe this will be a totally new experience. Just maybe it will impact her life forever.

## ADOPTED

Several years ago, my sister-in-law and her husband adopted a baby boy from Guatemala. Seven years later, it is almost spooky how easy it is to forget that he is not their biological child. He talks like them. He dresses like them. And even though my in-laws are about as Anglo as they come, Drew even looks like my brother-in-law. Most people who are just getting to know the family would never guess he was adopted.

Shortly after Pam and Erdie brought Drew home, I asked my brother-in-law what it was like in Guatemala. He described how desperately poor the area was. He talked about the dirt floors of the buildings. When I asked him to imagine what kind of life Drew would have had if Pam and Erdie had not adopted him, Erdie said simply, “I can’t.”

Now, as many of you know, adoption isn’t cheap, and it isn’t easy. Thousands of dollars and reams of paperwork are involved. All the preparation every couple goes through to get ready to welcome a new member of the family is part of the adoption process as well. Nurseries must be painted. Clothes must be bought. Showers must be attended. Airline tickets must be purchased,

often at a much higher rate because the couple has to be ready to go on very short notice. And on top of that, an adopting couple must go through an intensive screening process.

Knowing all this, I asked my brother-in-law one more question: “Was it worth it?” He looked at me like I was from Mars, because I had surely asked the dumbest question ever asked of a new parent. Of course it was worth it! And after seven years, the strength of that conviction has only solidified.

**Do you know any adoptive parents or are you one yourself? What would their (or your) answer be to the “Was it worth it?” question?**

I have a theory. I think every stage of life and every role you play in your life teaches you something about God that people who are not at that stage or in that role cannot know. If you are married, you have insights into how Christ loves the church (His bride) that a single person doesn’t have. If you have children, you understand things about the Father heart of God that parents without children don’t have. And if you have adopted children, then you can grasp the truth of who we are in Christ in ways that parents with biological children don’t have.

**Take a minute to read this passage and circle the two words which indicate that believers in Christ are God’s adoptive children.**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ; for He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:3-6).

If you circled “chose” and “predestined,” congratulations. Isn’t it fun to get the “right” answer?

It’s easy to get hung up on the idea of “predestination.” Lots of people do. But maybe it will help to think about my in-laws again. Long before their son was born, they made the choice to be adoptive parents. They began filling out their forms before they ever saw a photo of the boy who would become their son. And without any action or merit on the part of my seven-year-old nephew, he was the one they chose. That’s the predestination part.

**Take these concepts, and write down some thoughts about how this applies to God’s adoption of us as His children.**

**According to verse 5, what (or Who) makes all this possible?**

We began our time together today by talking about the cost that was involved for my in-laws to bring home Drew as their adopted son. Paperwork. Physical and material expense. A journey to a far country, to deal with people unlike themselves, in order to bring home a child who would become as much like them as if he had been theirs biologically. Now, reflect on these questions:

**What did it cost God to adopt us?**

**What “far country” did Jesus go to in order to bring us home?**

**What did He find when He got there?**

Read these verses to help you see the result:

“He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:10-13).

“But when the completion of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “•Abba, Father!” (Galatians 4:4-6).

**PRAYER TIME**

*Abba! Father! Thank you for thinking I was worth it.*



# DAY 3: PROCLAIM

**Learning Concept:** Evangelism/Living Out Faith

**Teaching Aim:** Students will learn to live out their faith in word and deed. They will find, as they pursue the Lord, their calling to proclaim the gospel.

**Scriptures:** Ephesians 3:7-13                      Proclaim Him  
Ephesians 3:14-21                      Be Strengthened with His Power

**Key Verse:** “I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the working of His power” (Ephesians 3:7).

**Life Question:** When others look at your life, what do they see? What is God’s call on your life? How do you know? What is it about your life that proclaims God’s power? How do you live in His power?

## YOU WANT ME TO BE A WHAT?

Today your teenager is getting hit with a pretty challenging concept. And if you’re honest with yourself, you’ll realize you’re not a big fan of it either. Are you ready for it? Here it is:

Every Christian is an evangelist.

If this strikes you as a less-than-good thing, it’s probably because the word “evangelist” may have some negative association for you. Let’s try this: **Write down 10 words or phrases that come to mind when you hear the word “evangelist”:**

What made your list? For me, there were words like “high-pressure,” “shout,” “Bible-thumper,” “door-to-door,” “polyester,” “hairspray,” “money,” “hokey,” and, oddly enough, “airplane.” Why “airplane”? Well, pretty much every traveling evangelist has a story about someone he witnessed to on an airplane. Most of them seem to start with, “On my flight to get here, I was sitting next to . . .” The skeptic in me always wondered, “If we invite him back next year, will we hear the same story?”

I didn’t grow up with a great impression of “evangelists.” Instead, I grew up watching comedians do great impressions of evangelists. I hope you had a different experience and made a different list. I really do. Your list of 10 words might have had words such as inspiring, humble, godly, convicting, effective, and powerful.

Either way, you might still have a problem with the idea that every Christian is an evangelist. For some, an evangelist is something they would never want to be. For others, it is something they could never hope to be. Chances are, you and your teen are feeling one of those two feelings right

now.

In Ephesians, we are given these words:

“This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints!—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of the Messiah, and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. This is so God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens” (Ephesians 3:8-10).

Circle that word “proclaim” in the first sentence. The word in Greek is euangelizo. It means “good message.” Eu in Greek is a participle that means “good.” Thus, in English, a eulogy is a good word spoken over someone; a euphemism is a good way of saying something bad, and so on. And “angel” is message, or messenger. Every time you see angels in Scripture, they are bringing a message from God. So let’s review:

Proclaim	=	euangelizo
euangelizo	=	good message
euangelizo	=	evangelism
evangelist	=	one who proclaims a good message

Now, take a minute to go back to the Scripture, and think about three questions:

**1. What, exactly, was the good message Paul was proclaiming?**

**2. To whom was he proclaiming it?**

**3. How did Paul feel about himself as the proclaimer?**

Ah, that’s my favorite part! Paul considered himself “least of all the saints.” When the Holy Spirit renamed him “Paul” (Greek for “little” and where we get the word “paltry”), it was so Paul would constantly be reminded that it wasn’t about him. He wasn’t the flashy evangelist with the slicked-back hair, three-piece suit, and million-watt smile. In fact, according to 2 Corinthians 10:10, he was pretty unimpressive in public. He also didn’t consider himself to be a brilliant, intellectual defender of the faith. In his first Letter to the Corinthians, he reminisced:

“When I came to you, brothers, announcing the testimony of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Corinthians 2:1-4).

All this is good news for me. It isn’t about my impressiveness; it’s about the glory of Christ. It isn’t about my power of persuasion; it’s about the “powerful demonstration by the Spirit.” And evangelism isn’t about being something weird; it’s about proclaiming something good to people who need to hear it bad.

I wonder if today you would be willing to reconsider your misgivings. Rather than psyching yourself up to sign up for “evangelism training” at your church, simply ask yourself:

**Who needs to hear a good message about Jesus from me?**

**Who needs to hear a good message about Jesus from my son or daughter?**

**PRAYER TIME**

Close out this devotion time by praying for four people: yourself, your teenager, the person you need to talk with about Jesus, and the person your teenager needs to talk with about Jesus.

# DAY 4: STAND

**Learning Concept:** Unity

**Teaching Aim:** Students will learn how to stand in unity with other believers as they pursue God personally. They will discover the diversity and their role within the body of Christ.

**Scriptures:** Ephesians 4:1-6                      One in the Spirit  
Ephesians 4:11-16                      One in the Body

**Key Verse:** “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

**Life Questions:** What is your role in the body of believers? How are you adding to the unity of the body? How are you a distraction to this unity? When there is a lack of harmony, how do you react?

Before we do anything else this morning, take a minute to pray for your son or daughter. Whatever the Lord still desires to do with your teenager at Fuge 2012, it will happen either today or tomorrow.

Pray for the chaperones who are staying in the dorm with your child. Pray that they will have an expectant attitude that will be contagious to the students.

Pray for breakfast. Your child may be tempted to skip breakfast, but she needs the fuel so she can be focused in Bible Study.

Pray for the Fuge camp staff, particularly for your child’s Bible Study or Ministry Track leader. He or she has loved and prayed for your student all week long. They know what has happened on this day during other weeks of camp. They know how much potential it can have. They need to teach and lead with as much Spirit-given clarity as they can today.

Pray for your student during Bible Study. Pray that she will hang on every word. Pray that God will show him something in His Word that he has never seen before. Pray for the leader to have supernatural wisdom.

Pray for Recreation and Track Times (Centrifuge and XFUGE). Sometimes we mistakenly think that God only speaks during Bible Study and Worship, but it’s in the in-between times that God often whispers the loudest. Pray for spiritual sensitivity, even if your son is playing basketball for his Track Time.

Pray for Ministry Sites (M-Fuge and XFUGE on Mission). Pray that there will be amazing stories for your son or daughter to share with you when they come home.

Pray for Worship tonight. The last nights of camp are often very emotional, so pray that it will be for your child . . . for all the right reasons. Also, remember that they are probably physically very

tired. Ask the Holy Spirit to keep them focused so they can hear what He wants to say to them.

Pray for the camp pastor and the worship band. Let them preach faithfully and lead sensitively.

Pray for your youth pastor and the other adults who are with your group. Tonight, they may have the privilege of helping with invitation counseling. They might help lead someone in your group to Christ tonight. It might even be your son or daughter. Pray that they will have supernatural wisdom and discernment.

Pray for the group from your church during Church Group Devotions. Pray that this week has brought them together, encouraged them, and empowered them to face the coming school year with courage, conviction, and connectedness.

### **COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

If you know anyone with cerebral palsy (CP) or have spent time with people who are challenged by this condition, you have seen firsthand what happens when there is a lack of communication between the brain and the parts of the body. For many victims of CP, there is nothing else wrong with their brains other than the damage to the cortex, which prevents communication. They can be just as intelligent, funny, creative, and empathetic as people without the condition. The problem is that the person's arms, legs, and mouth have stopped following the commands of the brain. The result is a body that often cannot perform even the most basic functions.

**Long before CP was first identified in 1861, Paul described a type of spiritual cerebral palsy in I Corinthians 12. Take a couple of minutes to read his description of what was going on in the church:**

“For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. So the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,’ in spite of this it still belongs to the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,’ in spite of this it still belongs to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the parts, each one of them, in the body just as He wanted” (I Corinthians 12:12-18).

**Go back and underline all the examples of the parts of the body not working together.**

In Paul's analogy, Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and we as His followers are His hands and feet. Yet how often we rebel against the Head! How many times do the hands and feet of Christ resist following His instructions? Or when it comes to the church, how many times do some parts of the church try to behave independently of the other parts of the church? We often seem to move through the world spastically, unable to accomplish the coordinated instructions our Head gave us in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). We have ceased listening to Him and stopped working with one another.

Paul explored the same theme with the church in Ephesus. (Isn't it interesting that churches everywhere all seem to deal with the same problems?) Just as in Corinth, there were apparently

believers in Ephesus who were jealous that God had called “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). It sounds a little like marching band in high school. At my school, everyone wanted to be on the drum line. No one wanted the Sousaphone. But in Ephesians, Paul spelled out the precise reason why there were different roles given to different people.

**Read the following passage and underline the purpose of the different roles in the church, according to verse 12:**

“And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Do you see it? The point of all the roles in the church is “for the training of the saints.” Saints, by the way, means you. It also means your teenager, no matter how hard that is to believe. Every gift is for the purpose of equipping every person in the body to do the work of the church.

While cerebral palsy does not yet have a cure, spiritual palsy does. The key is to submit all the parts of the body of Christ back to Him every day. As parents, we submit our families. As church members, we submit the activities of our church. And as individuals, we present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices every day (Romans 12:1) so that we can “grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

### **PRAYER TIME**

*Lord Jesus, forgive me for taking control of Your hands, Your feet, and Your speech away from You. That’s what I do every time I choose to make my own decisions rather than submit myself to Your will. Here and now, I give you complete control so that you can accomplish Your work on earth through me. Amen.*

By the way, I would like to challenge you to do tomorrow’s devotion first thing in the morning, even if you have been doing these at other times in the day. Let’s get the day started with covering your son or daughter in prayer. See you bright and early tomorrow!

# DAY 5: WALK

<b>Learning Concept:</b>	Submission/Holy Living/Consistency	
<b>Teaching Aim:</b>	Students will learn to walk daily with Christ and discover how to order their lives based on His lordship.	
<b>Scriptures:</b>	Ephesians 5:1-14	Be Imitators of God
	Ephesians 5:15-21	Be Consistent
<b>Key Verse:</b>	“Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).	
<b>Life Questions:</b>	Does the way you live your life—the things you do and think—bring honor to Jesus Christ? Do others see Christ in you? What sins keep you from being light to a dark world? Is God your priority? How can you remain consistent in your faith?	

If your church group is attending a five-day camp, they are spending the morning wrapping up their experiences. They are attending their last Bible Study of the week. They are reflecting and sharing about their time at camp. They are taking photos of each other and their groups. They are exchanging contact information. They are giving last hugs and good-byes.

If your church group is at a six-day camp, today will be a regularly scheduled day, ending with the last Worship service of the week.

## WALK THIS WAY

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” It occurs to me that most people past the age of 3 don’t have to pay much attention to how they walk in their normal, everyday, run-of-the-mill lives. While we might think we lack the coordination to walk and chew gum at the same time, for the vast majority of us, walking is second nature. We just do it.

There are two great exceptions. The first is if you are walking in a dangerous place—like a tightrope between two buildings. Or across a minefield. Or several blocks in a large city, after dark, on the way back to your car in an unlit parking garage following a World Wrestling Federation cage match at the Municipal Auditorium. If you are in that situation, you definitely want to “pay careful attention to how you walk.” You want to project confidence. You want to hold your head high, walk quickly, and communicate with your body language that you are not someone to be messed with. And, you want to stay under streetlights as often as possible.

**Let’s draw the spiritual application:** In what scenarios are you “paying attention to how you walk” so that you don’t put yourself in danger? (Think about your entertainment choices, conversations at work, or opportunities to either gossip or choose not to gossip.)

The other exception is when you are walking for the exercise benefit, or even for competition. Did you realize there is an Olympic event for power walkers? When you watch those guys, they are truly “making the most of the time,” because they are competing for the best time. They are paying attention to their posture, their stride, the focus of their eyes, and the distribution of their weight. They are in tune with every signal their bodies are giving back to them.

**Now, turn it the other way: In what ways are you trying to “make the most of your time” in your spiritual walk? How are you trying to maximize the power and the effectiveness of your discipleship?**

Paul’s challenge to believers to “pay attention to how they walk” is especially crucial for parents. You can be sure that your children are paying attention to how you walk, even if (or especially if) you aren’t. When they come home from camp, they will have been challenged all week long to evaluate their individual walks with Christ and to make changes where necessary. Those changes will have a much better chance of taking root in their lives if they know their parents are committed to walking closer with Christ as well.

#### **PRAYER TIME**

*“Just a closer walk with Thee,  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
Daily walking close to Thee,  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.”*



# DAY 6: FIGHT

- Scriptures:** Ephesians 6:10-17 Stay alert  
Ephesians 6:18-20 Live with boldness
- Key Verse:** “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil” (Ephesians 6:11).
- Life Questions:** How can you walk in victory over temptations? What characteristics do you have that are reflections of being an ambassador for Christ? What does prayer accomplish?

If your church group was at a five-day camp, they are either already home or will arrive later today. If your church group is at a six-day camp, they are spending the morning wrapping up their experiences. They are attending their last Bible Study of the week. They are reflecting and sharing about their time at camp. They are taking photos of each other and their groups. They are exchanging contact information. They are giving last hugs and good-byes.

## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Read the following passage:

“Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

If you grew up in church, then you’ve probably seen a life-sized picture of a Roman soldier with all the different parts of his armor labeled according to Ephesians 6. The belt of truth. The breastplate of righteousness. The feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The shield of faith. The helmet of salvation. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It was probably pointed out to you that the sword was the only offensive weapon, and that everything else was defensive.

I can still remember the picture from my first grade Sunday School. That’s some great doctrine! But to be honest with you, there was one lesson about the armor of God that I did not learn from first grade Sunday School. I learned it from watching the movie *Gladiator*.

There’s a scene in which Maximus, the faithful general who was sold into slavery and then became a gladiator, is leading his fellow slaves/gladiators in combat in the arena. And when the enemy comes charging at them in their war chariots, Maximus and his band drop to one knee and bring their shields up. But each man’s shield does not simply cover each man. The shields interlock. One man’s shield protects himself and the men to his left and his right. One man puts his shield to the left flank and another to the right flank. And one puts his shield over the heads of himself and the men next to him. In this formation (called the tortoise for obvious reasons), the entire squadron is protected from attacks on all sides.

There are two things I learn about spiritual warfare from this scene in the movie.

1. Take a knee. A Christian is never so powerful than when she is on her knees. We sometimes have the attitude of “When all else fails, pray.” Our attitude should be, “Before all else fails, pray!” Because if we pray, there is a much better chance that all else won’t fail.
2. Link up. As powerful as the image of a single soldier standing alone might be, the truth is that a soldier never stood alone. Even the name— centurion—reminded them of this. They were one of one hundred.

This leads us to two questions for reflection:

**Is prayer the first thing you do or the last thing you think of when you are confronted with a crisis? Why do you think that is?**

**Can you think of at least two Christian friends with whom you can link up so you can stand together? If you can, write their names below. If not, why not?**

Your kids are being taught how to fight. They are learning what it means to arm themselves with the Word of God and to stand strong against temptation. All week long they have also been learning what it means to be part of a youth group. The group has drawn closer this week, so when your student goes back to school in the fall, or back to work next week, they know they are going back to a host of temptations that they are expected to stand against. Hopefully they will go into the battle knowing that they are not standing alone.

### **PRAYER TIME**

*Lord, let me stand. Remind me that I do not stand alone. Let me learn from watching my kids what it means to stand with brothers and sisters.*