

The Armor of God: Review

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[0 : 00] Well, let me begin by reading another quote that goes along with the quote that I trust you read on the screen prior to class.

This one by David Pollison. He says, Standing up to evil plunges us into deep, dark waters, the complexity of the human heart, the complexity of cultural influences, the complexity of the enemy. We must learn how to fight well, how to put on Jesus Christ himself, wearing the weapons of light with which he defeats the powers of darkness.

And I believe we are here because we do want to learn to fight well. We want to fight the spiritual warfare that we are in successfully and fight it well for the glory of God and the welfare of many who are around us.

And we've spent several weeks learning about putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, putting on the armor of God. And this morning, I want us to have a bit of a review of what we've covered.

[1 : 13] It just seemed too quick just to jump into another topic. And so I thought it might be helpful for us to have a bit of a review. And I'll be doing this by providing you a summary of what's been presented over the past few weeks.

And I think you probably received one of those papers as you came in. If you didn't, there's one outside. Does anybody need one of those sheets of paper at this point? Just raise your hand. No. Oh, Mark Aikens needs one, Jeff. Oh, and Dave and Sue need one over here. You've got your track shoes on today.

You can take a breather. Dave and Sue. So we've got that summary, and we'll go over that.

A little bit more explanation and reminder. Then we'll look at a history, a brief history of the Church of Ephesus. And along the way, as we look at that history, I'm going to ask you to, for your input in inserting some of your comments about which principle of spiritual conflict or which piece of armor might fit that scenario that the Church was in or the Apostle Paul was in, just to give us a little bit of opportunity to think this through a little bit more and what the application might look like.

[2 : 42] And I think you'll be able to make the application to your lives on a daily basis. But at any rate, we'll give it a shot here and see how we do. But first of all, let's take a look at this, where we've been, the ground that we've covered, and starting out with that principle that we need in Ephesians 6 that Paul wrote about, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

We can rejoice that we know the Almighty God, for it's He who brought us out of Satan's domain and brought us into the kingdom of the Son that He loves.

And He also continues to act on our behalf, working out that purpose that He has for each of His children, our transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

So we want to be strong in the Lord, to be trusting in Him in our daily walk, relying on Him, depending on Him, calling upon Him in our times of temptation or struggle in this spiritual warfare. So we're going to be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might, understanding this is not a battle that I can fight on my own, and my own strength and my own wisdom, and we're not intended to do that.

[4 : 00] Neither will we be successful if we try to do that. And then put on the whole armor of God, the whole armor of God that is describing somewhat who the person of Christ is and what He has done in light of who Jesus is and what He has done on our behalf and what He's continuing to do in us.

We clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. We put on the whole armor of God, again, that's descriptive of the character of Jesus Christ.

And we do that because we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the devil and his forces of evil. We're remembering our spiritual warfare is not ultimately against flesh and blood.

It's not ultimately a struggle between people. Even though evil will be manifested through people, who Paul describes in Ephesians as children of disobedience, children who follow the prince of the power of the air, that being Satan.

And as a result, we may be recipients of evil and opposition through those people. But again, ultimately, our battle is against Satan, his forces that act in opposition against God, his purposes that he's seeking to accomplish and will accomplish.

[5 : 28] It's not like there's these two equal opposing forces fighting against each other. Of course not. We are with the Almighty God, and God's purposes will reign.

But the forces of evil will be acting and opposing God, his purposes, and of course us as his people. And we need to be alert and aware of that. So we need to put on the belt of truth from Jeremy's lesson.

We take up the whole objective truth of God, all again, which is embodied in Jesus Christ, expressed through his teachings and the works that he did.

So we, like Christ, also take up the whole of God's revealed truth. It finds expression through us as we sincerely act in accordance with what is presented in that word, and as we're committed in very practical ways to live that truth out, and to live it out with all sincerity and integrity in the midst of the spiritual conflict, which might be those times that it becomes very difficult to do that.

And that's why we take up that belt of truth by God's grace and in the power of God. Then the breastplate of righteousness. This is that part of armor that points us to a righteousness from God that's imputed to us by faith in Jesus Christ, when we express and come to him in true repentance and faith.

[7 : 00] It also refers to that righteousness from God that's applied and practiced in our daily lives. It's responding in righteousness and holiness when the spiritual forces of evil are working against us, tempting us to walk in ways that would not be worthy of our calling in God, in Christ Jesus.

And then we have our feet shod with the readiness given by the gospel of peace. It's through the gospel of peace that the repentant individual is called to and brought into the kingdom of God and in union with Jesus Christ and thus has peace with God.

So we're made ready for this warfare, to conduct this warfare, first of all by being at peace with God. Hearing that gospel message ourselves and responding in faith and true repentance, confessing Christ as our Lord, being justified by faith, then we have peace with God.

We're made ready for the warfare then through this gospel of peace and being united to Jesus Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

[8 : 23] We do have a readiness to move forward in the face of the opposition that is out there that we are going to meet. We have a renewed confidence. Again, we have peace with God.

We have the Word of God. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit. On and on we could go with the different ways in which we've been made ready. We now carry with us the gospel of peace that we can take into the spiritual warfare and dispense to others who also need to hear this gospel of peace and be made ready themselves for life in this world and that life which is to come.

And then we have the shield of faith, again from Jeremy's lesson, that constant reliance on God. Faith is our shield because through faith, we place our trust in the one who has already won the victory through Christ.

That's the confidence we carry with us into the battle, that Jesus has accomplished that victory. In every circumstance, we take refuge in God, trust in His promises, knowing that He is our ultimate defense.

And then the helmet of salvation, from Jeremy's lesson again, the helmet of salvation is a critical piece of the armor of God that protects our minds with the assurance of salvation.

[9 : 49] It guards us against doubt, fear, deception, and despair. We're called to take up the helmet of salvation daily, actively using it in the security of our salvation, renewing our minds in the truth, and standing firm against the enemy's attacks.

Through Christ, our salvation is secure. And we can face any battle with confidence, knowing that our salvation is secure in Christ Jesus.

And then the sword of the Spirit. And what is the sword of the Spirit? It is the Word of God. We take up the sword of the Spirit effectively when we have knowledge of particular, specific Scripture passages and use them strategically in those times of spiritual conflict, times of specific temptation that come to us.

We recognize our heart is being drawn to something else, and the Spirit of God brings specific Scripture passages to our minds, reminding us, no, this is the way you need to walk in.

What you're experiencing is a deception coming from the spiritual forces working against you. Your own deceitful flesh that's warring against your soul.

[11 : 09] Be alert. Believe this Scripture passage, what God, the counsel that God has provided for you, and keep in step with the Holy Spirit. So the importance of having the sword of the Spirit.

And in all of this, we pray at all times in the Spirit. Again, from Jeremy's lesson, with the Holy Spirit's enabling and assistance because of the spiritual conflict is ongoing, we're devoted to praying at all times in a variety of ways, in a variety of reasons, with great persistence, and for all the saints.

How'd you do this past week? Praying at all times. We trust as you got up during the day, you even started. Lord, help me, you know, as I anticipate what's ahead of me.

Help me to walk in your Spirit today, and not me only, but my wife, my children, who profess faith in Christ Jesus. My other brothers and sisters in Christ, who also go about different responsibilities, help them this morning specifically.

Praying at all times. Praying for all the saints. We're in this together as a unit and in our walk in the Spirit and following Jesus Christ.

[12 : 24] So that's a quick summary. Wow. Eight weeks it took us to go through all that. And I trust that that brief summary is helpful. So keep that paper handy because now we want to take a look at a summary of the Church of Ephesus and see where these particular principles and pieces of armor might apply in their situations, but also in our situations today as well.

And as we move through this survey, again, I'll stop along the way and just ask you for some of your input. And even if you don't want to say anything out loud, we'll use it as a time where you can just think that through a little bit on your own and pick out one of these principles or pieces of armor that might fit that situation.

But if you want to share, don't hesitate. But keep it short. Okay. I was surprised and interested in seeing how many times the Church of Ephesus shows up in the New Testament.

In Acts 18-19, we read of Paul's first visit there on his second missionary journey that was around A.D. 52. And it'll be interesting as we go through this history to see how many years are covered through this history.

And that quite possibly, A.D. 52, was the time the Church was first established. And then in Acts 19, we read that Paul visited again. This is the time that he stayed about two and a half years teaching in the city.

[14 : 04] That would have been around A.D. 54 through 56. This would have been his third missionary journey. It was also during this day that he wrote 1 Corinthians.

And in that letter, he wrote that he wanted to stay in Ephesus because of the many ministry opportunities that he had there. Yeah, spending two and a half years there.

But also because of the adversaries that were there. He recognized there was a need for him to stay with this new church and help them understand how to fight these adversaries.

So let's take a break here at this point. I know Paul hasn't wrote Ephesians yet and talked about the spiritual conflict and the armor of the Lord, but we have it.

So as we look back at this opportunity that the Apostle Paul had in going to this church, spending two and a half years there, knowing something of the situation that he was facing there in the church, what are some of these principles from this sheet that I handed out to you that would apply in Paul's situation and maybe the pieces of armor that he may have had to be wearing at that time of ministry for two and a half years?

[15 : 21] Some of your thoughts. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. That's one of the ones I had down here. He knew specific scriptures that he needed to be taught to the people.

Truth about the Holy Spirit and baptism in the synagogue. He spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. So yeah, definitely.

Sword of the Spirit. Specific things from the scriptures that he had to teach them. He was prepared to use the sword of the Spirit. What else? Go ahead.

Amen. And also, believing that God could accomplish something great in such a city as Ephesus.

[16 : 39] All the ungodly practices that were taking place, the idol worship, the opposition that he experienced in a very real way. Yeah, that would have been attached to my faith for sure.

And so as you get up to go to work tomorrow, well, you may not be anticipating facing some of the things that Paul faced, but you'll need the shield of faith for what you're going to be facing tomorrow or even today.

You believe God can lead you through those times? Take up the shield of faith. What else? What else? What else? What else? What else? What else? Yeah.

Amen. He did. And he recognized at times asking the people to pray. In fact, it was at the end of the book of Ephesians that, hey, pray for me. Other times, pray for me that I'd have the courage to speak the way I ought to speak.

Yeah, so we too. Hey, pray for me as I start my day tomorrow. I'll pray for you. As well. What plans do you have in place to pray for the different members of the church?

[17 : 48] What else? What else? Yeah, yeah, very good.

Understanding, I mean, that was what was before his eyes. Those people that were opposing him. You've probably been there before, faced opposition from people different ways, maybe not even for your faith in what you're teaching in the gospel, but just because they don't like you.

And, well, what's your response? But you're going to understand, wait a minute, my battle is not against flesh and blood here. They don't even recognize why they're responding this way to me. God helped me to move toward them as Jesus moved toward me when I was standing in great opposition against Jesus Christ. I'm not even asked to lay down my life for this person.

I just need to talk to him and return good for evil. So, yeah, this is the application of these principles. There's a lot more, but we've got to keep going. Well, after his two and a half years, he left for Macedonia and several months later he sent for the Ephesian church elders to meet him on a nearby island of Miletus and he took this opportunity to make his farewell address to them.

[19 : 17] And it's in his farewell address that we read of his exhortation to the elders in Acts 20. He says, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

How would you like to have that as a farewell address? Might make me a little bit nervous knowing what's ahead so I would need what? To be reminded of what?

Yeah, helmet of salvation certainly. There were people coming in attacking the gospel and maybe even causing some doubts within their own hearts about their own salvation.

They needed to have the helmet of salvation on daily so that they would not doubt its efficacy to save those that were hearing the gospel message but also so that their assurance would be in what God had said and what Jesus Christ had done on their behalf.

[20 : 34] So let us as well take up that helmet of salvation daily too. What else would they need? Time's ticking by quickly.

They need to be strong in the Lord, right? When he was saying that from among your own selves. What?

Is that me? That I would be one that would turn away from the gospel? God, I need your help.

I need your strength. I need your power so that that would not be true of me. Help me to stand strong in the Lord during these times when the opposition comes.

So yeah, being strong in the Lord. Again, the battle against spiritual forces that was very real. Belt of truth they would need.

[21 : 36] Sincerely committed to God and living and speaking the truth of God with all sincerity and integrity. Not departing from it. Anything else?

Yeah, yeah. Again, living within the city. They had to understand and recognize, listen, I've been united with Jesus Christ.

I've been declared righteous in Jesus Christ. This is my new identity and therefore all my actions, whatever I do in word or deed, another book, another letter, I should be seeking to do to glorify God no matter what the circumstances are.

And by the power of God I can do that. It's not my own strength that I'm called to do this but I can act in a way that would in a manner worthy of the calling that I have in Christ Jesus.

So yeah, they had to be ready and then they had to be ready with the armor of God. But let's continue. It was about 10 years later in A.D. 62 that Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians.

[22 : 55] And as you read the letter you see the church they'd been doing well since Paul left them about 10 years prior. And in this letter he provided some instruction on a variety of topics.

Salvation, the mystery of the gospel, unity in the body of Christ, the worthy walk of the Christian relationships, what they looked like between husband and wife, parents and children, slaves and masters, and then he ended the book again with that instruction in spiritual warfare and the armor of God.

So we can see some ways in this letter that the adversaries quite possibly were working against the people of the church. Paul had provided specific instruction for a specific reason that they might know the truth or be reminded of the truth and stand firm against the schemes of the devil that might quite possibly have been working against them.

Probably again in the city of Ephesus it was out there every day in regard to their relationships, husbands and wives, parents to children, so on and so forth, worship, salvation, the false teachers were still there among them declaring a false message, so lots of opportunity for instruction, lots of opportunity for them to be applying these spiritual principles in regard to conflict and the opposition they were experiencing and wearing the armor of God.

So again, what would they have had to draw to their minds during this time of their lives?

[24 : 44] .

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. No. Yeah. Yeah, amen.

They did. There was still that cultic worship, Artemis, Diana, still very much influential in the city, and they needed to be reminded of the specific truths that would apply to family life, righteous living, what a worthy walk looked like, salvation, helmet of salvation.

What else? Some of these might be repeated answers, but that's all right.

[26 : 05] Yeah, yeah. They better be praying for each other. They needed to be praying for each other. Not just Wednesday nights of prayer meeting, but throughout the week, they needed to be praying for one another at all times in a variety of ways.

Steadfast, persistent in prayer for one another. You could say there's similarities in our culture, wouldn't you, today? We're living in the last days, right?

And quite possibly, things will get worse before the King Jesus returns and sets up his kingdom here on earth. Are we praying for each other, or are we just so comfortable in America that it just doesn't even seem that serious to us at times, then we forget.

Well, just like warfare takes different appearances, it's not always an in-your-face conflict, very subtle, coming in subtle ways.

If we're not alert, praying, in this case, praying for one another, we could be caught unawares and become sleepy in our spiritual walk. Anything else that they would need to be alerted to and reminded of and be putting on.

[27 : 32] Oh yeah, good. Yeah. Yeah, peace in their own relationships and their relationships in the church, certainly. And they were made ready through the gospel of peace for those kind of relationships in the church.

that in the midst of the conflict, the stress that would come in the lives of the people living in times like that and a culture like that, and they'd come together and it could be a little prickly, you know, sitting next to somebody.

Somebody says something, well, don't you know what I'm going through on a daily basis? Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute. So, being alert with that readiness that we have to live out of that readiness in our relationships with each other and knowing also that I have this gospel of peace that these people need that are caught in this domain of darkness.

and what am I going to do? I've been made ready to take this gospel of peace to them. What's keeping me from talking? I need to go forward in confidence and be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.

And take the sword of the Spirit. What are they wrestling with? What are they struggling with? Man, this friend is having trouble in his home and his relationship with his wife and this guy's having trouble in finances.

[29 : 03] This guy's addicted to drugs in some way. Do I have any answers that will help this person that God has provided in the sword of the Spirit?

Well, we do. Tremendously. So now we can go forward in confidence just as they needed to go forward in confidence in the midst of their culture.

We've been made ready. Anything else before we move on? Yeah. The wolves are coming in and they're already in. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And he had told them and warned them a long time ago that from among your own selves these wolves are going to come in.

And so, yeah, they need a lot of discernment, the sword of the Spirit to really discern. Now this is what you're telling me. It just doesn't seem to fit with what I heard in the past that Paul taught and Timothy's been teaching us.

So, yeah, you need to get with Pastor Timothy or we need to be studying this more specifically. You need to repent of what you're teaching and so on and so forth.

[30 : 12] Yeah, the sword of the Spirit. So I'm hoping you're seeing the practical application of these pieces of armor and these principles of spiritual warfare because we are the ones today endeavoring to put this armor on and we're called to put it on in our daily lives and we need to on a regular basis.

Let's keep going. Well, next we get another look at the Church of Ephesus through Paul's letter to Timothy. Timothy, 1 Timothy was written around AD 63 about a year after Paul wrote Ephesians. Now, Timothy was the pastor of the church at Ephesus and as we read through 1 Timothy we begin to see some areas where the people may have been faltering in wearing this spiritual armor.

This is what I say is so interesting following this church through their brief history that's left in the scriptures and see how is it going. This is what they've been taught where they're applying these things in their daily lives.

Of course, the challenge comes to us too. A lot of us have been sitting in church for a long time and I've heard a lot of truth and the trust that we are making it our goal and ambition to walk in the light of God's word and enjoy that walk in the truth.

[31 : 36] Well, let's keep going. So some of the areas that Peter wrote about again, just as Paul had warned in his farewell address, there were some that were teaching false doctrine.

Oh, won't this ever stop? But there it was still. There were men that were praying but there was also some sinful anger, some quarreling going on in 1 Timothy 2.

Women needed instruction about what they needed to wear in regard to a respectable apparel with modesty, not showing expensive, not showy, expensive jewelry and clothing, needed instruction and proper submission within the church.

Some were despising Timothy's leadership. There was need for instruction for families to care for elderly widows. None instruction was needed for younger widows, some who had already strayed after Satan.

There was need for instruction about how to deal with sinning elders. Paul provided instruction about how servants were to honor their masters. He gave warning about, here we go again, false teachers, the need for true contentment, the dangers of their desires to be rich and trusting in riches.

[32 : 54] Then there was a charge to Timothy to be faithful in the work and to fight the good fight. What pastor wouldn't need that kind of encouragement after hearing all these different topics that Paul was covering with Timothy.

So, what specific principles apply here? Maybe what pieces of armor had they kind of neglected to put on that Paul would need to address these kind of issues with Timothy for the sake of the people and the church?

Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. And I would agree, too. What had happened? There had been some sort of lacks in their application of the spiritual armor that they needed specific attention.

Listen, you know, this is, you need to be alert to this, Timothy, and this is what needs to be dealt with. It needs to be dealt with because it was manifesting itself in the church. What else?

[34 : 10] Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, they're understanding that, hey, you're members of the body of Christ together. Why are you fighting against each other? Of course, James dealt with that as well as he had to alert them to, hey, this is coming from your own hearts.

So, yeah, there is an enemy out there, but you and I are not the enemy of each other. Let's tone things down here and let's get some help in resolving this issue between us and some counsel that

will lead us in the way of peace in our relationships with each other.

What else? Yeah, proper praying for each other that was necessary.

Helmet of salvation, these false teachers were still there. Sword of the Spirit, knowing how to respond to each other.

[35 : 34] Yeah, on and on we go here. Well, let's finish up. Our next view of the church at Ephesus comes in Revelation 2. Now, Revelation was written somewhere between A.D.

94 and 96, so now we're 30 years after Paul wrote Ephesians and then 1 Timothy, and about 40 years after the church was first established.

In Revelation 2, 1 through 7, we see the Lord's assessment of the church as written by John. And he first presents the commendation in verses 2 and 3.

I know your works, your toil, your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not and found them to be false.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake and you've not grown weary. So Jesus says he knows their works. The original language is written in such a way that there's a reference really to them individually as well in this phrase.

[36 : 43] I know your works. He knows corporately what they're doing but individually as well. He knows each one's works that they've been performing.

Their works were characterized by a toil, patient endurance as they dealt with these false teachers. So again, their path over these years as we've seen in this brief history hasn't been easy.

These false teachers have just hung on. It's been going on for a long time and it was with such patient endurance really was necessary all along the way.

And that's commendable that they stayed the course in the spiritual conflict in regard to these false teachers. And John again commends them for patient endurance, bearing up for the name of Christ and that they've not grown weary.

Again, a worthy commendation as they remain steadfast and not grown weary and given up in defending the name of Christ. And the last commendation comes in verse 6.

[37 : 48] Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. The Nicolaitans promoted and practiced sexual immorality, encouraged eating, food offered to idols, perverted the gospels.

But the members of the church so far hadn't recognized a lot of that and pushed it away, that false teaching. So a good commendation to the people.

But, there's that word, but, but all was not well in the church as we read in verse 4, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

They didn't abandon Christ, but they didn't demonstrate the same intensity of love for him and others that they had at first when they were first converted, organized as a church.

About 30 years prior to this when Paul wrote his letter of Ephesians to them, in that letter he wrote this as he closed the letter to them. In Ephesians 6, 24, Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

[39 : 00] So, there was some good that was going on there in the church. but still there was this whole matter that love just wasn't the same.

The manifestation of service for God and others just wasn't the same from a heart of fervent love. And they needed to be confronted with the aim of them repenting and loving from a pure heart and a good conscience.

And there is this lack of service from a robust love for Christ and others. And again, it had become characteristic of the majority of the church.

It wouldn't have been written as a whole church addressing the whole church. A quote from John MacArthur, though they maintained their doctrinal orthodoxy and continued to serve Christ, that service had degenerated into mechanical orthodoxy.

They had sunk to the place where they were carrying out their Christian responsibilities with diminishing love for their Lord and others. Another quote from Heather Riggelman, Under the weight of the immoral and pagan-filled culture, the church maintained the letter of the law, but they had lost the spirit of the law.

[40 : 19] Serving Christ had become so routine, they had lost their passion to serve Jesus like they once had. Their actions showed they loved Christ, but their hearts were far from it.

Interesting, as you try and discern, how could that happen in the church? Well, that's a good question for us as well. How long have I been saved?

Do I, does the manifestation of my works for Christ and service to Christ and others still flow from that heart of fervent love for Christ and others that once had burned there?

So what happened? Well, time is gone. You'll have to answer that on your own. So we use this as a challenge to us.

God has certainly given us the opportunity to be a light for Christ. I mean, part of the challenge for this church was and in Revelation 2 was they needed to repent, go back to the works that they had been doing in the manifestation of love or their light would be removed from the lampstand and from some of what I read it was in the second century that there was no more church in Ephesus.

[41 : 43] So lack of repentance. Well, how long has our church been around? Forty years? I don't know I wasn't here when it was started. Forty years. Here they are.

So may God certainly help us and he will but our responsibility is to be strong in the Lord, the strength of his might put on the full armor of God that we might be able to stand against the schemes of the devil and the rest of Ephesians 6.

So we still have a time of battle to go through here but that time of battle will end in the future and next week we'll learn about the final ultimate battle.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, this morning we do give thanks again for the work of grace you've done in our hearts.

Thank you for the exhortation from your word, your loving instruction to us, to the people in Ephesus so many years ago. Help us to understand its application to our own hearts and how we live out our lives day by day.

[42 : 50] We need your help truly, oh God, even discerning the reality of our own hearts, that the reality of our motives wouldn't be hidden from us, so that we can still love with that fervent love that we have for Jesus Christ that you certainly deserve in all ways and how we live.

So as we sing songs this morning in the morning service, may those songs really just flow out of hearts and sincere love for you and may your spirit use the songs and the word as it's taught to really move us again in the direction of loving you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you.