

## Prepared to Face the World

As every mom knows, kids' worlds come with helmets, knee pads, elbow pads, wrist pads and special shoes. Then we send them off with a "Be careful" warning. Why? Because we want them to be alert and safe from the many hazards that surround their young lives.

In Scripture God also gives us many "Be careful" warnings, along with some special pads and helmets to keep us safe from the hazards of our world. Every good warrior knows the ways of his enemy. Peter tells us, "Be controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The king of the jungle is prowling around, sly, well camouflaged, quiet, but ever so alert, relentless and focused, looking for the smallest crack where he can slip in. He's hungry and committed, and will not give up until he finds and devours that weak, separated, unprepared or distracted prey. If you are a believer, you are the prey he is after. If you escape him this time, he doesn't give up but keeps trying over and over.

God in his grace does not simply say "Be careful" and then leave us on our own in this jungle of life. Just as we dress our kids with their "armor", God tells us how to be a wise soldier, well protected against our enemy and fully covered by strong armor.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:10-17).

The belt of truth, the gospel, teaches us to recognize the lies of Satan, the king of lies. Our breastplate of righteousness is a gift given us through Christ's death and resurrection. It is Christ's righteousness alone that covers and protects us, making our hearts his own. As we study Scripture, the Holy Spirit uses his truth to fill our hearts to overflowing, making it harder and harder for Satan's lies to deceive us. We lean on Christ and use him as our shield to stop the arrows that seek to find their mark in any little spot that is unprotected. Our head is protected by the helmet of his Word. As we keep Scripture at the center of our thoughts, maybe even memorizing verses so they are readily available, our minds are able to recognize and fight against Satan's attacks with the words of God himself. Now that we have our armor on, we don't go out and fight, but we stand ready, knowing the battle is the Lord's. Our faith in God, constantly nourished by the means of grace, allows us to recognize Satan's lies and tell him we belong to God.

As we continually study God's Word we use it as our defensive armor, our pads that protect us from Satan's arrows. Our offensive weapon is God's Word itself as we use it to fight off Satan's

attacks. We wouldn't think of sending our children out to play without their protection, so it would not be wise to face a day without God's Word as our offensive and defensive weapon against our constant enemy.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I praise you for your grace and mercy. Through Jesus, your dear Son, you have defeated Satan and given us the promise of eternal life with you. You have given us your precious Word that we can be protected from Satan's attacks. For those times when Satan does break through, we ask for your forgiveness and the strength to amend our ways. Lord, help us to constantly study your Word and take it to heart, that we do not find ourselves weak or defenseless. Amen.

*Written by Marilyn Miller*