

# THE ARMOR OF GOD: BODY ARMOR OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ephesians 6:10-12, 14; Matthew 23

## Parents Dig In

### Dig In to the Bible

Read: Ephesians 6:10-12, 14; Matthew 23

In This Passage: Paul talks about the spiritual battle we're fighting against evil and tells us to put on body armor of God's righteousness. In Matthew 23, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they may look righteous on the outside, but on the inside their hearts are dirty. True righteousness comes from Jesus' love in our hearts.

Bible Point: We fight evil with righteousness.

Summary Verse: "Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm" (Ephesians 6:13).

### Dig Deeper

You'll Be Teaching: We fight evil with righteousness. Righteousness is a hard word to define, and too often Christians define it as a checklist of right actions. But the Pharisees had their checklist down pat, and they weren't truly righteous. True righteousness is something God puts in our hearts, and our body armor helps protect it!

Think About: What does righteousness mean to you? How can you use it to fight evil?

### Dig In to Prayer

Ask God to guard your kids' hearts against evil with the body armor of his righteousness.

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## OPENING

### Supplies

Bible

"Knight" handout from Week 1

aluminum foil

scissors

glue sticks

### Easy Prep

Ensure the "Knight" handout is still hanging on the wall. If you need to print a new one, download it [here](#).

### Introduce the Lesson

**Say: We're learning about the armor of God. In battles, soldiers wear armor to protect themselves. We're not in a war against people, but the Bible says we're in a war against unseen powers of evil! But don't worry; we're on the winning side—God's side! And we have his special armor to put on, including the body armor of righteousness. Body armor goes on like a shirt to protect your heart and organs.**

- Have kids cut pieces of aluminum foil to fit on the knight's torso.
- Kids can glue their body armor to the knight, one piece on top of another, so you end up with a thick layer of foil that makes substantial body armor.
- You'll continue to add to the knight handout for several weeks, so leave it up.

### Share

- Tell kids about a movie that looked like it would be really good but was disappointing when you saw it.
- Ask kids to share about movies they thought looked really good but were disappointed by.

### Summarize

Open a Bible to Ephesians 6 and say: **In today's Bible story, we'll find out about people who looked really good, but on the inside, it turned out their hearts were more focused on themselves than on God. Let's see what happened in the Bible, God's special book. The Bible is one way God shows us his righteousness. And guess what! God is here right now, ready to talk to you! Let's talk with God now.**

Pray, thanking God for his victory over evil with righteousness.

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## TALK-ABOUT VIDEO

Andy's Armor

### Supplies

"Andy's Armor" teaching video (download [here](#))

### Discuss and Watch "Andy's Armor"

Say: **We're learning that we fight evil with the righteousness.**

Ask: • **What does that mean to you?**

Say: **If you're not quite sure what it means to fight evil with righteousness, you're not alone. Let's join our friend Andy to see what he thinks it means.**

Watch "Andy's Armor."

Ask: • **What would you like—or not like—about wearing actual body armor around all the time?**

• **Genesis said putting on the body armor of righteousness means "covering our hearts in God's goodness." How do we do that?**

Say: **Luckily we don't have to wear heavy armor around like Andy tried to do. We fight evil with righteousness when we ask God to shine his goodness through our hearts.**

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## MUSIC VIDEO

### Supplies

"All Authority" (download [here](#))

"God Will Guide Us" (download [here](#))

"There's Power in the Blood" (download [here](#))

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## CORE BIBLE DISCOVERY

The Armor of God: Body Armor of God's Righteousness (Ephesians 6:10-12, 14; Matthew 23)

### Supplies

6 hardcover Bibles

5 paper grocery bags

paper

"World Map" handout (download [here](#))

\$1 bill (you'll get it back)

2 paper cups

dirt or coffee grounds

soccer ball or rubber playground ball

### Easy Prep

Cut a strip of paper, and tape it into a loop to make a paper bracelet.  
Write "I promise" in big letters on another piece of paper.  
Rub dirt or coffee grounds inside 1 of the cups.

### Fill In the Blank

Say: **We're in a battle against evil! Listen to this!** Read Ephesians 6:10-12. **Today we're learning that we fight evil with righteousness. Some people think of righteousness as doing the right thing. But we're going to explore how it goes beyond that.**

**First, I want you to fill in the blank for this sentence: "You should never \_\_\_\_\_ at church."**  
Allow time for kids to respond.

Say: **Now think about this: Do you ever do that thing outside of church?**

Ask: • **If someone doesn't do the bad thing at church but does do it outside of church, does that mean that person is righteous when they're at church? Explain.**

Say: **A lot of people might behave one way at church but differently outside of church. Looking at the way they behave at church, you might consider them righteous. But let's get to the heart of righteousness.**

### Set Up Bags

Say: **To explore righteousness, we're going to look at some guys in the Bible who acted really, really righteous, or perfect. They were the religious leaders, and everyone looked at them as examples of how to live the right way. Let's see what they did to be righteous.**

Set up five paper grocery bags side by side on the floor.

Say: **They wore Bible verses in boxes on their arms, kind of like a bracelet. That seems like a good thing to do!**

- Have one child put the paper bracelet in the first bag.

Say: **They also went to other countries to tell people about God. That seems good.**

- Have a child put the world map in the second bag.

Say: **They also made promises people could count on them to keep.**

- Have a child put the "I promise" paper in the third bag.

Say: **They gave money, too!**

- Have a child put the dollar bill in the fourth bag.

Say: **And overall, their lives looked clean and pure—like a clean cup.**

- Have a child put the clean paper cup in the fifth bag.

Say: **It seems like all the things we just read about are good things to do. Let's see what Jesus thought about the wonderful things they did and whether they were the most righteous guys around.**  
read the following Scriptures:

Matthew 23:5

Matthew 23:15

Matthew 23:23, 25-31 33.

Say: **Boy! Jesus didn't sound too impressed with the Pharisees' righteousness.**

Ask: • **How would you describe Jesus' words to the religious leaders?**

• **Why do you think he talked like that?**

Say: **Jesus knew their hearts and knew that everything they did was all for show. They were trying to be righteous on their own to impress other people. But we can't be righteous without Jesus!**

**When we fight evil with righteousness, it's about our hearts tuning in to God's righteousness. It's not about doing things that impress other people.**

Ask: • **With the Pharisees in mind, think back to our original question: If you do the right thing only when you're at church, are you righteous at church? Tell me what you think about that.**

**Say: Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites and whitewashed tombs. A hypocrite is a pretender. The Pharisees looked nice and perfect on the outside, but they were dead and rotten on the inside. If your actions look nice but your heart isn't turning to Jesus for righteousness, you can't fight evil with your righteousness. It'd be like going into battle with aluminum foil instead of metal for your body armor. And that kind of armor can be easily defeated.**

Have kids take turns kicking the ball toward the bags to knock them over. You can set them back up if needed so everyone gets a turn. The bags should fall over easily.

**Ask: • Why do you think the bags fell so easily?  
• What would help the bags stand strong?**

### **Reset the Bags**

Set the bags back up, and remove the items from them.

**Say: When we fight evil with righteousness, we wear God's body armor. Here's what that looks like.**

Read Matthew 23:3-4.

**Ask: • Jesus said not to crush people with religious demands. What are some rules that feel like they crush you?**

Have a child put a Bible in the first bag. Then say: **We fight evil with God's righteousness, so we don't demand that people should be perfect on their own.**

Read Matthew 23:11-12.

**Ask: • Jesus said to be kind and do things for others. Tell about someone you know who's like that.** Share your own example first.

Have a child put a Bible in the second bag. Then say: **We fight evil with God's righteousness when we act like his servants.**

Read Matthew 23:23.

**Ask: • The Pharisees ignored justice, mercy, and faith. Why are those important?**

**Say: The Pharisees kind of kept score of the right things they did. They liked things you could measure, like how many Bible verses you could wear or how much money you gave. Then they could show off how great they were! But they missed out on the more important but less showy things.**

Have a child put a Bible in the third bag. Then say: **We fight evil with righteousness when we show justice, mercy, and faith in Jesus.**

Pass around the dirty cup.

**Ask: • What would you say if I wanted you to take a drink out of this cup?**

**Say: We'd be grossed out by a cup that's dirty on the inside—it doesn't matter how the outside looks! In the same way, our hearts are far more important to God than what our actions make us look like on the outside. That's what Jesus had to say!**

Read Matthew 23:26-28.

**Say: Jesus said that on the outside, the Pharisees looked righteous. But on the inside, their hearts were filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness. They were like a clean cup on the outside with dirt and mold on the inside.**

Have a child put a Bible in the fourth bag. Then say: **We fight evil with righteousness by having hearts that are turned to God.**

Have a child put a Bible in the fifth bag. Then say: **Most importantly, we need to remember that our righteousness doesn't come from our own strength. That's where the Pharisees got it all wrong! We fight evil with righteousness when we rely on Jesus for our righteousness.**

**Ask: • What looks different about our bags now than before?**

**• What is different about our bags now?**

Say: **On the outside, these bags look the same as they did before. But we know what's on the inside—the truth of God's Word, not flimsy good deeds!**

Read Ephesians 6:14.

Say: **So now that we have Jesus-powered body armor on the inside, let's see how it stands up in battle!**

Have kids kick the balls again. This time, they won't be able to knock down the bags.

Ask: • **Why did the bags stand strong the second time but not the first time?**

• **When is it hard for you to be strong? How could God's righteousness help you?**

Say: **We looked at some tough stuff that Jesus said to the Pharisees. Maybe you didn't think Jesus would say something so harsh! But he knew that the Pharisees' hearts were all about themselves, not about God. That not only made him mad, but it also broke his heart. Listen to what he said after he put them in their place.**

Read Matthew 23:37-38.

Say: **Jesus was sad because he wanted to gather and protect his people, but they wouldn't let him. They wanted to do things their way, not his, and it cost them everything. So consider this question: Will you let Jesus gather you and give you his righteousness?**

Pause for kids to reflect. Then pray for the kids to fight evil with God's righteousness.

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## DEEPER BIBLE

Is It My Job to Make Someone Else Righteous?

### Supplies

Bibles  
paper  
pens

### Set It Up

Say: **We're learning that we fight evil with righteousness. In the Bible story, Jesus saw that the Pharisees looked righteous on the outside, but their hearts were bad. They didn't have God's body armor of righteousness protecting their hearts.**

**So what do we do when we think someone has a bad heart? How do we know that someone's heart is bad? Is it our job to make someone else righteous? Let's dig in to that by playing a game where we can see only the outside of something.**

### Play a Game

Give each child a piece of paper and a pen. Say: **First, secretly write the name of a food that starts with the first letter of your name. Then fold the paper so no one can see what you wrote.** Allow time for kids to write and then fold their papers.

Have kids sit in a circle and set their folded papers in front of them. Give each child a second piece of paper. Say: **Now look around at everyone's papers from just the outside. Make a list of people's names and the foods you think they wrote. If you don't know someone's name, just ask! You'll have two minutes. The person with the most correct answers wins!** Allow two minutes, and then have kids reveal what they wrote so kids can tally their scores.

Ask: • **How many did you get right?**

• **Did you write your own name and food on your list? Why or why not?**

Say: **I never told you that you could guess and write only other people's answers. But some of**

**you might not have thought to write down your own answers on your lists! That reminds me of the way we sometimes focus on righteousness. Sometimes we're so focused on everyone else that we forget the most important thing: seeing how God wants to make our own hearts more righteous. Jesus talked about that.**

### **Dig Deeper**

Read Matthew 7:3-5.

**Ask: • What's wrong with focusing on someone else's faults when you're not really right with God?**

**Say: These verses show us the importance of working on our own relationship with God first. We can't help others do what's right when we're not tuning in to God's righteousness ourselves! But sometimes there is a benefit to helping our friends grow in their righteousness. Let's look at a verse that talks about that.**

Read Galatians 6:1-2.

**Say: Let's explore these verses further.** Have kids form three groups. The Ones will read the verses again, paying attention to who we're supposed to help. The Twos will read the verses again, paying attention to who is supposed to do the helping. And the Threes will read the verses again, looking for words that describe how we can help.

Allow time for groups to read the verses and discuss what they can find out about their topics.

Then have kids form trios with a One, a Two, and a Three in each trio. Ask kids to share with their trios what they learned.

**Ask: • So what did you figure out about helping people who are sinning?**

**• Based on these verses, what could you think about differently the next time you want to tattle on someone?**

**Say: These verses say to help another believer who is overcome by sin. That means it's not our job to judge people who don't even know Jesus. And it's also not our job to point out every little sin in other Christians.**

**We also learned that people who are godly should help others who are overcome by sin. It goes back to what Jesus said: Get the log out of your own eye first.**

**And the verses say to gently and humbly help people back onto the right path. In other words, help them find ways to make better choices instead of just rooting for them to get in trouble. One way to make sure you're doing that is to think through the reasons you want to tattle on someone or comment about what that person is doing wrong.**

**You can ask yourself questions like this:**

**Is it because you want to get that person in trouble?**

**Or is it because you really care about that person and want what's best for them?**

**Ask: • How do those questions help you think about your motivation?**

**• Tell about a time you just wanted someone to get in trouble. Share your own story first.**

**Say: If you just want to get someone in trouble, that's not helpful. But if you have a close friend who keeps doing the same wrong thing, and you've made sure you're wearing your armor, you can come alongside that friend and help them make better choices.**

**So when we fight evil with righteousness, we do it by letting the body armor of God's righteousness protect our hearts. That example can be the best help of all to someone who's struggling with sin.**

## Supplies

8- or 9-ounce paper cups (1 per child)  
colorful air-dry clay (about 1½ ounces per child)  
pencils  
permanent markers in a variety of colors

## Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft to show kids.



## Make Pencil Cups

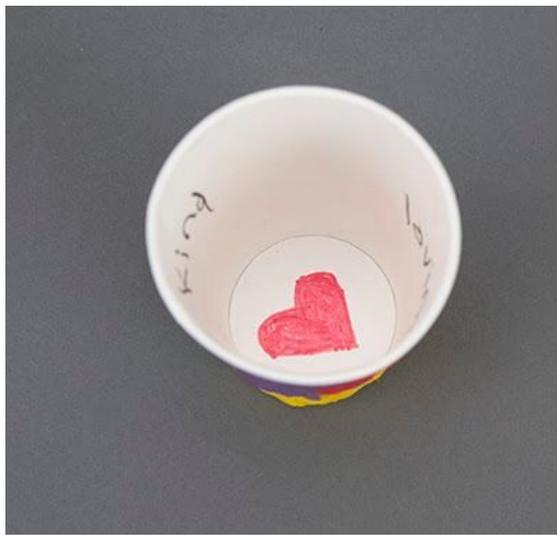
Show kids the sample craft you made. Give each child a cup. Set out the remaining supplies to share, and have kids follow these directions to make pencil cups.

- Cover the outside of the cup with different colors of clay. Smoosh it as flat as possible, and arrange different colors in patches to make it as beautiful as possible.
- You can use pencil tips to carve fun designs in the clay.
- Place a few pencils in the cup so you can see what it will look like when you fill it at home.

## Decorate the Inside

Say: **Wow! Your pencil cups look beautiful on the outside! But we learned from the Pharisees that it's God's love on the inside that matters when it comes to righteousness. So let's decorate the inside of our cups!**

- Have kids each draw a heart at the bottom of the cup on the inside and then write words around the inside that would reflect a righteous heart, like kind and loving.



### Talk About It

Ask: • **Why would it matter what the inside of a pencil cup looks like?**

- **Why would it matter what our body armor of righteousness looks like on the inside?**

Say: **You probably don't look inside a pencil cup very often. Maybe it doesn't matter to you what it looks like. We also can't see inside each other—but God can. God sees our hearts, and true righteousness happens when God makes us righteous on the inside. That's the body armor that protects our hearts. It's not about checking off a righteous to-do list and looking pretty on the outside! When God gives us his righteousness, we fight evil with righteousness.**

Have kids return the pencils and take their pencil cups home and ask God for righteousness whenever they take a pencil or pen out of the cup.

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## LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Praise Prayers

### Supplies

Bible (optional)

### Praise God for His Righteousness

Say: **Our body armor is God's righteousness! Let's praise him for his righteousness using words from Psalm 71 in the Bible.**

Read the following lines from Psalm 71:15-16, 19. Pause after each one for kids to repeat after you.

I will tell everyone

about your righteousness.

All day long

I will proclaim your saving power,  
though I am not skilled with words.

I will praise your mighty deeds,

O Sovereign Lord.

I will tell everyone

that you alone are just.

Your righteousness, O God,  
reaches to the highest heavens.

You have done such wonderful things.

Who can compare with you, O God?

Allow time for kids to add their own praises to this prayer.

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week.