



Our faith is not just something we check in with on Sundays, our faith is how we live lives of meaning and purpose everyday, if we will learn to notice and respond to how God is moving. But this awareness, like anything worthwhile, takes practice. Which is why a weekly discipleship practice of Reading, Reflecting, and Responding to scripture in the context of community is so important. The following devotions have been written with this practice in mind. Use them with friends or family to help you deepen your experience of faith.

Week: Ordinary Time, Proper 16

Adult to Littles

Read: Ephesians 6:10-20

Reflect: Paul is writing from prison, where Roman guards, who actually wore armor like a breastplate and heavy metal helmets, were standing close by. People reading this letter many centuries ago would have understood Paul's metaphor. However, we are removed from a time of physical battle so it can sound silly and outdated to think about putting on the armor of God. We don't need helmets and breastplates anymore. But maybe the question is, what do we need to be followers of Christ in our world right now? Do we need hearts filled with peace or ears willing to listen? Maybe hands holding a warm meal for a friend or arms that give gracious hugs? Historically, the church has gotten caught up in the idea of fighting a battle, and has forgotten that we are also called to "proclaim a gospel of peace." What does that look like for you and your family in this season?

Respond: Next time you are helping your little one get dressed, reflect on this passage and use it as a chance to play and pray. Don't rush through the task, but make time to talk about each article of clothing as a tangible reminder of how God invites us to live. It can be simple, like this: *Thank you for this t-shirt that hugs us like your love... Thank you for these pants that help protect our body so we can protect others, thank you for these shoes that help us go into the world to share your peace. Amen.*

- Michelle Acker Perez

Adult to Middles (Elementary)

Read: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Reflect: Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together to a place called Shechem and they presented themselves before the Lord. He reminded them that their ancestors, family members who lived before them, had worshipped other gods. He encouraged them to remember that they now served the Lord God of Israel, the One True God and to put away the false gods of their ancestors and of those they had come in contact with from the people in whose land they were living. Joshua took a stand and told the Israelites that he and his family would choose to serve the Lord. The people responded that they too would worship the Lord as they remembered what God had done for them. God brought their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt, showed them signs and wonders, protected them along the way, and removed their enemies from the land they had been promised.

Respond: In this story the people decide and agree together to worship God. Sometimes in a family it can be hard to agree on things, even on how to worship or follow God. Together make a list of the ways each family member likes to worship God best (in church, through singing songs, through prayer, reading about God, creating art...) How could you make room in your month for everyone to get the chance to experience their favorite kind of worship at least once?

-Quantrilla Ard

Adult to Bigs (Youth)

Read: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Reflect: Every day we are faced with a ton of choices. What should I wear? What should I eat? Should I even get out of bed today? Then there are the big choices you may be facing, where should you go to college? What kind of career do you want?

Joshua gathered the Israelites to challenge them to serve God and God only. The Israelites had a long history of chasing after other gods. They even went as far as to create a golden baby cow to worship! The problem is, we do the same thing. We may not melt down our jewelry but we do worship money, always trying to get more. We worship our phones, never picking our faces up from them. We worship ourselves, doing everything we can to carefully craft images of how we want people to view us.

Joshua called the Israelites to look back and see all that God has done for them. Do you look back? Think about your life and all of the things you have been through, can you point to times where God has rescued you, taken care of you, loved you? God is and always will be faithful to us. Seeing his goodness and all that he has done, we work every day to remain faithful to him.

Respond: Make a list of 5 ways God has protected you or shown his love to you. Pray about each one and thank God for his goodness.

- CJ Quartlbaum

Adult to Adult

Read: Ephesians 6:10-20

Reflect: If I were suddenly going to have magical powers or a magical, superhero-type weapon, the thing I'd most want to have is a shield. I love the images of Captain America with his shield in battle, or Harry Potter and Dumbledore's Army casting the Protego charm, or even my favorite fictional wizard, Harry Dresden, with his bracelet of shield charms that could protect him from everything from bullets to attacking spells.

Truth be told, though, what I'd really like is a shield that protected me from the meanness of the world. Wouldn't that be great? Sometimes it feels like the world is attacking with flaming arrows, and I imagine a shimmering force field around me that just deflects all negativity. While Paul surely wasn't envisioning all the crabby people on social media, it's not hard to make a connection. And it's not hard to imagine how we might use Paul's metaphor of armor. When the world feels like it is attacking, we can raise our faith as our shield, and remember the other tools of faith offered to us: truth, justice, salvation, peace and the word of God. When we hold on to and count on even one of these tools, it can help us find the strength to continue in the world as people of The Way, bringing about the Kingdom of God as we are called.

Respond: As you walk through your week, which of the tools of the Armor of God do you feel especially drawn to engage? Choose one to focus on through the day. At the end of the day, spend time reflecting on how your day went and how the tool you chose influenced how you encountered the day.

- Regina Heater

Faith-at-Home is a Forma sponsored resource and is managed by Jerusalem Greer. For more information on our authors and this resource visit Forma.church