

Overcome Arrows of Doubt with

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Ephesians 6:10-18

When we first come to faith in Jesus, it's the most natural, the most logical and the most liberating thing we can do. Sooner or later, though, the challenges come. Why is following Jesus sometimes so difficult?

The Bible answers that question in different ways. One way is by talking about the weakness of our own nature (Rom. 7:18-19). Another way is by pointing to the culture that opposes us as we seek to represent our Master (Mark 13:9). Ephesians 6:10-18 explains the difficulty of the Christian life by talking about the battle we're in with our archenemy, the devil.

The moment we put our faith in Christ, Satan does everything in his power to keep us from acting on that faith, and he has a well-worn strategy to do it. Thankfully, God has given us everything we need to overcome each step of his strategy.

The first step of his strategy is to deceive us with lies. To overcome his lies, we have the belt of truth. If Satan can't deceive us with lies, he will try to defeat us with accusations. To overcome his accusations, we have the breastplate of Jesus' righteousness. (Amazing grace. How sweet the sound.) If he can't defeat us with accusations, Satan will try to lull us into a spiritual slumber with songs of amazing grace. To overcome his lullabies, we have the shoes of readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

If our enemy can't lull us to sleep, the next thing he tries is to paralyze us with arrows of doubt.

I've noticed that my own doubts are directly related to my intention to live and die for God and his kingdom. Perhaps you've noticed it too. Sleeping Christians don't struggle with doubt, only those who are ready to act.

How do we overcome the enemy's arrows of doubt?
Ephesians 6:16 tells us to hold up the shield of faith.

- Contrary to what many believe, faith is NOT a substitute for experience and certainty. Faith is an essential step toward these things. Without faith it is impossible to know and experience God. Without faith it is impossible to know anything or anyone.
- To exercise faith in God is to act on his promises. Through his Word and through his works, God makes the promise of life, and that promise is fulfilled for everyone who acts on it. The more we act on God's promise, the more we know and experience him.
- When we set out to act on God's promises, our enemy wants us to say, "I need more evidence and certainty before I act." That's the last thing we must say. When we say that, we abandon the one means by which we are able to experience God and grow in certainty in him.
- Instead, to overcome doubt, we must raise up the shield of faith. That means leaning into God's promises and acting on them. He's been faithful in the past. He will be faithful in the future.

The question is not, "Can God be trusted?" The question is, "Are we prepared to lean into God's promises when the arrows fly?"