

## Equipped to be obedient

How do you respond when someone tells you to do something? I suppose a lot depends on who is giving the instruction, right? Many years ago, a group of psychologists arranged for some people to walk down a busy street, ordering shoppers to pick up litter that had been dropped earlier in the day. Half of the people were dressed in civilian clothes and the rest were kitted out in official-looking uniform. Results showed that the obedience rate of the shoppers increased dramatically when the orders were issued by the people in uniform. This suggests we tend to respond more readily if we think a command comes from a credible source.

In the realm of spiritual warfare, do you think commands from God should be responded to readily? After all, who else is qualified to give instructions in this area? In **Ephesians 6:10-18**, we're brought face to face with the necessity of preparing for battle. As part of this preparation, God gives four commands - *be strong*; *put on*; *stand firm*; and *pray*.

**Be strong.** This command might seem an impossible one to obey, particularly when we're feeling weak and lacking in spiritual energy. But one of the great things about God is that he never commands us to do anything unless it is possible for us to obey. So, in whom or in what are we to be strong? Ourselves? Our friends? Our achievements? No, the command is to "*be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*".<sup>1</sup> He knows how weak we are in ourselves, so he directs our focus to *him*. We are to be strong in *his* power.

**Put on.** The command here is to "*put on the full armour of God*".<sup>2</sup> This battle gear is made up of the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Although God provides this protection for us, he doesn't dress us in it. It's up to us whether or not we obey the "*put on*" command. How will you respond to this on a daily basis? Will you put on only one or two pieces of armour, or will you go the whole way and put on the full gear?

**Stand firm.**<sup>4</sup> Isn't it good to know that, in every spiritual battle we face, we fight from a position of strength - not our own, but Jesus Christ's? We can stand firm *only* if we have already heeded the command to be strong in the Lord and keep putting on the battle gear he provides for us. Trying to stand *before* we are strong in the Lord and equipped by him is a guarantee that we will fall flat on our faces! It's great to know that the ability to stand firm doesn't come from us, but from God's power working in, and through, us.

**Pray.**<sup>5</sup> What place does this command currently have in your life? Are you following through on praying on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests, for all Christians everywhere? As we engage in spiritual warfare every day of our lives, we daren't ignore this command. Prayer shows our dependence on God and enables us to tap in to his strength, both for ourselves and for other people.

Let's be those who quickly and willingly respond in obedience to what God says!

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 6:10 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:11, 13 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 6:14-17

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 6:14

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 6:18