



INTRODUCTION



SWORDS UP
J. HARRINGTON
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For so long, we have been fighting Satan with one weapon, but that stops today—not that the sword of the Spirit is insufficient, but because the Lord has given us an arsenal of weapons you may not have known existed.

The world has gone bananas. Each day, the headlines seem more jarring than the day before. Satan is displayed and glorified in mainstream music, our children have to dodge confusing messaging about their identity in school, and women do not feel safe in their own bathrooms. It's enough to want to hide under the covers and not venture out until the second coming! But you and I were made for a time like this—like Queen Esther, we were put here for a reason: to be the light in the darkness and a beacon of hope. Who are we to stand against such evil? And what does it look like to fight it day-to-day? The apostle Paul outlines this very thing in Ephesians 6:10–18.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

These verses hold the secret to winning the battles and the wars we wage daily, but time has hidden its treasures for us to discover together here and now. In the next eight weeks, we will break this passage down into its parts, giving you a new perspective while equipping you from head to toe to fight the enemy as we go along.

HOW SHOULD YOU DO THIS BIBLE STUDY?

This eight-week study is meant for individuals or groups. Each week consists of five lessons where you will do the following:

1. Discover the truth in God's Word.
2. Participate in daily challenges to help you grow spiritually.
3. Discuss questions with your group or study partner.
4. Have an opportunity in your own time to meditate on what you have learned and apply it to your everyday life.

If you are an individual without a group, the questions are designed to help you meditate further on what you have learned throughout the week. Please remember to do them, as it helps you think deeper about the topics being discussed.

WHAT TOOLS DO YOU NEED FOR THIS BIBLE STUDY?

The primary tool I used to write this Bible study is the Blue Letter Bible app. You can find that on your mobile device app store or on your desktop at blueletterbible.org. This tool allows you to examine the original language of the Old and New Testaments and provides commentary by known theologians that will expand your understanding of Scripture. Each time you see a Greek word, this means I got that

meaning from the Blue Letter Bible app. I highly suggest that you download the app and follow along. I will include a tutorial on how to use it on my website. I have also included the links to each of those definitions in the back of this book for your convenience.

For most of this book, I will use the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible, but in a few instances I will use the New International Version (NIV), which you'll see in parentheses next to the text. Also, on my website, I have included eight videos to accompany your discussion questions. So, if you have not signed up to receive free access to those, go ahead and do that today at www.jpharrington.com. These are meant to supplement your lessons each week.

FINAL THOUGHTS

What you hold in your hands is the answer to a prayer that has been in my heart for a very long time, but one I did not know would come in this form. That you are reading my book today is a miracle in itself. I have been praying that you are touched by it, you are equipped with it, and that after you are done reading it, you will never be the same. May God bless you in this time, and may the Holy Spirit guide you and speak His wisdom into you so that the words in this book will change how you see God and the Bible for years to come.

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WEEK 1

OUR ENEMY



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The place where I became a willing vessel for God was a dark one—one where the old me died, and the woman God needed me to be was born. In 2015, I gave birth to a beautiful little girl, yet my heart ached for the little boy I had seen in my dreams. I prayed for him daily, and I cannot express the joy I felt when I found out that he was on his way. My husband is one of a few men who could have sons to carry on the Harrington name. I wanted to give him that privilege more than I've wanted anything else.

My pregnancy was difficult, and I was under a lot of stress. My husband is an active-duty Marine and was going to be leaving again on deployment. I was finishing my master's degree and volunteering over forty hours a week with an energetic toddler at home. My life was hectic, to say the least.

Throughout my pregnancy, there were many trips to the hospital with unexplained bleeding, but my son seemed healthy and had begun to start breathing in my womb. But after one too many trips to the hospital, I began to worry. I needed help, and there didn't seem to be any on the horizon. I asked God to either send me help or help my son survive me.

One day, while I was taking a shower and fretting, I felt the Holy Spirit say, "Get used to the idea that you don't get to keep him." I cried so much that day. I let the shower hide my sobs and wash the tears I could not let my family see. I hoped I was wrong, that the voice I heard was not from God but my own insecurity, and that it would all be okay.

As Hurricane Florence approached the North Carolina coast, we made the decision to stay in Camp Lejeune because the hospital was so close. The storm lasted days, and we were without power for two weeks. I knew that something was wrong, and my anxiety grew with each passing day. After many canceled appointments, I was not surprised when, at my next visit, there was no heartbeat. At twenty-seven weeks, my son died, along with my dream.

There are no words to explain what it's like to deliver a stillborn. I entered the hospital with two things: my phone and my Bible, which was somehow still a comfort to me. From the moment I stepped into the room, I was completely enveloped with an overwhelming peace. I knew that if anyone understood what I felt at that moment, it was my God—the same God who had given up His Son to save me. This is the God I chose to cling to. I was surrounded by prayer from friends and family all over the world. The only thing I could think to ask for was an easy delivery. The process was incredibly painful, but in the end, my son came into this world while I slept. We held him, blessed him, and sent him back to the Father who had taken him from us.

I remained in observation for twenty-four hours after I delivered him due to preeclampsia. Upon my request, my husband went home to be with our daughter to give her a semblance of normalcy. I was left alone, yet I have never felt God so real as I did that day; I could feel His presence in every fiber of that room, and as I came out of my medications, I sat with Him as He held my broken heart together. For twenty-four hours, I remained with my God in a state of prayer, and it was beautiful. For years I have tried to replicate that moment of full communion with my Savior, coming close but never entering the solace of those days in the hospital.

When nightfall came, God gave me a vision I will never forget. I was standing in my room, looking at a patch of forest across the street from my window. I became acutely aware of two things: the presence of God was still very much with me, and there was a darkness in those trees that was the opposite of Him. I knew that presence was evil, and my fight-or-flight response sent my heart racing. The need to punch and maim coursed through my veins. I knew beyond a doubt that this presence wanted my destruction, and I knew I would have to fight him sooner or later. In my mind, the existence of our enemy was a fact, but that day, under the protection of Christ, I was made aware of just how real our enemy is.

In life, we will experience moments like these, where light and dark clash in the epic battle for our souls. We are left with two choices: Give in to the enemy's schemes or run to our Father. As believers, God has given us His protection, weapons, and armor to use boldly when we face the enemy, and we need to know how to use them! In the coming weeks, we will learn about the arsenal at our disposal and don His armor as we walk out of the darkness into God's marvelous light—*Swords Up!*

*I swallowed my song
with fists balled tight
as I felt an unshed scream of pain
choke the breath from my lungs.*

DAY ONE

THE LULLABY EFFECT

I have gone to church pretty much my entire life. When I was a kid still living in Panama, my mom attended a Pentecostal church. I have early memories of being dressed in itchy, white tights and shiny Mary Janes, managing to fall asleep in her arms despite the fervent shouts of praise and oppressive tropical heat. To this day, for all the love of my pastor and the AC, you can catch my eyes half-closing if I am too cozy in my favorite Sunday worship spot. The Word of God can also cause a similar reaction in us.

Ephesians 6 has what scholars call a “lullaby effect.” After many years of hearing these same verses, we find the repetition of the words and their cadence soothing and pacifying, and we are content in their permanence to let their unearthed lessons lie. Complacency is not something we can afford in this day and age, though. We have a powerful enemy that warrants our attention and demands we keep a watchful eye. This is where we will begin our study.

As with any war, you prepare yourself according to who your enemy is. If you are in the Wild West, some six-shooters will do; if you are in feudal Japan, a sword is what you will need. But if you are facing the prince of this age, who the Bible calls “Satan” or “Lucifer,” you need head-to-toe protection—the full armor of God. Before we start putting on our armor, let’s find out where our opponent came from and a little more about him. The following two passages tell us a lot about Satan and his character.

Based on Isaiah 14:12–15, what are some of Lucifer’s characteristics? Name as many as you can.

What do these characteristics reveal about what he thinks of himself?

Reading Luke 4:1–13, what else can you find out about our enemy?

After reading and answering the above questions, you should have a pretty good idea of who you are up against. The guy is a peach, am I right?

While Satan is a spiritual being and more powerful than us humans, there is one thing we can use against him: *his arrogance*. He underestimates us and the fight we have in us. When he looks at us, all he sees is a bag of flesh—weak and easy to lead astray. He can easily crush and maim us; in truth, against him,