

Catching Fire

Intro:

Catching Fire is the 2nd movie of *The Hunger Games* book trilogy. It is set in Panem, a country consisting of 12 poverty stricken districts that are oppressed by a wealthy capitol. Every year, children and youths are chosen from each district to participate in a mandatory, nationally televised fight to the death called The Hunger Games. The purpose of these games are to further suppress the 12 districts and to remind them of the fate of District 13, now a wasteland, that was destroyed during a revolt by the Districts against the The Capitol 74 years earlier. The first movie chronicles the 74th Hunger Games, specifically, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark, from District 12 who were selected in The Reaping to be in The Hunger Games. Through their ordeal, they have become quite close, although on their relationship has been made out to be much more. Normally, only 1 contestant survives as the victor, but, when Katniss and Peeta, both from District 12, survive to the end, they threaten to both commit suicide rather than fight each other. The Capitol amends the rules allowing both of them to survive as victors, but President Snow was angered by their defiance.

Catching Fire, picks up after Katniss and Peeta have returned home safe to District 12 after winning the 74th Annual Hunger Games. One day, Katniss has an unexpected guest...

Clip 1 - President Snow & Katniss (4:17)

After a short time at home, Katniss and Peeta leave their families once again, this time for a "Victor's Tour" through the districts and ending at The Capitol. At their first stop, they decide not to use their handler's prepared remarks and, instead, speak from their hearts. Following their remarks and emboldened by Katniss and Peeta's act of defiance against The Capitol in The Games, the crowd begins to show signs of an uprising. Guards react swiftly and violently to suppress the crowd to the horror of Katniss and Peeta. Their coach for The Games and a previous Victor from District 12 tries to calm them...

Clip 2 - Haymitch (1:30)

Their Victory Tour ends in The Capital at the home of President Snow where he addresses the Victors and the crowd at the Victory Party.

Clip 3 - President Snow's Address (0:47)

More and more Districts are beginning to show signs of an uprising against The Capitol and President Snow begins to make plans to deal with Katniss Everdeen. He enlists the help of the new Gamemaker Plutarch Heavensbee.

Clip 4 - President Snow & the Gamemaker (1:17)

Katniss is frustrated by her newfound role as the leader or, at the very least, symbol of an uprising against The Capitol. She and Gale, her true love, discuss escaping.

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Clip 5 - Katniss and Gale (1:22)

But, plans for an escape are put on hold with a shocking announcement from President Snow.

Clip 6 - 3rd Quarter Quell (1:46)

Like it or not, Katniss Everdeen has become the District's leader in a revolt. Her little spark has caused talk of an uprising to smolder and now it is catching fire with its symbol the mocking jay bird.

Clip 7 - Catching Fire and Wedding Dress (3:35)

It is now just before the 75th Annual Hunger Games—a Third Quarter Quell where all of the contestants are previous Victors of The Hunger Games. Haymitch has some last words of advice for Katniss.

Clip 8 - Remember who the real enemy is (0:47)

Haymitch reminded Katniss that the real enemy is not the other fighters in the arena. The real enemy was President Snow and The Capitol. Today, we will be reminded that our enemy is satan and, that as followers of Jesus, we are in a spiritual battle and we must equip ourselves.

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

Like it or not, we are in a battle. Too often we as Christians live our lives completely oblivious to the war that is raging all around us. We might feel beat up by our life's circumstances—maybe our boss doesn't like us and treats us unfairly, or we are struggling financially and if only these corporations weren't so greedy we could get ahead, or if only our government would (fill in the blank), or if only our government wouldn't (fill in the blank). But this passage makes it clear that those aren't our real enemy. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." We must be equipped! Let's take a look at what is provided...

Belt of Truth (6:14) - Guys, have you ever left home without your belt? If your pants are snug, you can get away with it, but if they are just a little bit loose, you feel like you're constantly pulling your pants up. Have you ever seen a police officer's belt? All the tools are attached to the belt—mace, handcuffs, taser, gun. That belt is where the officer reaches when there is a threat.

Knowing the truth is key to standing firm. Truth is the Christian's tool belt. Just look at the example of Jesus. When He was tempted, He went to the Scriptures—to truth. We live in an age of relativism where we are taught that there are no absolutes and if we live that way, we will have no defense when there is a threat. The Psalmist said in Psalm 86:11, "Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth."

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Then, in John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The best way to learn truth is to get to know Jesus and the best way to get to know Jesus is to read what the Bible says about Him and talk to Him.

Breastplate of Righteousness (6:14) - One translation calls this the “body armor of righteousness.” Today’s law enforcement and military personnel wear body armor to protect their vital organs—especially the heart—where a bullet or shrapnel from enemy fire could do extensive damage, likely causing death. There are two aspects of this to remember. First, there is God’s part. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. If we are followers of Christ, an incredible transaction has taken place. God provided a way for us to trade in our sin and get the righteousness of Jesus in return. This transaction makes us right with God—or righteous. When God looks at us, He literally sees the righteousness of Jesus! So, when Satan, the accuser, tries to discourage you, remind him that you have been made righteous.

The second aspect is our part. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” When we think of the word “holy,” often the first thing we think of is “without sin” and that is true. We do need to keep our hearts pure and free from sin. But, there is a broader definition used throughout Scripture for “holy” and that is “set apart, different.” I’ve been reading through the Old Testament lately, the first 5 books of the Bible where God chooses Israel and “sets them apart” as His “holy” people, His treasured possession. It is amazing to see how many times the word “holy” is used. God wanted Israel to be different—worship a different God, live a different way according to the laws of this different God. Why? So they could represent God to the rest of the nations. The unusual relationship that God had with Israel was to show all the other nations that the God of Israel is the one true God. But it would only work if Israel was “holy”—set apart, different from all the other nations. That didn’t happen. Israel gradually became just like all the other nations surrounding them worshipping their gods and adopting all of their pagan customs.

As followers of Jesus, we are to be “holy”—set apart, different. Why? So we can represent God to the nations. So, what does it look like to be different? Live like the Amish? No. They have become so different—even in ways that Scripture doesn’t speak to (no electricity, no automobiles) that they are ineffective representatives of God. At the same time, many Christians have become just like the culture that surrounds us that they are no longer different which has made them ineffective representatives of God. It is something we must hold in tension. “In the world, but not of the world.” It is not easy and can only be done living under the authority and power of the Holy Spirit.

Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of Peace (6:15) - Have you ever tried to walk barefoot on a gravel road? You assume an awkward posture as you step quickly trying to make yourself as light as possible because your feet are screaming at you! Ever been hiking in flip flops? It doesn’t work out so well. Ladies,

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have you ever tried to run in heels? But appropriate footwear makes all the difference, right? When we understand—truly understand the Gospel, it makes all the difference in our lives as well. Until about 6-7 years ago, if you asked me, “Kevin, what significance does the Gospel have in your life right now?” I would have said, “Not much. I don’t really need the Gospel anymore because I’m already a Christian. The Gospel is really more for people who haven’t believed in Jesus yet.” Now, I understand that the Gospel is what empowers and gives purpose and meaning to my everyday life. Look at 2 Corinthians 5 again.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

The same Gospel we received when we became a follower of Christ gives us a mission to accomplish as representatives of His Kingdom—His ambassadors, “as though God were making his appeal through us.” We can confidently step out and represent God’s Kingdom because of the Gospel, because He has commissioned us as His representatives. I love what 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

Suzanne and I have developed a friendship with some of our neighbors. One family in particular has been very special to us. They made it very clear when we first met that we could be friends as long as we didn’t talk about politics or religion. The husband’s family is originally from the Middle East and is very devout Muslim, but the wife is from Detroit. They live here in Brighton so they don’t go to the Mosque often, but they would consider themselves to be Muslim. Our families have been out to dinner together, Suzanne has been out to breakfast on a number of occasions with the wife. In fact, the two of them went to Cedar Point together just after we moved here right after we had met them. Just a week or so ago, Ethan was over playing with their son and it was dinner time so Suzanne sent me over to get him to come home. The husband was there so we struck up a conversation. It quickly went very spiritual in nature and we ended up talking for about an hour and a half! During the conversation, we were talking about people in both of our religions who claim the name, but don’t live according to the teachings. I said something like, “Most of the time, I don’t even call myself a Christian anymore. I prefer ‘Follower of Jesus.’” His eyes lit up and he recounted his admiration for Jesus and we were able to talk a little bit about the common ground our two faiths shared—it’s small ground and in no way am I saying that it is the same faith in the same God, but I was able to communicate a little bit of the Gospel in that moment. He also affirmed that our family does live like Jesus and they have noticed it.

Those kind of moments require us to be ready to follow the Spirit’s leading. We don’t have to force the Gospel on people. I believe that God is working in people’s hearts. As this neighbor and I were talking, he shared the story of how his family came to Detroit from the Middle East and as he was talking, I could see the places where God intersected with his life. I believe this family will come to faith in Jesus because all throughout his life God has been working. Now, He is working through Suzanne and me

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as His ambassadors. This is what it means to have your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace.

The Shield of Faith (6:16) - In our day and age of high-tech, laser-guided warfare, you don't see a lot of shields. But, SWAT teams storming buildings and police encountering rioters often still use shields to protect them. A shield is a portable defense system that can be moved in position between you and the threat. As believers, our shield is faith. How can faith be our shield?

Sure, it is through faith in the work of Jesus on the cross that we are saved. But how does faith extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one? First, the flaming arrows are temptations that the evil one fires at us. Each one of these temptations is ultimately a lie. These lies cause us to make a choice—a choice between God's ways or satan's ways. Look at Eve. She fell for satan's lie and when we fall to temptation, it is because we believe satan's lie. At the root of every temptation is one basic lie. And if we recognize that lie, with faith, we can overcome every temptation. What is that lie? When we fall to temptation, we believe the lie that what satan is offering us is better than what God has to offer us. To have faith as our shield means that we have faith that even though satan's temptations can look really desirable, living according to God's way is better. An unshakable faith that God loves us and that His way is the best way to live will extinguish the flaming arrows or temptations of the evil one. But, if our faith is weak and we are not confident that God loves us and that His way is the best way to live, we will fall to temptation time and time again.

The Helmet of Salvation (6:17) - Quite obviously, a helmet protects the head. I'm a huge NFL fan. What has been the biggest topic regarding injuries in the NFL for the last couple of years? Head injuries, concussions. They are constantly trying to develop helmet technology to better protect the head. To bike at Kensington, you have to wear a helmet. I never owned a bike helmet until I moved to Michigan 2 1/2 years ago. Sometimes I feel like we are living in a nanny state in this country—between NYC outlawing 32oz soft drinks and public schools being federally mandated to remove all sugary drinks and snacks from vending machines on school property. But, I have known some people who were severely injured in bicycle accidents—even with helmets on!

Paul is telling the believers in Ephesus to put on the helmet of salvation. What does that mean if they were already believers? They had already experienced salvation, right? Well, yes and no. Theologians contend that there are three parts to salvation. The first part is instantaneous when we put our faith in the work of Jesus on the cross for our sins. That's called *justification* and it happens when we trade our sin for Christ's righteousness. Justification frees us forever from the penalty of sin—separation from God forever or spiritual death. What happens next is *sanctification* which begins immediately after justification and continues until either Christ returns or we die. It is the Holy Spirit working within us to make us more like Jesus in our character and in our competency. During sanctification, sin no longer has power or dominion over us. We can still choose to sin, but we are no longer the slaves of sin. The third aspect of salvation called *glorification* is yet to come. Glorification completes our salvation and sin

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is completely removed from the picture. In fact, all of God's creation will be restored to His original intent without the effects of sin and evil.

Putting on the helmet of salvation protects our minds. The evil one likes to fill our minds with doubt and discouragement. Have you ever doubted your salvation? I used to. Many Christians struggle with doubts wondering if God has really forgiven them. Did they pray the right prayer, say the right words, go to the right church, did they REALLY mean it? I grew up in a Christian family so I was very young when I "asked Jesus to come into my heart." I doubted for a long time whether or not I meant it or if I knew what I was doing. Those doubts were from satan. Now, years later, I can see the work that the Holy Spirit has been doing in my life which gives me confidence in my salvation, in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Life can be hard and satan loves to discourage believers in Jesus making us feel that there is no hope. But Scripture is clear that we have blessed hope that is yet to come. One day, we will be set free from all of the effects of sin—disease, poverty, sadness, pain. Even though we go through "momentary trials," we can have confidence in the hope that is yet to come. That is our helmet of salvation.

The Sword of the Spirit (6:17) - All of the other pieces of armor are defensive in nature, but the sword is an offensive weapon. Swords are rarely seen among our modern military weapons. The closest thing to a sword would probably be a bayonet or a large knife. But for the Roman soldier, the sword was his go to weapon just like a modern soldier would reach for his gun. The Bible, God's Word is our sword. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." How many of you had "sword drills" growing up as kids? The teacher would give a reference and all the kids would race to see who can find it first, stand up and read it out loud.

How is the Bible an offensive weapon? Do we go around beating people over the head with it telling them to repent or burn in hell? No. The Great Commission gives us our mission—to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you." We attack the kingdom of darkness by making disciples of Jesus through living out and sharing the Gospel and teaching them God's ways. And it's all found in The Bible.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "The best offense is a good defense"? While a sword is an offensive weapon, for the believer, it is also our primary defense. Do you see how all the parts of the armor work together and are interrelated? The Belt of Truth points us back to Scripture as the basis for truth. The Breastplate of Righteousness points us back to Scripture which says that our righteousness comes from Christ and that God desires for us to live a holy and righteous life. Our footwear, is the Gospel and The Bible from Genesis all the way to the maps is God's story of redeeming mankind. The Shield of Faith points us back to Scripture so we can live in the confidence, the faith that God loves us and that His way is the best way to live. And the Helmet of Salvation brings us

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back to Scripture to protect our minds from doubt and discouragement from the evil one. Jesus used Scripture to ward off the attacks of Satan when He was tempted. Our sword is a very effective offensive and defensive weapon.

Reflection

As we go to reflection today, I have two questions. First, Scripture is clear. There is a kingdom of darkness and a Kingdom of Light. We are all a part of one or the other and they are warring against each other. Only followers of Jesus are a part of the Kingdom of Light and only followers of Jesus need the armor of God found here in Ephesians 6. So my first question is: **Which kingdom do you represent?** If you are a follower of Jesus, you represent His Kingdom—the Kingdom of Light. If you have never become a follower of Jesus, you represent the kingdom of the evil one—the kingdom of darkness. You can change sides and we would love to show you how you can become a follower of Jesus today. See me or Pastor Jeff after the gathering and we would love to explain to you how you can become a follower of Jesus.

Second, if you are a follower of Jesus, **Is your armor complete?** Have you put on the full armor of God? Are you missing some pieces? Are there holes in your armor? Are you maintaining your armor? On the reflection stations, are pieces of paper that have a picture of a warrior in full armor. Beneath the picture is a tool for you to use to evaluate your armor. Rate your armor from 1 (very weak or missing) to 10 (very strong). Take this paper home and put it where it can remind you to daily put on the armor of God.

After this evaluation, you might say, “Kevin, how do I raise my score on these pieces of armor? How do I put on the full armor of God?” The answer is to fully pursue being a disciple of Jesus. There are many things we can choose to pursue with our lives: our career, wealth, power, prestige, the athletic success of our children... None of those things will help you stand firm in this spiritual battle. Only fully pursuing being a disciple of Christ will help you stand firm in this battle and allow the Holy Spirit the ability to complete the work He has started in making you more like Jesus in character and in skill.

Here at The Well, our discipleship strategy is modeled after Jesus’ method of discipleship. We see that Jesus spent time with the crowds. This environment, the public worship gathering is an intentional part of discipleship. But it doesn’t stop there. Luke 10 refers to a group of 72 disciples that Jesus sent out. These 72 obviously had more access to the teachings of Jesus than the average person in the crowd. Our Communitas groups are the next layer of our discipleship strategy. These groups are intended to be like having an extended family to be on mission with. We study the Scriptures together, pray with and for each other, eat together, serve together and simply enjoy life together—all of this while we pursue a common mission. But it doesn’t stop there. Jesus chose 12 disciples who had even more access to His teachings than either the crowds or the 72. Within our Communitas groups, we desire to see smaller groups form for deeper connection and accountability. It is something we’re still working on and is in progress. But it doesn’t stop there. Jesus invested in a few more than others. There were 3 men—Peter, James & John—who had the most access to Jesus—

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more than the 12, the 72 or the crowds. He gave these 3 men more access than anyone else. At The Well, this environment is called a Huddle. It's for people who are serious about being a disciple of Jesus and discipling others. It's about developing both the character and skill of Jesus.