

L.I.F.T.

P.O.D. STUDY GUIDE

WEEK THREE - FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT



INTRODUCTION

WHAT MAKES IT A “GOOD” FIGHT?

Paul's words to Timothy are striking: “**Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.**” Evidently, faith is something we receive by grace, but it is also something we must actively hold onto and live out in the presence of resistance

1 Timothy 6:11-12

But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

The word translated “**fight**” comes from the Greek *agōnizomai*. It carries the idea of struggling, contending, or exerting oneself intensely and is related to the word from which we get agony. The picture is not of casual participation but determined engagement. Paul uses similar language elsewhere for athletic competition and disciplined effort.



Yet Paul does not merely tell Timothy to fight. He calls it the **good fight of faith**. That distinction matters because not every battle deserves our energy. Christians can become passionate about arguments, offenses, preferences, reputations, and being proven right while neglecting the battle Scripture actually tells us to fight.

The immediate context helps us understand what Paul means. In verse 11, before Timothy is told to fight, he is told to “**flee**” certain things and “**pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.**”

The fight of faith therefore includes both refusing what pulls us away from Christ and pursuing what makes us more like Him. There is an important paradox here: sometimes fighting means standing your ground, sometimes it means pursuing something, and sometimes it means running away.

Scripture tells us to resist the devil but **flee temptation**. Spiritual maturity is learning the difference. The Christian life is not passive. Grace does not eliminate resistance. There are desires to resist, lies to reject, habits to confront, wounds to forgive, temptations to flee, truth to believe, and faith to maintain. But the purpose of the fight is not simply to defeat something. **We fight so that nothing keeps us from faithfully following Jesus.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

1. First Timothy 6:11–12 tells Timothy to flee some things, pursue others, and fight the good fight. Why do you think all three are necessary for spiritual growth?

2. How can we distinguish between a battle that is worth fighting and one that is simply consuming energy that should be directed somewhere else?



I. KNOW WHO YOU ARE REALLY FIGHTING

Ephesians 6:10-13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Paul begins his teaching on spiritual warfare with a command that is easy to overlook: **“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”** Before Paul describes the armor, the enemy, or the battle, he identifies the source of our strength. We are not told simply to **be strong**. We are told to be strong **in the Lord**.

That distinction protects us from two extremes. One is fear, where we become so preoccupied with spiritual opposition that we forget Christ's authority. The other is self-confidence, where we assume we can overcome temptation, deception, and spiritual resistance through willpower alone. Biblical spiritual warfare begins with dependence upon God.



Paul then makes another crucial distinction: **“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.”** This does not mean people cannot hurt us, oppose us, deceive us, or behave unjustly. It means the human being standing in front of us is never the ultimate enemy. This radically changes how Christians fight.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 says that although **“we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.”** Paul then describes one important battlefield: **arguments, lofty ideas, and thoughts that set themselves against the knowledge of God.** Spiritual warfare therefore includes confronting lies with truth and refusing to allow our thinking to be captured by ideas that contradict God's character and Word.

Consider how easily this happens. Someone hurts us, and the event is real. But then another thought attaches itself to the event: *You can never trust anyone again.* We experience failure, and the failure is real, but then comes the conclusion: *God can never use you now.* A prayer remains unanswered, and disappointment is real, but then comes the accusation: *God has forgotten you.*

The event and our interpretation of the event are not always the same thing. This is where spiritual warfare becomes extremely practical. **We must learn to identify the difference between what happened and what we have begun believing because it happened.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Paul says our struggle is not ultimately against “flesh and blood.” How would remembering this change the way we handle conflict, offense, and difficult people?

2. 2 Corinthians 10 speaks about taking thoughts captive. Can you identify a time when a difficult experience began producing a conclusion about yourself, another person, or God that was not actually true?



LIFE APPLICATION

When you encounter resistance this week, stop before reacting and ask three questions: **What actually happened? What am I beginning to believe because of what happened? What does God's Word say is true?**

Do not fight a person when the deeper battle is over what you are beginning to believe. **One of the most important places to fight the good fight is where a lie is attempting to become a belief.**



2. LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO STAND

Ephesians 6:13–18

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

One word appears repeatedly in Paul's description of spiritual warfare: **stand**. He tells believers to “stand firm,” to withstand the evil day, and after having done everything, to stand. That is interesting because we often imagine spiritual warfare primarily as advancing against something. Paul frequently pictures it as **refusing to surrender ground that Christ has already given us**.



Look carefully at the armor. The belt is **truth**. The breastplate is **righteousness**. Our feet are prepared with the **gospel of peace**. We take up **faith, salvation**, the **Word of God**, and **prayer**. Paul's picture of spiritual warfare is deeply centered on the gospel. We stand in what God has said, what Christ has accomplished, and who we have become in Him.

This helps us understand James 4:7: “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We often quote the second half while overlooking the first. Resistance begins with submission. We resist the enemy effectively when our lives are increasingly aligned under God's authority.

Notice also that James immediately continues, “**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**” Spiritual warfare is therefore not primarily fascination with the enemy. It is steadfast devotion to God. Sometimes standing will look remarkably ordinary. You forgive again. You pray when you don't feel spiritual.

You tell the truth when dishonesty would be easier. You open Scripture when your thoughts are spiraling. You call another believer instead of isolating yourself. You refuse to return to the habit Christ has been freeing you from. None of those actions may feel dramatic, but they are warfare because **you are refusing to be moved away from faithfulness to Jesus.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Ephesians 6 repeatedly tells believers to “stand.” What are some situations where simply remaining faithful to what God has already told us may actually be the spiritual victory?

2. James says, “Submit to God” before saying, “Resist the devil.” Why is submission to God essential to successfully resisting spiritual opposition?



LIFE APPLICATION

Identify one area where resistance has been attempting to move you spiritually. Perhaps discouragement has moved you away from prayer, offense has moved you toward bitterness, temptation has moved you toward compromise, or disappointment has moved you toward distrust.

Then identify the piece of God's armor that speaks most directly to that battle. **What truth must you believe? What righteous action must you take? Where must you choose faith? What Scripture must you bring into the fight? What needs to become a matter of persistent prayer?**

Do not merely focus on what you are fighting against. **Decide where you are going to stand.**



3. FIGHT WITH THE FINISH IN VIEW

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

Near the beginning of Timothy's ministry, Paul told him, **"Fight the good fight of faith."** Years later, near the end of Paul's own life, he could say, **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."**

That gives us an important definition of victory.



Paul does not say, “I never struggled.” He does not say, “I won every argument.” He does not even say, “Everything turned out the way I wanted.” He says, “**I kept the faith.**” The goal of the Christian fight is faithfulness.

Hebrews 12 gives us similar imagery. After describing generations of faithful people in Hebrews 11, the writer tells believers to lay aside “**every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us**” and to run with endurance the race set before us. Notice the distinction between “**every encumbrance**” and “**sin.**” Not everything that slows us down is necessarily sinful. Some things may simply be weight.

A habit can be permissible and still be unhelpful. A relationship can consume attention that belongs somewhere else. An ambition can gradually become an obsession. Entertainment can become distraction. Busyness can leave us spiritually exhausted. Hebrews therefore asks a more mature question than merely, “**Is this wrong?**” It asks, “**Is this helping me run?**” Then Hebrews tells us how endurance is sustained: “**fixing our eyes on Jesus.**”

Once again, the Christian fight brings us back to Christ. We do not endure by staring endlessly at our opposition. We endure by keeping our attention fixed on the One who has already endured the cross and finished His race. This gives us a healthier picture of fighting the good fight. The goal is not to become people who are constantly looking for battles. **The goal is to become people who refuse to allow anything to keep us from finishing faithfully.**



GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews distinguishes between “sin” and “encumbrances.” What are some things that may not be sinful in themselves but can still become spiritual weight that slows our progress?

2. At the end of his life Paul could say, “I have fought the good fight...I have kept the faith.” If “keeping the faith” is the measure of victory, how does that change the way we think about winning our present battles?



LIFE APPLICATION

Ask yourself one direct question this week: **What is making it harder for me to run faithfully right now?**

If it is sin, repent and bring it into the light. If it is unnecessary weight, consider laying it down. If it is a lie, replace it with truth. If it is isolation, bring another believer into the battle. If it is exhaustion, restore healthy rhythms. If it is discouragement, fix your attention again on Jesus. You do not need to fight everything. **You need to fight whatever is trying to keep you from faithfully following Christ.**



BRINGING IT HOME

The good fight of faith is not about becoming combative Christians. It is about becoming steadfast Christians.

We learn to recognize the real battle instead of making people our enemy.

We learn to stand in truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, God's Word, and prayer. We learn to lay aside both sin and unnecessary weight so that resistance does not stop our forward movement. And through it all, we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Personal Reflection

- **Am I currently spending my strength fighting something that is not the real battle?**
- **Where is the enemy attempting to move me away from what I know is true?**
- **What weight, sin, lie, offense, fear, or distraction is making it harder for me to move forward in faith?**



This week, identify **one battle worth fighting**. Do not try to fix everything at once. Bring your strength to the decisive place. Bring God's Word there. Bring prayer there. If necessary, bring another believer there. Then determine what faithfulness to Jesus looks like in that particular battle and stand your ground. Paul began by telling Timothy, “**Fight the good fight of faith.**” Years later he finished by saying, “**I have fought the good fight...I have kept the faith.**” Between those two statements was an entire life of resistance, suffering, obedience, grace, failure, courage, and perseverance. And in the end, Paul's victory could be summarized in four words: **I KEPT THE FAITH.**

Prayer

Father, strengthen us in You and in the power of Your might. Give us discernment to recognize the battles that matter and wisdom to stop wasting our strength on those that do not. Help us remember that people are not our enemy. Teach us to recognize lies, take our thoughts captive, and stand firmly in Your truth. Show us every sin and unnecessary weight that is slowing us down, and give us courage to lay it aside. When we are tired, fix our eyes again on Jesus. When we are tempted, help us stand. When we are wounded, keep bitterness from gaining ground. When we are afraid, teach us to take up the shield of faith. And when our race is finished, may we be able to say with Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” In Jesus' name, Amen.

