

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Before beginning your personal or group study of *Standing Strong*, take time to read these introductory comments.

If you are working through the study on your own, you may want to adapt certain sections (for example, the icebreakers) and record your responses to all questions in a separate notebook. You might find it more enriching or motivating to study with a partner with whom you can share answers or insights.

If you are leading a group, you may want to ask your group members to read each assigned chapter and work through the study questions before the group meets. This isn't always easy for busy adults, so encourage them with occasional phone calls or emails between meetings. Help members manage their time by pointing out how they can cover a few pages each day. Also have them identify a regular time of the day or week that they can devote to the study. They too may write their responses to the questions in notebooks.

Notice that each session includes the following features:

Chapter Theme—a brief statement summarizing the chapter.

Icebreakers—activity ideas to help group members get better acquainted with the session topic and/or with each other.

Group Discovery Questions—a list of questions to encourage individual discovery or group participation.

Personal Application Questions—an aid to applying the knowledge gained through study to one's personal living. (Note: These are important questions for group members to answer for themselves, even if they do not wish to discuss their responses in the meeting.)

Focus on Prayer—suggestions for turning one's learning into prayer.

Assignments—activities or preparation to complete prior to the next session.

Here are a few tips that can help you more effectively lead small-group studies:

Pray for each group member, asking the Lord to help you create an open atmosphere where everyone will feel free to share with one another and you.

Encourage group members to bring their Bibles as well as their books to each session. This study is based on the New International Version, but it is good to have several translations on hand for purposes of comparison.

Start and end on time. This is especially important for the

Discussion Guide

first meeting because it will set the pattern for the rest of the sessions.

Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds and to give understanding so that truth will be applied.

Involve everyone. As learners, we retain only 10 percent of what we hear, 20 percent of what we see, 65 percent of what we hear and see, but 90 percent of what we hear, see, and do.

Promote a relaxed environment. Arrange the chairs in a circle or semicircle. This allows eye contact among members and encourages dynamic discussion. Be relaxed in your own attitude and manner. Be willing to share yourself.

DRAWING THE BATTLE LINES

Chapter Theme: As believers, we play a key role in the ongoing cosmic conflict between God and Satan.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. When someone is in conflict with another person, what usually initiates the conflict? How does the interpersonal conflict manifest itself?
2. Suppose you are an employer. How would you feel if your most beloved and trusted worker suddenly turned against you and tried to sabotage your business, with the ultimate goal of supplanting you?

Group Discovery Questions

1. What lofty position did God give to Lucifer?
2. What was Satan proud of? What did it produce? How did it manifest itself?
3. How widespread is Satan's army? In what ways do you see its effects in the world today?
4. Why is Christ Satan's primary target?
5. Explain the purpose God had in sending the archangel Michael to help another holy angel defeat Satan's emissary. With that in mind, can you give some contemporary examples of nations that have opposed God's purposes in the past but don't do so now?
6. In what ways do you see Satan attacking Israel today?

Personal Application Questions

1. Satan's pride was the beginning of his fall, which extended to all humanity. How does the sin of pride spawn other sins?
2. How does the conflict between God and Satan express itself in your life? Contrast the spiritual fruit Christ produces with the fleshly fruit Satan encourages. What kind of fruit are you manifesting?

3. What can you learn from the example of Daniel's ongoing prayers to God on behalf of his people? What should you be praying for in regard to the outworking of God's plans in the world?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to give you a better understanding of how His conflict with Satan manifests itself in the world. Ask Him also to strengthen you to resist the temptations Satan brings into your life.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 2 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Read 1 Timothy 2:1–2. List some specific prayer requests for world leaders, reflecting on their role in global spiritual warfare.

SATAN AS GOD'S INSTRUMENT

Chapter Theme: God uses even Satan and his demons to accomplish His sovereign will for believers and unbelievers alike.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. What do you suppose motivates an athlete to train for endless hours to compete in his or her chosen sport? How might that relate to any Christian faced with trials or afflictions?
2. If you have children, what things do they do that require you to discipline them? Relate some specific examples.

Group Discovery Questions

1. How have people in today's spiritual-warfare movement concluded that it is possible for a demon to indwell a believer? What is wrong with their reasoning?
2. Why did God allow Satan to afflict Job? What did Job learn from his afflictions?
3. In what ways did God use the afflictions experienced by both Paul and Peter to strengthen their faith?
4. Why did God allow a demon to torment Saul? What must happen before Satan and his demons can terrorize anyone?
5. Why was Paul so adamant that the Corinthian church deliver an unrepentant sinner in their midst to Satan? Why should church discipline never be neglected?
6. Describe how today's spiritual-warfare movement can become a detriment to what God wants to accomplish.

Personal Application Questions

1. Job's test is great proof of God's sovereignty in every aspect of our lives. The next time you face a difficult trial and you don't understand what God is doing, reflect on what you have learned about Job and how it can be a source of comfort to you.

2. In what specific ways do you see God's love manifested in your life? Read again what Samuel Bolton said. What additional things can you add to the ways you see God's love for you?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to give you a greater sensitivity to His sovereign control over your life. Ask Him to reveal to you the reality of Romans 8:28.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 3 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. For the next few days, make note of each obstacle that comes your way. What was your initial reaction? After your list has several items on it, look at those obstacles in the light of God's sovereign plan for your life.

SATAN ATTACKS THE CHURCH

Chapter Theme: God allows Satan to attack His church—in some cases as a judgment on sin and in others as a means of strengthening faith and commitment.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. Christ warned five of the churches about something they were doing that displeased Him. Name some of the things prevalent in Christianity today that you think displease God.
2. How do you usually respond when God gives you an opportunity to be a witness for Christ?

Group Discovery Questions

1. Contrast what the Bible says about our security from demons with what is being taught about “territorial warfare.”
2. What one thing had the church at Ephesus failed in? What usually results from that?
3. What was the basic problem with the church at Pergamum? What motivated them to do what they did?
4. How did Christ encourage those who did not follow the deep things of Satan in the church at Thyatira? Why is it essential for the church to draw the line between right and wrong?
5. What are the benefits of true repentance? How does that relate to God’s battle plan for spiritual warfare?
6. Give some examples of churches today that fit the model of the church at Laodicea. What does Christ want those types of churches to do?
7. What preservative characterized the church at Philadelphia? Why is that preservative so effective?
8. How did God preserve the church at Smyrna? Why does that preservative work?

Personal Application Questions

1. Are you in danger of losing your first love—or maybe have you lost it already? Think back to when you first embraced Christ—when your new life in Him was rich and exciting and you experienced the thrill of being free from the bondage of sin. Have other things replaced that zeal in your life? If so, you need to repent and ask God to forgive your indifference toward Him.
2. Living in today's materialistic world is a great temptation to many believers. In what ways does the world assault you, drawing you away from loving service to Christ? What is your best defense against the world's temptations?
3. God uses both evangelism and persecution to preserve His church in this world. What must you do for God to make them real in your life? What will happen when you take advantage of the opportunities God gives you for evangelism? When are you most likely to be persecuted for your faith? Are you willing to pay the price?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to give you a greater love for Him as a result of your willingness to stand separate from the world. Pray that He would give you opportunities to present the claims of Christ.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 4 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Take notice of the doors God opens for you this week to minister to unbelievers. It may not even be an opportunity to share the gospel right away but a chance to establish a relationship that could easily lead to that opportunity.

4

THE BELIEVER'S DUTY

Chapter Theme: We grow in Christ when we are obedient to Him, which includes our commitment to endure hardship, fight the good fight, and stand firm in the battle.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. The apostle Paul likened the Christian to a soldier. How would you characterize a soldier's duty?
2. What things in the world most often prevent you from fulfilling what God expects from you?

Group Discovery Questions

1. What must a Christian do before he or she could be characterized as a good soldier who endures hardship?
2. How can we take encouragement from Christ's life when we are faced with adversity?
3. Explain how the prosperity gospel contradicts the biblical meaning of discipleship.
4. How does Scripture tell us to resist Satan? What does that require us to know?
5. What kind of warfare are we engaged in? How would you characterize the weapons God has given us for this warfare?
6. Explain the quietist and pietist views of the Christian life. What is wrong with each extreme?

Personal Application Questions

1. In Luke 9, Christ offered three people the opportunity to follow Him, but they all had something that kept them from making a full commitment. What about you? Examine yourself to see what worldly things might be keeping you from following Christ wholeheartedly.

2. How does our contemporary Christian experience differ from what Paul experienced? What must happen in your life before you could fit the description offered by J. C. Ryle?
3. Read Matthew 4:1–11. How did Jesus resist the devil? What can you learn from Christ's example whenever you are tempted to sin?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to give you a greater awareness of the spiritual battle that is taking place daily. Ask Him to help you apply your scriptural knowledge to every occasion when you are tempted to sin.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 5 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Reexamine the list of the Christian armor. Next to each, indicate why you think God provides that piece of armor.

THE CALL TO COMMITMENT

Chapter Theme: God calls all Christians to don the belt of truthfulness, which means being committed and ready for the battle.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. Before you leave your home, how do you get ready to go to work, to school, or on some errand? Why?
2. Describe the transformation that occurs when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. What does it leave behind?

Group Discovery Questions

1. How does Satan attempt to get you to doubt God? How should you respond?
2. Why is it difficult to live the Christian life in contemporary Western culture?
3. In what ways does putting on the belt of truthfulness prepare the Christian for battle?
4. What part does self-sacrifice play in being committed to Christ? What must be transformed before that can happen?
5. What does the pursuit of excellence require?

Personal Application Questions

1. Cite some examples of times you doubted God. What caused you to doubt Him? What kinds of difficulties do you often face that hinder your relationship with Christ? Once you identify those causes, seek to either avoid or be ready for them in the future.
2. Analyze your commitment level to Christ and His cause. How does it relate to the zeal of the young man who joined the Israeli Army so he could be in the most difficult regiment? To be honest, can you relate more with those who serve only when it's convenient—when it fits

with their agenda? Read Romans 12:1–2 and be sure you are living like one who has decided to follow Jesus.

3. Are you guilty of masking your problems or your struggles with sin from other believers? Don't allow Satan such a hold on you; share your struggles with a close Christian friend and let God use him or her to encourage and advise you.

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to help you be prepared for the battle by showing you how to renew your mind. Ask Him to reveal to you any areas in your life that you need to yield more completely to His control.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 6 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Make a list of all the commitments you have, such as your job, responsibilities at church or a Bible study, and so on. Which ones are related to tasks? Which ones are related to people? Which ones involve service to Christ?

6

PROTECTING OUR MINDS AND EMOTIONS

Chapter Theme: To protect your mind and emotions from Satan's relentless attack, you must be clothed with the breastplate of righteousness.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. What are your favorite forms of entertainment? What are the things you desire most in life?
2. In what specific ways do you experience conflict because of your Christianity?

Group Discovery Questions

1. What does Satan attempt to do to believers when he attacks their wills and emotions?
2. In what ways do the proponents of today's spiritual-warfare movement err in following the example of Christ and His apostles?
3. Why can't the breastplate of righteousness refer to our own righteousness?
4. What happens to an individual the moment he or she is saved? Why is that necessary?
5. What kind of effort is required to live a holy life?

Personal Application Questions

1. In what ways is Satan most successful in attacking your mind and emotions? In what ways are you most influenced by the world? How can a commitment to practicing the righteousness of Christ enable you to resist Satan's attacks?
2. What is your attitude toward repentance? Do you acknowledge your sin to God but not really work at eliminating it from your life? If so, you haven't truly repented. Determine to make your repentance real by forsaking sin.

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to reveal to you the sins you hide and don't deal with. Commit Psalm 139:23–24 to memory and let that be your prayer.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 7 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. For the next week, note each time you find yourself agreeing with or being influenced by something that reflects the world's thinking. Line those things up against God's Word. Which ones must you discard? Get in the habit of taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE

Chapter Theme: Without the confidence we gain from knowing we are at peace with God, we would not be able to stand firm in the midst of our battle with Satan.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. How do you feel when you are by yourself and you have to confront someone or be confronted by someone? How different did you feel on similar occasions when a friend accompanied you?
2. Think of the last time you were faced with a situation where God's Word clearly indicated that you should do a certain thing that you didn't want to do. What happened if you obeyed? What happened if you didn't?

Group Discovery Questions

1. Why is it important to understand that Ephesians 6:15 doesn't refer to preaching the gospel?
2. Describe the war between God and humanity. Why does everyone start out as an enemy of God?
3. How did God make peace with you? How does He maintain it?
4. What must you do with any teaching or experience another Christian claims to have had?
5. What enables a Christian to stand with confidence in the midst of the spiritual battle?

Personal Application Questions

1. How would you respond if someone attacked the reality of your Christianity, pointing out that you are much less than perfect? What truth would you share with him or her regarding the peace that you have with God? What could you share about Christ that would explain the remedy He provided for your sin?
2. Since Christ your High Priest is continually interceding before God on your behalf, what does that require from you? Since you no longer are an enemy but a son

or daughter, what ought to characterize your relationship to God?

Focus on Prayer

Thank God for making peace with you through the sacrifice of Christ.
Thank Him for Christ's intercession before God on your behalf.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 8 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Plan out what you might tell an unbeliever about the peace that God offers in Christ. Use some of the truths in this chapter and add other facts that would reinforce the fact that God is at war with those who don't know Him.

FAITH: OUR DEFENSE SHIELD

Chapter Theme: The best way we can defend ourselves against the fiery darts of Satan's temptations is by raising the shield of our faith in God.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. What are the benefits of exercise? How does exercise affect your ability to do certain activities?
2. What usually happens when you go through a trial? How does that trial affect your relationship with God?

Group Discovery Questions

1. What distinctions did Paul make among the individual pieces of armor? Why?
2. Define faith. Why is faith necessary before we can resist Satan's attacks?
3. Explain how exercising our faith is a matter of obedience.
4. What happens when our faith is tested by trials?
5. Describe how Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness. What methods does he use to tempt us?
6. What is the only way to defend ourselves against Satan's temptations? What does that require of each of us?

Personal Application Questions

1. Read Hebrews 11. What lessons can you learn from these heroes of faith that you can apply to your life?
2. In what ways do you experience temptation today? How do you plan to use the shield of faith to defend yourself against each of those temptations?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to strengthen your faith by helping you gain a more heavenly perspective throughout each day. Ask Him to help you apply His Word to those events that tend to pull you away from dependence on Him.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 9 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. During the time you normally have your devotions, start this habit: Whenever you come across a command that particularly applies to you, write it down. Refer to it often as you make obedience to that command a reflexive act in your daily walk.

THE BELIEVER'S FUTURE GLORY

Chapter Theme: Satan's two major methods of attack are discouragement and doubt. But by putting on the helmet of salvation, you can resist his attacks.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. What is the goal of most athletes when they run a race?
How effective do you think their training would be if, once they started the race, they had no goal?
2. Have you ever had to guard something for someone?
What were you responsible to do? Could there have been some reason for ceasing to guard that thing?

Group Discovery Questions

1. What are the three aspects of salvation? Explain their significance in your life.
2. What are the ramifications of knowing that your future glorification is secure in Christ?
3. How does Satan attempt to discourage believers?
4. What does Satan try to get believers to doubt? Why?
5. Identify seven strands that assure us that Christ holds on to us eternally.
6. What guarantee did God give to assure us of the reality of our salvation? How does that guarantee work?
7. What keeps us secure from Satan's attacks?

Personal Application Questions

1. To what degree do you show joy during your tribulations? How often do you focus on the trial and not on the benefits? According to Romans 5:2–5, what are the benefits of our tribulations? How can you turn the results of tribulation into goals for your life?
2. In what ways are you most often discouraged? How often are you plagued with doubts about your salvation? How do you think the helmet of the hope of salvation can

help you turn discouraging things into positive events and turn your doubt into complete trust in God?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to give you a better appreciation of the salvation He has given you. Thank Him for providing such a secure salvation—one in which simply looking to what you will have in heaven makes life that much better on earth.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 10 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Read Romans 8. Make note of each phrase that indicates how the Holy Spirit guarantees the security of your salvation. Write down each of those guarantees. The next time you are faced with any discouragement or doubt, refer back to your notes.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Chapter Theme: Perhaps the most versatile weapon available to you as a Christian is the sword of the Spirit. With it you can parry Satan's attack and also cut through Satan's dominion to bring the truth to lost souls.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. Why do you need a map when you drive into an unknown area? Why do you need a guidebook when you go to a museum? Why do you need a set of instructions when you buy an appliance?
2. When you have been able to share the gospel with people, telling them what Christ did on their behalf, what kind of reactions did you receive? Describe them.

Group Discovery Questions

1. Since God's Word is authoritative, how should Christians respond to it? Why?
2. In what ways is God's Word sufficient?
3. Why is it critical to use God's Word in a defensive manner? Since believers cannot bind Satan, what should they do?
4. What does Christ's response to three of Satan's temptations teach us about applying God's Word?
5. Are signs and wonders necessary for evangelism? Why or why not?
6. How does Satan counterattack the believer's use of the sword in evangelism?

Personal Application Questions

1. Review the section that details the divine qualities of God's Word. In what ways can those qualities encourage you to take God's Word more seriously?
2. Since God's Word is defensive, you can use it to fend off Satan's attacks. What specific temptations do you struggle with most? Seek out what God's Word teaches about those temptations so that the next time you are tempted, you'll be ready to resist.

3. Are you a sower of God's Word? Do you talk about the good news of Christ with the lost as God gives you opportunity, or do you shy away? Notice that in Matthew 13:3–8 the sower does not discriminate where he sows—he is not responsible for casting seed on good ground—his only responsibility is to sow the seed. Where do you need to start sowing seed?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to help you be ready and willing to make a defense of the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15). Ask Him to help you recall what His Word teaches about specific struggles you have.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 11 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Review the story about the butterfly, botanist, and bee. Which one most closely resembles your personal Bible-study habits? Starting today, begin to read and study the Bible with the attitude of the bee. Study especially with the purpose of obeying God's Word by applying what it teaches. Don't let a day go by where you have not mined some nugget of truth from God's rich resource.

PRAYERS ON THE BATTLEGROUND

Chapter Theme: While we must be prepared for battle by wearing the spiritual armor God has provided, we must have a commitment to unceasing prayer for the armor to be effective.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. Which of the following words best describes your prayer life: intense, intimate, lackadaisical, sporadic, incredible, joyful, quiet, nonexistent, frequent? Why?
2. Success in any kind of warfare depends heavily on communication. Do you think Satan tries to isolate us from fellow Christians during spiritual warfare? How?

Group Discovery Questions

1. Why are so-called warfare prayers directed toward Satan and his demons ineffective?
2. Why is prayer to God important in conjunction with spiritual armor? What may result from a lack of prayer?
3. What does it mean to pray at all times? What are you saying to God through your lack of prayer?
4. How does the Holy Spirit help us pray?
5. In Christ's hour of temptation in the garden of Gethsemane, how did He overcome Satan's efforts? What did Christ teach the disciples about prayer?
6. Who are we to pray for? How can we know what they need prayer for?

Personal Application Questions

1. How often do you pray? How do you pray? When you pray, how much time do you spend? Learn to cultivate an attitude of prayer throughout the day. Begin to meditate on God's Word as you study it each day. Allow God's Spirit to develop in you a spiritual sensitivity to the things that happen around you. Try to see those things as God sees them.

2. Prayer is hard work, as you well know. How often have you had great intentions to spend time in prayer but like the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane let down your guard? When are you most susceptible to neglect prayer? When or in what circumstances do you find yourself the most successful in persevering? As you begin to isolate what prevents you from praying and simply remember that God has commanded you to pray at all times, you'll begin to see your resistance to temptation and your perseverance increase.

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to reveal Himself in greater measure to you as you meditate on His character. Also ask Him to reveal to you your own sin and self-sufficiency—the very things that most often keep you from communing with Him.

Assignments

1. Read chapter 12 of *Standing Strong* and answer the questions in the corresponding study.
2. Pick your favorite prayer in the Bible and study it. What was the individual praying for? Why? What can you learn from that prayer and apply to your own prayer life?

THE COMMANDS FOR VICTORY

Chapter Theme: Our success in spiritual warfare is based on five commands that the apostle Paul issued in 1 Corinthians 16: being alert, firm, mature, strong, and loving.

Icebreakers (Choose One)

1. What kinds of activities do you participate in that require you to be alert? What are the potential dangers of not being in that state of mind during the activities?
2. In what areas of life do you habitually exercise self-discipline? Why? What might happen if you didn't?

Group Discovery Questions

1. How can you best defend yourself against Satan's surprise attacks?
2. What kinds of attacks should you be prepared for?
3. What are three possible explanations for those who claim to have cast out demons and performed signs and wonders?
4. What is the best way to protect yourself from the influence of false teachers?
5. How can you "stand firm in the faith"?
6. What must ultimately verify the authenticity of your experiences?
7. What must believers do to become more mature? Why do so many remain immature?
8. How can you obey God's command to be strong? To be loving?

Personal Application Questions

1. In the commands to be alert, firm, and mature, what is the key ingredient you must turn to before you can obey those commands? How much time and commitment are you willing to devote in doing that?

2. If an athlete must watch over his dietary, rest, and exercise habits to be successful in competition, what are the types of things you need to watch over to be successful in the spiritual realm? Take a close look at how disciplined you are in dealing with sin and committing yourself to prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers. In which areas do you need to exercise more self-discipline?

Focus on Prayer

Ask God to help you become more obedient to Him by gaining a greater appreciation of the spiritual battle raging in and around you. Ask Him to give you a greater devotion to His Word and a greater willingness to yield your life to the control of His Spirit.

Assignment

Review the assignments from the previous chapters. In what ways have you found them beneficial to your walk with Christ? If there are assignments you still need to complete, please do so. Don't forget the principles you have learned in the preceding pages—make sure they remain a part of your ongoing commitment to become more like Christ.