

Personal Illustrations

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:11-12, ESV)

There is nothing quite like a good illustration to show a truth revealed. Paul uses the illustration of a suit of armor to represent the qualities Christians should equip themselves with. How is truth like a belt? Righteousness like a breastplate? Readiness like shoes? Faith like a shield? Salvation like a helmet? The Word of God like a sword? (v11-17) Without any of these things, a Christian is not equipped to battle the forces of seduction and temptation that Satan hurls our way, nor the internal lusts Christians must temper from our own selves through discipline. As a soldier is ineffective and vulnerable without these things, so a Christian is.

Yes, this makes a great illustration for us. An illustration, such as what Paul used, represents God's truth in a personal way that we can get our fingers around tight and use in battle when necessary. An illustration is a candle by which we can better read and understand. (The word really means to bring light to.) Think of the comics page of a newspaper. Often an opinion article or a commentary can fill up an entire column or page of a paper, but all it takes is one three-celled frame of a cartoon to say the same thing in a different way. When I first desired to preach, I had hoped to find a reference book to illustrations that would help me apply scripture to all types of people, younger, older, student, retired, married, single, etc. but I had difficulty finding any volume with all of these types listed. Why was that? It seems the best illustrations, outside of scripture, are those parables we craft or find that personally reveal scriptural truths. The Word of God exists written in pages of a book, but illustrations must be personally accounted for in our lives. The Word of God is applicable in every age, but we must make effort to show how. After we understand what scripture meant to its first audience, we may take those principles and illustrate them to our generation.

Preachers and teachers must do this type of study to find illustrations. But, what of all Christians? We all read scripture, let us all search for illustrations and share them with one another. Personal stories from our lives, parables we craft as Jesus did, articles from magazines, newspapers, Web sites; All of these may greatly shed light on the truth of scripture for the understanding of ourselves and others. You are encouraged to consider this for our Bible studies and to bring them up when we discuss scripture.