

“Lessons from a Football Game”
Grow Up Series, Part 6

I want to thank you all for allowing Nikki and I to get away last weekend for a quick trip to Nashville. Thank you, Pastor Randy, for that powerful message. I always appreciate when you bless us with the Word. Last Sunday I got to do a bucket list item and see my Tennessee Titans live in their home stadium. I still can't believe I got 18th row seats for \$24. I looked up at the nosebleed seats and thought, “What, did they pay two blueberries and an empty can of coke for those seats?” Many of you already saw my game day outfit but here is a picture along with a screenshot of me cheering in the stands after a Titans touchdown. Let me just say, I did not stand out at all in my outfit. If anything, I was overshadowed. There were grinchies, Santas, nuns, Elvis', and more.

We drove 19 hours round trip and it wiped me out. But anytime I know I will be doing a long drive, I load up my phone with podcasts, sermons, and more. I do so much thinking, praying, and dreaming when I drive. I think it allows my brain to have a job (which is driving) but it distracts me enough to where I can dream and not focus on all my other daily responsibilities. So, on the drive home I was thinking about my experience in Nashville and started seeing a lot of spiritual lessons in what I encountered. So, today I have a message for you titled, “Lessons from a football game.” By the grace of God, the lessons I discovered fall perfectly in line with Ephesians 6, which is the final installment of the series we have been in. Today I want to conclude our series through the book of Ephesians. I have titled this series “Grow up” not as a condemning warning, but as a reminder that anyone has the ability to grow in the Lord at any stage of their life.

I want to walk through three lessons the Lord taught me through a football game in alignment with Ephesians 6. We are not going to read the whole chapter this morning only verses 10-20. I am going to jump right in to the first lesson so if you are taking notes, please fill in point number one:

POINT #1 – The presence of Evil is everywhere.

The opponents my Titans faced were the New Orleans Saints. Let me just say that many “saints” fans were not saints. A group of ladies came dressed up as nuns and that was funny, but many fans were just plain creepy. When I was waiting in line for the gates to open and find my seat, a few saints fans got in line behind me. One of them was a guy dressed up like half pimp and half voodoo man. It was very windy on Sunday and the stadium had gusts up to 30 miles an hour. This voodoo fan's hat flew off his head. Out of the corner of my eye I see this feather and décor covered hat rolling on the ground. I'm from Texas. I'm a good citizen. I have manners. So, I pick up the hat and hand it to the guy. He looks at me almost seductively and says, “Ha, you touched it.” I handed the hat to him and rolled my eyes. He might have been talking football and superstition, but it made me feel icky. I had to fight to snap out of it in order to enjoy the game.

Football games are supposed to be a family event. But we all know people get drunk, use inappropriate language, and some ladies came dressed for attention not for football. The bottom line is that no matter where you are in life, there will be a presence of sin and evil. We cannot be

caught off guard but be ready with a defense and capacity to resist. Lets' go to Ephesians 6 beginning at verse 10 and see what the Apostle Paul has to say on this matter:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Verse 10 says, “be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Notice that in one small verse there are three different words about strength. The word in Greek for “be strong” is *endunamoo* which means to strengthen. It is used 12 times in the Bible. Some of my favorite verses in the Bible use this word. In **Romans 4:20** when Abraham “did not waver in unbelief but *grew strong* in the Lord,” Paul used this Greek word. It is also used in **Philippians 4:13**, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me *strength*.” It was also used in **Acts 9** after Paul became a Christian. It says he kept “increasing in *strength* confounding the Jews.” It is a word that demonstrates that in the face of opposition or suffering, God can grant you supernatural strength. I wonder if Paul was thinking back to **1 Samuel 30** when David had lost everything and “strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” We don’t know how David strengthened himself. All we know is that he did something to stop focusing on the suffering and loss and instead focus on the direction of the Lord. The word in verse ten for “strength” is *kratos* and means power, force, and dominion. The word “might” in the Greek is also used in Scripture when it says “love the Lord with all your mind, heart, soul, and *strength*.” The word here shows force and the capacity or ability of someone. It is your ability to be strong when you feel weak.

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 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.

In verse 11 here Paul identifies the true enemy. The enemy is not our boss, it is not our mother-in-law, and it is not the HOA (even those they can be evil). The enemy is the devil period. This is important to know because it is easy to get distracted by circumstances rather than the one causing the circumstances. It is important because we are not fighting evil or stupid people, we are fighting against the influence the enemy has over those people. As tough as it can be sometimes, we need to look past the offense and through grace see the need. So, because the presence of evil is everywhere and because we will face bad circumstances and bad people, we need the full armor of God. When I looked up the Greek word for armor here, I discovered that “full armor” is actually one word. Paul is actually going to say this two times in this passage of Scripture. It is important that we use *every* tool the Lord gives us.

In Verse 12 Paul says that our battle is not against flesh and blood. It mirrors **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** where Paul says, “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.” Now, there are all kinds of words used here from strongholds, powers, principalities, and so forth. The presence of evil is everywhere but we must understand we are on the winning side. When it comes to principalities, we need to remember **Romans 8:38** that “neither height nor depth, nor *principalities* will be able to separate us from the love of God.” We need to remember **Ephesians 1:20** that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God *far above* all rule, power, and dominion. We need to remember **Colossians 2:15** that Jesus disarmed principalities and made the devil a public

spectacle. Point number 1 was recognizing that the presence of evil is everywhere but we must never forget the presence of God is everywhere. So, fill out point number two:

POINT #2 – The presence of God is everywhere.

One of my favorite memories at the football game was seeing my quarterback and other players bowing for a word of prayer before the game. Here is a picture from where I was sitting. Again, I was too excited and got to the stadium two hours early. As I was in the stands waiting for the game to start, I started going through the game program. It listed all the stats of players and important information regarding Nissan Stadium. I found out that Nissan Stadium has a prayer and meditation room. So, as I sat there in the stands I thought, “That’s right, it’s Sunday morning. I may not be in the house of God this morning, but His presence is everywhere.” And right there in row 18 in section 124 I prayed, I worshipped, and I welcomed the presence of God into that stadium. I said, “Lord, I pray Your presence overwhelms voodoo man and help him to see your salvation.” Take a look with me at verse 13:

13 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.

Verse 13 Paul repeats taking up the *full* armor of God. We need every tool (which will be explained in a minute) to resist the constant barrage of attacks from the enemy. Here is a very interesting truth: you are always working toward something. You are either sinning or you are obeying every moment of the day. You are either distracted by the presence of the enemy or standing in the presence of God to resist. Let me take a detour really quick. On the way home from Tennessee I listened to a thousand church leader podcasts. One of them was very interesting. The topic was the spirit of sloth. Now, when you think about sloth you think laziness, sitting on the couch doing nothing, and avoiding responsibility. But these pastors used the example of David and Bathsheba to give a different perspective. Remember in **2 Samuel 11** David looked at a woman taking a bath on a roof top. Then he commanded that she come to his palace, got her pregnant and then killed her husband. What a “man after God’s own heart” right? Notice that it says in 2 Samuel that “at the time kings go off to war, David remained at Jerusalem.” Maybe David was walking around the rooftop in Jerusalem because he was bored. He was not where he was designed to be. He was a warrior who was just sitting around. It ultimately led to his horrible sin. But these pastor on the podcast pointed something out. David was not *lazy* in his sin. He set it all up to have his servants bring Bathsheba, he plotted the sin, he devised a plan to cover up the sin, and ultimately organized a murder. None of that is lazy. The spirit of sloth is not just sitting around. The spirit of sloth is pouring all your energy into the wrong direction. It is using your strength for sin rather than obedience. So, Paul here in Ephesians is not just saying put on the full armor to stand against the enemy, he is saying put on the whole armor so that you don’t step out of the presence of God. What if putting on the armor is more about being in the presence of God than spiritual warfare. Let’s continue reading in verse 14. I am not going to go into detail about the armor of God. You have heard a hundred sermons on this. If you haven’t, study this portion this week and get some good revelation from God.

14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of

peace; 16 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. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
– Ephesians 6:10-20 NASB1995

Sometimes in we forget that Paul is sending a letter to a church here. Although the apostle Paul traveled all around the known world preaching the Gospel and planting churches, he stayed connected in fellowship with the Christian community. Fellowship and community are so important. Not only is the presence of God everywhere, but His church is everywhere. Fill out the final point in your notes:

POINT #3 – The presence of the Church is everywhere.

Now for the sad part about the Titans game and I am not talking about them losing the game. I want to show this picture of the last football game I went to. I was still living in San Diego and the Chargers were still playing there. Qualcomm Stadium had the second largest parking lot in America. The tailgating scene was incredible. So, one year when the Titans came to San Diego, I got 17 tickets and brought all my friends from church. We tailgated and BBQed for hours. My stomach hurt from laughing so much in the stands. It was one of my favorite memories of all times. But last Sunday at the game I was alone. Nikki was supposed to be there with me, but she was too sick Saturday night. I sat there in the stands and looked around. It was amazed don't get me wrong. Titans stuff was everywhere. The atmosphere was awesome. But I was alone. Even the group sitting around me was saints' fans. I didn't even have Titan strangers to high five. I kept thinking, "man this game would be 100 times better if I had me people with me." SO next time I go to a Titans game, you guys are coming with me. I don't wanna hear "I'm too old" blah haha.

Paul says in verse 18 "with all prayer and perseverance pray for the saints." He is not talking about New Orleans; he is talking about the church. Let me say something prophetically over you. Many of you have not passed the line of your breakthrough because you refuse to welcome spiritual community into your situation. You want to keep fighting it alone. Some of the very first words we hear in the Bible are "It is not good for man to be alone." I want to encourage you in this new year to stop focusing on the presence of evil. Pour all your energy and time into focusing on the presence of God and do not fight this battle on your own. Welcome more fellowship and community into your life.