

The Hilltopper



October 2021

From Pastor Mike

Someone emailed me this story recently which is an “urban legend.” An urban legend is a story that is repeated often with differing details that is assumed to be true. However, most urban legends cannot be confirmed by eyewitness accounts. These stories tend to happen to a friend of a friend but never to someone the teller of the story knows.

You may have heard this story or one similar told before.

It seems that a couple from Bakersfield, CA purchased a brand-new boat, but they were having some serious problems. No matter how hard they tried, they could not get their 22-foot boat to perform properly. It was very sluggish no matter which way they turned or how much power was applied. After about an hour, they put in at a nearby marina, hoping someone there could tell them what was wrong. A thorough check on the topside of the boat revealed that everything was in perfect working condition. The engine ran fine; the out drive went up and down; and the propeller was the correct size and pitch. Then one of the marina guys jumped in the water to check underneath. He came up choking on the water because he was laughing so hard. Under the boat, still strapped securely in place, was the trailer!

This story has been told in many different forms over the years. It is a popular legend because we like to hear stories about other's people's most embarrassing moments. But this story lends itself to a good object lesson.

When God looks underneath your life, what does he see? Are you strapped to some habit or sin that keeps you from living life as God intended? Is your life weighted down with a burden that is pulling you under?

In Hebrews 12:1 we are told, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

If you want to fly like the wind in the race God has marked out for you, please look closely at what is holding you back and by God's grace free yourself from it.

Yours in Christ.

Pastor Mike

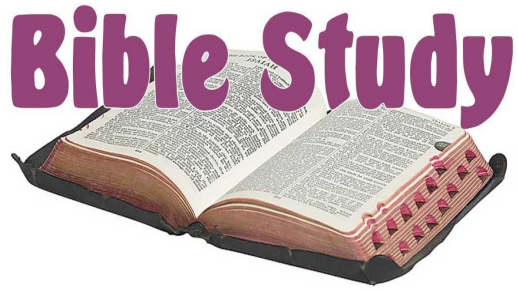
VALLEY VETERANS



What an awesome time we had on September 11th, showing our patriotism and our appreciation for the people who serve our country in the armed forces.

The Valley Veterans Rides for Heroes raised \$45,000 this year for the Boulder Crest Retreat in Bluemont, VA. They help support our combat veterans and their families who are dealing with the trauma and stress of their war experiences.





Pastor's Bible Study Begins Wednesday, October 13th

Pastor Mike will lead a 6-week in-person Bible study beginning Wednesday, October 13th.

Amy-Jill Levine's book, *'The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings'*, looks at how Jesus provided his disciples teachings for how to follow Torah, God's word; he told them parables to help them discern questions of ethics and of human nature; he offered them beatitudes for comfort and encouragement. But sometimes Jesus spoke words that followers then and now have found difficult. He instructs disciples to hate members of their own families (Luke 14:26), to function as if they were slaves (Matthew 20:27), and to sell their belongings and give to the poor (Luke 18:22). He restricts his mission (Matthew 10:6); he speaks of damnation (Matthew 8:12); he calls Jews the devil's children (John 8:44). In *The Difficult Words of Jesus*, Amy-Jill Levine shows how these difficult teachings would have sounded to the people who first heard them, how they have been understood over time, and how we might interpret them in the context of the Gospel of love and reconciliation.

This 6-week study will meet in the evening at 7:00pm. A daytime class will be offered if there is enough interest. Please contact Pastor Mike to register for the Bible study and receive a copy of the book.



The United Methodist Men still have some projects to complete before winter. Therefore, they have scheduled a workday on Saturday, October 23rd. Their primary focus will be to work on the plant beds around the church. If enough people are available to help, they will spread fresh mulch as well. Check your schedule and plan to join us for a morning of fellowship and service. If you have any questions, please see Kim Maugans or Bruce Rogers.



CHARGE CONFERENCE

2021

The New Hope Charge Conference was held on Monday, September 20, 2021 with Pastor Mike Reaves, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Dallas VanLear and Wanda Harding in attendance at the church and Samantha Brensinger present on Zoom. Also by Zoom was Reverend Victor Gomez and members of Bethel-Warren UMC, Crums and Vision of Hope churches. Reverend Gomez opened the meeting with mediation of “*Let Your Will Be Done*” from Praying the Lord’s Prayer (Jeremiah 29:11) followed by videos and recorded music of praise. Instructions were given for break-out meetings. Pastor Mike led our meeting at New Hope UMC. Lay speakers Kim Maugans and Jennifer Strother were approved. Pastor’s compensation and parsonage exclusion were approved. ThNominations and Leadership Development was presented and approved with some vacancies which will be finalized later this year.

~ Wanda Harding, Charge Conference Secretary

(Presented for you below is Lay Leader Jennifer Strothers’ report to the Charge Conference for 2021. Several questions were presented to the Lay Leaders and they were to write their reports based on these given questions.)

Lay Leader Charge Conference Report

What we learned in the past year about our church/charge?

Congregational fellowship is the heart and soul of our church. (I John 1:3) That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.

We never dreamed that in the United States we would not be gathering in person as the body of Christ. Even though it was not persecution that keep us apart, it gave us a new perspective on believers around the world that do not enjoy the freedom to worship as do we. Like them we are deeply grateful to gather when we can.

We can still do well under constraining circumstances. (Matt 19:26) But Jesus looked at them and said, “with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Covid forced us to think outside the box. Online worship, Sunday School and Bible Studies. Making better use of our outdoor space. Rethinking how we can minister to one another’s needs. New Hope managed to raise over \$30,000 to help a family purchase a wheelchair accessible van in the middle of the pandemic with all of its lockdowns and quarantines.

There’s something special about a congregation singing together. (Psalm 57.9) “I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.” The praises of God’s people are sweet. Our voices raised as one help us to see ourselves as one in Christ.

Many parents depend on childcare and children’s church during Sunday activities. (Luke 18:16) “But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” In many cases, it’s been young families with children who aren’t returning to worship until all children’s ministry is fully available. I realize some may see that as problematic, but I’m simply reporting what we’ve learned.

What is the vision of the church in a post pandemic world?

Reconnect. (Ezekial 37: 1-3) “The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I think we will become more aware as time passes that we need to reconnect. In spite of the many efforts New Hope UMC made to nurture relationships within and outside of the church during the pandemic, it has become evident that many are still feeling disconnected. An effort must be made to reach out, invite and re-engage with those who are feeling disconnected. This, I think, will take more phone calls and letters. WE must be intentional in this.

Get Ready for a New Thing! (Isaiah 43:19) “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Isaiah spoke this prophecy to a people facing release from captivity. They are words that serve us well today. Yes, we are ready and hungry for the return of the traditions we have come to love in our church, but we should also be excited about the prospect of the future of the church, we our church can look like. It’s our nature to get stuck in routines and ruts. Perhaps nothing short of a pandemic can force us out of those routines and turns. This crisis has shown us that with the creative wisdom of God, we can be resourceful and innovative. We’ve endured much and hopefully have learned much. I, for one, am excited about that New Thing at New Hope.



The following are the minutes from the **SEPTEMBER** meeting of the Church Council. The minutes are available for you to help the entire church family *Stay In The Know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - September 23, 2021

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Alicia Copeland, Nathan Kutz, Pastor Mike, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Dallas VanLear and Karen Whitmer

The meeting was called to order by chairman Dallas VanLear, with devotions and prayer by Karen Whitmer.

The minutes from the August meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report & Treasurer's Report: *(Kevin Armstrong)*

- ~ We thought that apportionments would reduce for next year, but they did not.
- ~ There has been a \$738 budget increase from what was previously approved. Increases Included: Clergy Health, Espotlee, Insurance went up slightly and the Piano Tuning costs increased. A more detailed finance report will be made next month. Kevin made a motion to adopt the new revised budget for 2022. Jennifer seconded it and the new budget was approved by all.
- ~ We have enough to pay apportionments for this month. And we're in good shape to pay our bills for the month.

Trustees: *(Pastor Mike)*

- ~ Corey Johnson and Sandy Wyrick have volunteered to paint the church hallway leading into the kitchen.
- ~ We are currently taking bids and interviewing yard mowing companies to take over the landscaping in the spring of 2022.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike)*

- ~ The PGR met on September 15th and reviewed the survey that was sent out to the church family about how to proceed with reopening of our church and our ministries. The survey results were to be expected and we have responses from people from one end of the spectrum to the other - and everything in between.
 - They reviewed ways to get the Children's Ministries reinstated. This will be the hardest part of our reopening. People are concerned about the kids not being able to be vaccinated yet. There are concerns over the wearing of masks for the kids and a number of other issues that were brought up.
- ~ Kids' Rock will restart this Sunday, September 26th during worship.
- ~ Pastor Mike will be starting a new bible study on Esther, it will tentatively run October-November. More details to come later.

Worship: *(Alicia Copeland)*

- ~ The Dunns will be performing at New Hope UMC on Sunday, November 14th during Sunday Morning Worship.

Evangelism: *(Nathan Kutz)*

- ~ All 'Welcome Back' baskets have been delivered to everyone with the exception of a few nursing homes.

Spiritual Nurture: *(Report from Samantha Brensinger)*

- ~ We are looking to do a soft restart of Kids' Rock this Sunday (September 26th), with kids that are already attending church. Once we get an idea of how the kids do in the social hall or outside we will announce the start of Kids' Rock for all who want to attend.
- ~ Samantha has been asked if we could host a Trunk or Treat this year at New Hope UMC; similar to how we did it last year - We have treat bags already made up and people drive through the church parking lot with their kids to pick up the bags.

Youth: *(Report from Bianca Brensinger)*

- ~ Bianca would like to start youth activities again. We pushed off the bowling event because of Covid-19 numbers increasing; but she feels like if we keep waiting for Covid-19 numbers to go down, then it wouldn't be until next summer before the youth can do anything again. Bianca is asking if the youth can proceed with setting a bowling date or an outside activity for the youth.

Pastor Mike thought that it would be okay for the youth to proceed with setting up an event at the bowling alley; as long as all Covid-19 protocols and procedures are followed .

United Methodist Men: *(Pastor Mike)*

- ~ During the October & November meetings, the United Methodist Women will prepare a meal for the men during their monthly meetings.
 - They discussed ideas for other fundraisers that they can have to raise money for their mission work. (Since H.O.T.S. 2021 will not happen again this year due to Covid-19 concerns.)
- ~ The UMM will work their week at the New Hope Trash Dump again starting on Monday.

United Methodist Women: *(Report from Wanda Harding)*

- ~ Two members of New Hope UMC attended the District UMW Prayer Breakfast on September 23rd at Donovan UMC in Singers Glen, VA with guest speaker, Rev. Debbie Cline.
- ~ The District UMW Annual meeting will be held at Otterbein UMC at 7:00 pm with guest speaker: Emily Bender of Church World Services.
- ~ The Circle of Hope will meet at New Hope UMC on Monday, October 4th at 7:00pm.
- ~ The Circle of Love will meet at New Hope UMC on Monday, October 11th at 7:00pm.
- ~ The Circle of Hope will provide a meal for UM Men on Thursday, October 21st at 6:30pm.
- ~ The Circle of Love will provide a meal for UM Men on Thursday, November 18th at 6:30pm.
- ~ Our Church family will be participating in the New Hope Community Center's Yard Sale and Bake Sale on Saturday October 2nd from 7:00am to 1:00pm; as benefit for Robin & Mark Craun's daughter's family, Michaela & Travis Floyd - for expenses incurred with their premature son, who is currently in Roanoke hospital. Please bring any baked goods to the Community Center early. Susan Mehler will be setting up our table.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

~ We have recently lost Henry Breeding and Alice Ward.

Lay Leader: *(report from Jennifer Strother)*

~ Will confirm if the Lay Academy is still on for October 2nd

Unfinished Business:

~ Jennifer and Alicia thanked Kevin and Jeff and others for their efforts in fixing the back tv monitor.

Dallas closed the meeting, and Pastor Mike sent us off with prayer. The meeting ended at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia Sheets
Recording Secretary

The next Church Council Meeting will be on Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 6:30pm.



Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 3rd @ 10:30am

Monday, October 4th @ 7:00pm

Wednesday, October 6th @ 6:30pm

Monday, October 11th @ 7:00pm

Thursday, October 21st @ 6:30pm

Thursday, October 28th @ 6:30pm

Sunday, October 31st @ 10:30am

Sunday, November 7th

World Communion Sunday

Circle of Hope

Post-COVID Re-entry Group

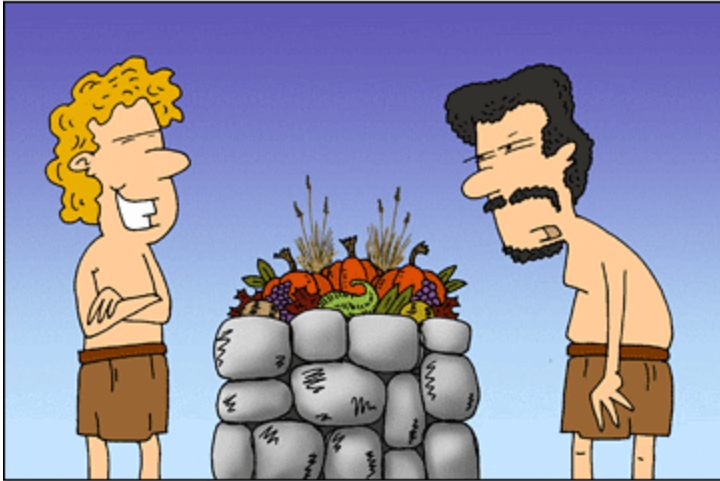
Circle of Love

United Methodist Men *(meal by the Circle of Hope)*

Church Council Meeting

All Saints Observed During Worship

Daylight Savings Time Ends - Fall Back!



(See Genesis 4:1-15) 10-31-2008

SERIOUSLY CAIN? ... YOU ARE NOW DOING SEASONAL ARRANGEMENTS?

How do leaves get from place to place?

With Autumn-Mobiles

How do you fix a broken pumpkin?

With a pumpkin patch

Why are trees very forgiving?

Because in the Fall they "Let It Go" and in the Spring they "turn over a new leaf".

Did you hear about the tree that had to take time off of work in autumn?

It was on paid leaf.


Autumn is like a second spring when every leaf is a flower.





Birthdays & Anniversaries

3 - Mike Canipe

-  Donald & Amy Michael

5 - Leon Sheets

6 - Matthew Coffman

- Mary Beth Walker Hill

7 - Ronald Booth

- Alison Coffman Markow

8 - Carl Arndtl

9 - Leigh Shaver

- Dallas VanLear

11 - Rebecca Jo Kraisser

12 - Mary Lu Lewis

- Lee VanLear

13 - Daryl Deavers

14 - John & Martha English

-  Thomas & Pat Ewers

15 - Jean Critzer

- Pat Ewers
- Philip Mabry

16 - Brett Sundeen

- Kyle Kraisser


17 - Cody Coffey

19 - Braden Herman

- Courtney Stout

23 - Cindy Deavers

- Berk Harner

-  Steve & Tonya Meier

24 - Jonathan Walker

25 - Amy Herman

26 - Sarah Barr

-  Eddie & Vinda Shaver

27 - Nancy Glass

28 - James Howdysshell

29 - Amy Michael

Loss For the Sake of Christ

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:7-14 NIV

I think if nothing else, when someone reads this passage it shows the complete sincerity of the apostle Paul. I encourage you to read the entire chapter. The whole book of Philippians is a wonderful book, and there is certainly something about this chapter that is very deep and very helpful. A few verses earlier Paul is speaking about individuals who are trying to confuse the Christians at Philippi to mix the old covenant with the new. And are clearly trying to get them to reach righteousness by practicing the law of Moses. Which he goes on to say he had previously done perfectly. And gives all of his credentials of the past.

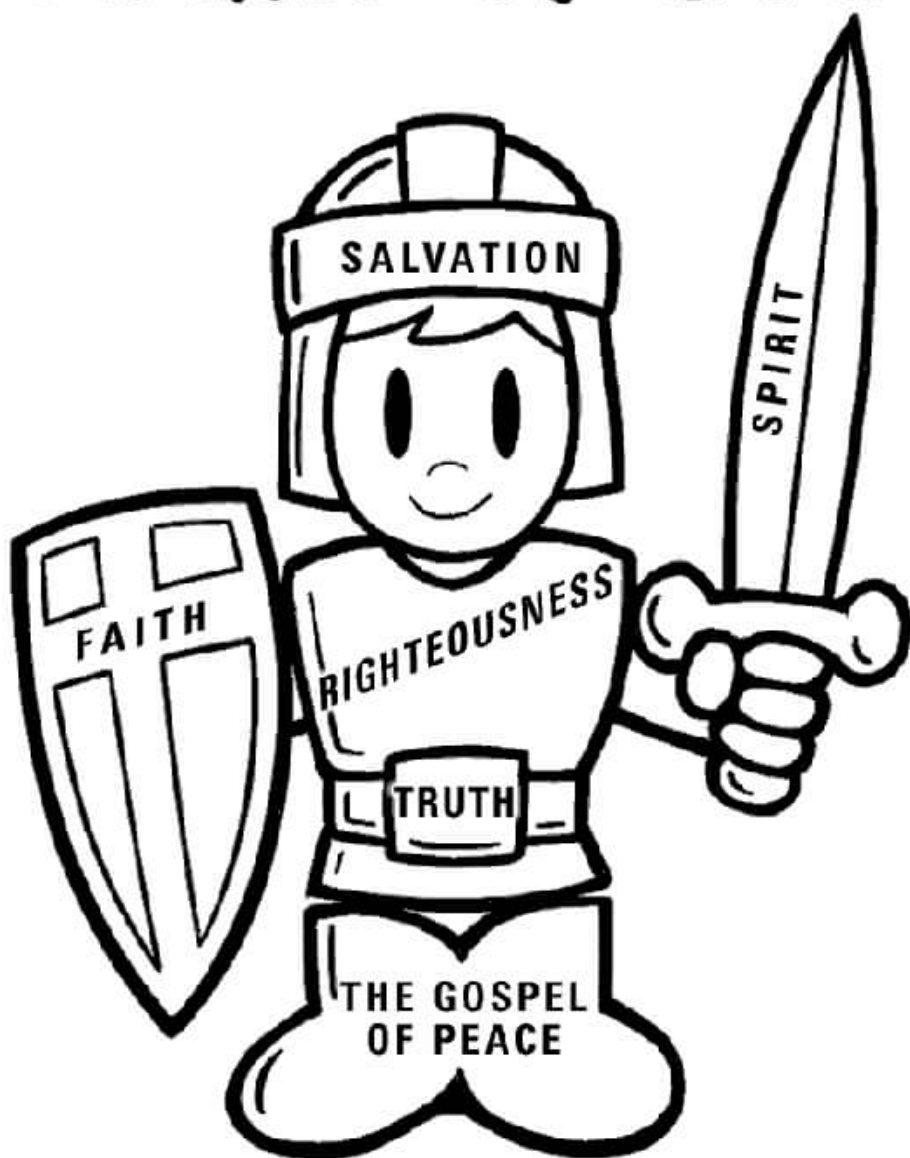
Accomplishments that no doubt very few in the entire nation of Israel were able to achieve. They were the reasons he was persecuting the church so harshly. Paul had proven that getting righteousness by your works does not lead to Christ. It gave him gains as he speaks of in verse seven. But all of his years of perfection and being a Pharisee suddenly melted away when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. Can you imagine what it must've been like realizing that you have been persecuting the very one whom you have been trying to worship through your works? His self perfection had led him to persecution of the Christian church. Even approving of the stoning of Stephen who declared Christ in a powerful way. And yet all of his gains from the first half of his life he counted as garbage, they could not compare to coming to know Christ in his resurrection and his suffering. And actually having joy in losing everything he had. He had come to see that he actually wasn't perfect, but that real righteousness comes through faith in Christ. In spite of not being perfect he still chose to press on to genuinely love Christ with all of his heart through all the loss and suffering because of the great love that Christ had for him and all of us and the suffering that he endured so that we could all have eternal life. He chose to forget everything that was behind him that had been lost because he knew they were temporal things and that everything in Christ Jesus our Lord is eternal things.

I couldn't help but think about the losses that I have experienced in life as I read this passage. I want to ask you to do the same thing please. So many things in our world and life have become so material. Our culture has influenced us to not care about immaterial things like we used to. Nothing lasts forever that we create in this life. Where we live there are lots and lots of farms. As time goes on we see farms come up for sale and they become subdivisions. Imagine all of the laughter, tears, work and sweat from families who lived on those farms for generations. Only to have it all disappear and become someone else's. The Scripture says that we do not have any enduring cities but we are looking for the one that is to come. If I may remind you if you are hurting from loss you have experienced, then whatever you lost will also be taken from the one who took it from you. And if you feel you lost something that's not tangible, you have not actually lost it. Jesus promised that whatever you lose for his sake it will be returned. The scripture also says to set our hopes on eternal things. The very one who wrote a good portion of our New Testament lost all things for the sake of Christ. Even his life in the very end, yet the peace he had with our Lord and Savior was worth more than anything he could've ever lost. If I may encourage you today, please see your losses in a different light. Number one most likely they have been replaced by something even more joyful, and if they haven't please don't lose heart it's not my promise, but the very promise of the one who bled and died for all of us that it will come back to you. Please consider Jesus Christ today either for the first time or maybe for a repeated time, and if you haven't done so truly repent of your sins, because with him there is no loss but only gain.

Kids' Corner - The Armor of God

By: Sharla Guenther

Armor of God



In biblical times soldiers would wear very heavy armor. In fact, when David went to fight the giant Goliath he couldn't wear the armor because it was too heavy. These days, soldiers don't wear armor, but you might find it interesting to know that many Christians wear armor everyday and it would be a good idea if you did too.

How can you wear armor? This armor is so neat; it's like having special powers that are invisible! When you imagine yourself putting on the armor of God each day it will help you against the devil as well as the things you shouldn't do. However, the only way this armor will work is if Jesus lives inside you.

The devil wants us to mess up and do things God doesn't want us to do. He might try to do that by getting you interested in violent video games, shows on TV or movies that show people doing things that are sinful and try to make them look like fun. You might also be pressured by other kids to do things that we know God wouldn't want us to do.

These are some of the ways that the devil tries to trick you into doing things you shouldn't (this is called sin). By putting on the armor of God, you will be able to stand up to these things and do what is right. The armor will give you God's help to fight against the bad in the world.

We are going to start with the **Belt of Truth**. We need to put this on first to be

truthful and remember the truth we know about God. We can know the truth by reading the Bible, the Spirit telling us (giving us a conscience), or learning from other people who believe in God the same as us.

Next is the **Breastplate of Righteousness**. If you play hockey you probably have something that protects the part between your neck and tummy. This piece also protects your heart. We can protect our heart by confessing any sin we have, or saying sorry to God for things we've done wrong.

Now we put on the **Sandals of Peace**. First, we need to protect our feet and go where God would want us to go. Our feet would get sore if we walked around with no shoes on, so we need to avoid places we know we shouldn't go to keep our protective sandals on. Second, we need to be peaceful with others. If there is someone you're fighting with or if you've hurt someone's feelings you need to go ask for their forgiveness, or forgive those who have wronged you. Third, if you find things are a little hectic God is the peacemaker, and if you ask He can give

you all the peace you need. The next piece of armor you don't have to wear; instead, you hold it. It's the **Shield of Faith**. Just think of what you could do with a real shield. If someone throws a snowball at you, you can lift the shield so it doesn't hit you at all. We can use the shield in the same way when bad things come our way like temptations or doubt.

Sometimes the devil will try to make us think that there isn't a God, or that he doesn't love us because we've done something wrong. We need to hold up our shield and stop these thoughts when this happens and remember that God loves us no matter what.

The **Helmet of Salvation** is the next piece. This is what we use to protect our minds. Sometimes we need to remember that we're God's children and He loves us and will help us. We also need to remember what we've read in the Bible and learned from our parents and church about God. That will help us make the right decisions.

The next piece of armor that we hold is the **Sword of the Spirit**. The sword is both the Bible and having the Spirit of God work in us. We can cut anything off that isn't good in our lives. By remembering God's word (the Bible) we will be able to tell what is good and what is bad.

Prayer is the last piece of armor. This isn't a particular piece of armor but kind of holds all our armor together. By talking to God we can do amazing things. Nothing is too big or impossible with prayer because God can do anything that He wants to. That doesn't mean that he will always answer the way we want him to, but he will answer the way He knows is best.

When we pray, we need to remember that we don't always need to ask for things. God also wants us to pray for others (for people that don't know Him, for people we don't like, for people that are sick, etc.). He also wants us to thank Him for whatever we are thankful for (being good at something, family, friends, toys, etc.) He blesses us with these things so we should thank Him.

A good way to help you remember the armor is to put it on each day when you get out of bed or before you go to school. Pray that God will help you remember that the armor is there and what it's used for so you can fight the bad with the good.



Hear Pastor Mike's Weekly Sermon by Phone

Call: 1-877-369-1437

If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper, please contact us! Call/Text: (540) 280-1860 or NewHopeUMC.Virginia@gmail.com

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