

Ephesians

Waging Peace

Lesson #13 for September 23, 2023

Scriptures: Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 4:1; 5:8; Isaiah 59:17; 52:8-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

1. In Ephesians 6:10-20, military equipment is much talked about. What place does such equipment have in the lives of Christians? In this lesson we will talk about the **strange weapons and protections that Paul outlined as being appropriate for Christians as a group as they are fighting not for war but for peace.**
2. Let us be clear, **we are engaged in the greatest “war” of all time.** Furthermore, this war is a war to the death. One side will be completely destroyed; the other side will live forever. Which side would you like to be on?
3. Moreover, we already know which side will win. The life and death of Jesus Christ gives us a clear choice: We can choose to live a life as closely as possible to the kind of life He lived, or we will die the death He died. By following the example of Jesus Christ, we place ourselves on God’s side. By following the customs of the world, we will die the death of which Satan is the preeminent cause, separated from God who is the only source of life.
4. So, why was Paul talking about individual items of armor and protection?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] By listing and describing the armor of God as individual items (belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword), Paul does not mean to depict a lonely warrior. On the contrary, in Greek, he **uses the verbs in the second person plural to address an entire army:** (1) **you (plural)** be strong (*Eph. 6:10*), (2) **you (plural)** put on the armor of God (*Eph. 6:11*), (3) so that you (plural) may be able to resist (*Eph. 6:11*), (4) for our (obviously plural here) struggle (*Eph. 6:12*), (5) you (plural) take up the complete armor (*Eph. 6:13*), (6) you (plural) stand firm. In fact, all or most of the other verbs Paul uses in addressing the church here are in the plural form. **By his use of the plural, then, Paul paints before our eyes God’s glorious army of brave soldiers fully equipped for their mission.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 171.†‡§ [So, this armor is for the church as a unified group of “soldiers.”]‡

5. Do we understand very clearly what the mission of this army is?

[BSG:] But what is this army’s mission? God’s soldiers are armored and ready to proclaim to the universe a message from Him, the message that God brings peace to the universe, to the people on earth, peace among the nations, peace in the communities, in the families, between generations and classes. But this **peace is not a peace achieved because of compromise or syncretism**, in which all the parties in the conflict secure the acceptance of a piece of their own worldview, values, or projects. Rather, God brought peace by revealing His love and justice at the cross and thus winning the battle against His accusers and enemies. When people embrace what the Lord Jesus accomplished at the cross, God joyously blesses them with

Christ's righteousness. It is this righteousness and love that brings peace between humans and God, between people, and to the entire universe. It is this peace that Christians proclaim. The history of the nations, of religions, of culture, of philosophy, of psychology, and of science has shown that there is no other way to achieve peace. Because Christians have experienced this peace themselves in their individual lives, in their families, in their communities, and in the church, they now can proclaim it to the entire humanity, indeed to **the entire universe**.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 171.††

6. Do you think of the church as a unified army?

Ephesians 6:10-20: ¹⁰ Finally, build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all the armour [*sic*] that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. ¹² For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age. ¹³ So put on God's armour [*sic*] now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.

¹⁴ So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight round your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, ¹⁵ and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace. ¹⁶ At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. ¹⁷ And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you. ¹⁸ Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people. ¹⁹ And pray also for me, that God will give me a message when I am ready to speak, so that I may speak boldly and make known the gospel's secret. ²⁰ For the sake of this gospel I am an ambassador, though now I am in prison. Pray that I may be bold in speaking about the gospel as I should.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Ephesians 6:10-20). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].‡

7. **Remember that this conflict started in heaven, and it is about the character and government of God. God is waiting for a group of people to correctly represent Him as His Son did during His life on this earth to prove to the entire universe that love can motivate better than selfishness, and that serving others with love is the only way to govern a universe at peace.**
8. We live in a very different world than the one in which Paul lived. He was describing war in terms that he understood. There were no airplanes, no armored ships, no tanks, not even any guns. So, let us try to get an idea of what war was like in Paul's day so that we can understand his call to arms.

[BSG:] **Victory in Greek and Roman warfare was dependent on the cooperation of the soldiers in a military unit and especially in their**

support for each other in the heat of battle. Individualism in battle was regarded as a characteristic of barbarian warriors, dooming them to defeat. There are important reasons to support the idea that Paul, in line with this usual military understanding, is primarily addressing the church's shared battle against evil in Ephesians 6:10–20: (1) The passage is the **climax of a letter that is all about the church.** It would be strange for Paul to conclude his letter with a picture of a lone Christian warrior doing battle against the foes of darkness; (2) At the end of the passage, Paul highlights Christian camaraderie in his call to prayer “for all the saints” (*Eph. 6:18–20, ESV*); (3) Most significant of all, earlier in the letter when Paul discusses the powers of evil, he places them over against the church, not the individual believer: “So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 3:10, ESV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, September 17.^{†‡§}

Ephesians 3:10: ... in order that at the present time, by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.—*Good News Bible.**

Ephesians 1:7-10: ⁷For by the blood [footnote: *by the blood; or by the sacrificial death*] of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, ⁸which he gave to us in such large measure!

In all his wisdom and insight ⁹God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the secret plan he had already decided to complete by means of Christ. ¹⁰**This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head.**—*Good News Bible.*†‡§*

Colossians 1:19-20: ¹⁹For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰Through the Son, then, **God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood** [footnote: *his Son's blood; or his Son's sacrificial death*] **on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.**—*Good News Bible.*†‡§*

9. This war involves the whole universe. The only rebellious spot in the universe that is left is this world. The rest of the whole universe is waiting for us to discover the truth.

10. In the book of Ephesians, Paul was emphasizing the idea of unity. So, in this greatest war of all time, the church must stand together, a united body, against the evil forces. How can we help each other in this war?

[BSG:] Paul's warning of an intense battle (*Eph. 6:13*) prepares readers for his final call to stand (his fourth, *compare Eph. 6:11, 13*) and is a detailed call to arms (*Eph. 6:14–17*). Paul describes the action of “girding up one's waist” (*compare Isa. 11:5*). Ancient, loose-fitting garments needed to be tied up around the waist before work or battle (*compare Luke 12:35, 37; Luke 17:8*). **Paul imagines the believer suiting up in armor as would a Roman legionnaire,** beginning with the leather military belt with its decorative belt

plates and buckle. From the belt hung a number of leather straps covered with metal discs, together forming an “apron” worn as a badge of rank for visual effect. It served the essential function of tying up the garments and holding other items in place.

Truth is not the believers’ own; it is a gift of God (*compare salvation in Eph. 2:8*). It is not, though, to remain abstract, a distant asset without any transforming impact on their lives. They are to “put on” God’s truth, to experience and use this divine gift. They do not so much possess God’s truth as God’s truth possesses and protects them.

Paul next urges believers to put on “**the breastplate of righteousness**” (*compare 1 Thess. 5:8*). Like the belt of truth, it is of divine origin, being part of the armor of Yahweh [*sic*] in His role as the divine warrior (*Isa. 59:17*). The body armor used by soldiers in Paul’s day was made of mail (small, intertwined iron rings), scale armor (small, overlapping scales of bronze or iron), or bands of overlapping iron fastened together. **This body armor or breastplate protected the vital organs from the blows and thrusts of the enemy. In an analogous way, believers are to experience the spiritual protection offered by God’s protective gift of righteousness.** In Ephesians, Paul associates *righteousness* with holiness, goodness, and truth (*Eph. 4:24, Eph. 5:9*), **thinking of it as the quality of treating others justly and well**, especially fellow church members.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, September 18.^{†‡§}

[BSG:] **A Roman soldier, preparing for battle, would tie on a pair of sturdy, military sandals. A multilayered sole featured rugged hobnails, helping the soldier hold his ground and “stand” (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14).** Paul explains this military footwear with language from Isaiah 52:7, which celebrates the moment when a messenger brings the news that Yahweh’s [*sic*] battle on behalf of His people is won (*Isa. 52:8–10*) and peace now reigns: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace” (*Isa. 52:7, ESV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, September 19.^{†‡§}

11. Proper battle footwear was important, especially for those who had to carry messages by hand for some distance, long before modern communication methods were available.

Isaiah 52:7-10: ⁷ How wonderful it is to see
a messenger coming across the mountains,
bringing good news, the news of peace!
He announces victory and says to Zion,
“Your God is king!”

⁸ Those who guard the city are shouting,
shouting together for joy!

They can see with their own eyes
the return of the LORD to Zion!

⁹ Break into shouts of joy,

you ruins of Jerusalem!

The LORD will rescue his city

and comfort his people.

¹⁰ **The LORD will use his holy power;**

he will save his people,

and all the world will see it.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

12. In the book of Ephesians, Paul repeatedly used various expressions talking about peace. See Ephesians 1:2; 2:14-15,17; 4:3; 6:15,23.

13. We all have some idea what it means to wage war. How does one “wage peace”?

[BSG:] **The church is to “wage peace” by employing the gospel arsenal of Christian virtues (humility, patience, forgiveness, etc.) and practices (prayer, worship).** Such acts are strategic, pointing toward God’s grand plan to unify all things in Christ (*Eph. 1:9, 10*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Tuesday, September 19.^{†§}

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] God calls upon us to put on the armour [*sic*]. We do not want Saul’s armour [*sic*], but the whole armour [*sic*] of God. Then we can go forth to the work with hearts full of Christ-like tenderness, compassion, and love.—Ellen G. White, *Australasian Union Conference Record*,^{*} July 28, 1899, par. 13.[‡]

14. What other pieces of military equipment were needed for battle in Paul’s day and do we symbolically need?

[BSG:] Paul’s *shield* is the large, rectangular shield of a Roman legionnaire. Made with wood and covered with leather, its edges curved inward to guard against attacks from the side. When soaked in water, shields were “able to quench . . . fiery darts” (*NKJV*), extinguishing arrows dipped in pitch and set on fire. Paul’s description of the “shield of faith” reflects the **Old Testament use of the shield as a symbol of God, who protects His people (*Gen. 15:1, Ps. 3:3*). To take up “the shield of faith” (*Eph. 6:16*) is to enter the cosmic battle with confidence in God, who fights on behalf of believers (*Eph. 6:10*), supplies the finest weaponry (*Eph. 6:11, 13*), and who ensures victory.**

At the same time, the Roman battle helmet was made of iron or bronze. To the bowl that protected the head were added a plate at the back to guard the neck, ear guards, a brow ridge, and hinged plates to protect the cheeks. Given the essential protection the helmet provided, “the helmet of salvation” (*Eph. 6:17*) symbolizes the present salvation believers experience in solidarity with the resurrected, ascended, and exalted Christ (*Eph. 2:6–10*). To put on “the helmet of salvation” means to reject the fear of spiritual powers so common in the time and, instead, to trust in the supreme power of Christ (*compare Eph. 1:15–23, Eph. 2:1–10*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Wednesday, September 20.^{†§}

15. All of the armor that we have talked about so far has been defensive. What military equipment was needed for the offense?

[BSG:] **The final item of armor is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17)**, referring to the Roman legionnaire’s short, two-edged sword. The usual battle tactic was to throw two javelins (not mentioned by Paul) and then draw the sword and charge, employing the short sword in a thrusting motion. The believers’ sword is “the sword of the Spirit” in that it is supplied by the Spirit, a weapon identified as “the word of God.” Paul steps forward as general and issues a call to arms, speaking promises of hope and victory from the divine Commander in Chief. It is these promises, issued in Ephesians 6:10–20, that constitute “the word of God” as the lead weapon in the battle against evil. **The “word of God,” then, refers to the broad promises of the gospel that we find in the Bible.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, September 20.^{†‡§} [How does it affect a person who receives some kind of communication from God and then speaks what he believes are God’s words to other human beings?][†]

16. For Christians, and especially Adventists who want to talk about peace, it might seem strange to be doing all this talking about military armor and battle. However, sometimes we need to stop and remind ourselves that this battle is real!
17. Think of Paul’s situation. He was in prison in Rome, condemned to death by Nero. Is it surprising that he was thinking in military terms? Paul was sure that, in the end, God’s cause will triumph; and he wanted all of God’s followers to take courage from that idea. He realized that the battles will not be easy and that the Devil is a powerful foe. Most of the ancient roads that we know about were originally built by the Romans so that if trouble broke out in some part of their empire, they could transport a lot of soldiers to that area fairly quickly. Those roads, of course, were soon being used by almost everyone who traveled. Imagine Paul with a few friends, walking along one of those roads and suddenly seeing a legion of Roman soldiers coming! What did they do? What would you do in that situation? Try to hide?
18. Paul next took his cue from the Old Testament and the story of King Jehoshaphat when his nation was being invaded by the Edomites. Before going out to war, whether literal war or spiritual war, we must arm ourselves with prayer.

[BSG:] This call to prayer can be seen as an extension of the military imagery, since calling out to God (or to the gods) in prayer was a common practice on the ancient battlefield. To cite a biblical example: following the battle exhortation of Jahaziel, Jehoshaphat leads “all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” in falling down “before the LORD, worshipping the LORD” (2 Chron. 20:18, ESV). **While prayer is not a seventh piece of armor, it is an integral part of Paul’s battle exhortation and military metaphor.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, September 21.^{†‡§}

2 Chronicles 20:18: Then [after hearing from the prophet regarding God’s plan for Judah’s victory against the invading Edomites,] King Jehoshaphat bowed low, with his face touching the ground, and all the people bowed with him and worshipped the LORD.—*Good News Bible.*†* [It was certainly not

customary for an ancient king to bow down with his face touching the ground!][‡]

19. Notice that Paul first of all prayed for the Christian church in its overall battle. But, Paul's second prayer was a request for himself. (See Ephesians 6:19.)

20. Paul reminded them that he was in prison. (See Ephesians 3:1.)

Ephesians 3:7-13: ⁷ I was made a servant of the gospel by God's special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. ⁸ I am less than the least of all God's people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles [**As a Pharisee of the Pharisees in his youth, Paul would not have had anything to do with Gentiles!**] the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ, ⁹ and of **making all people see how God's secret plan is to be put into effect. God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages, ¹⁰ in order that at the present time, by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.** ¹¹ God did this according to his eternal purpose, which he achieved through Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God's presence with all confidence. ¹³ I beg you, then, not to be discouraged because I am suffering for you; it is all for your benefit.—*Good News Bible.*^{*†‡}

21. There are several calls to prayer in the New Testament. What do you think of each of them?

Luke 18:1-8: ¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to teach them that they should always pray and never become discouraged. ² "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. ³ And there was a widow in that same town who kept coming to him and pleading for her rights, saying, 'Help me against my opponent!' ⁴ For a long time the judge refused to act, but at last he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or respect people, ⁵ yet because of all the trouble this widow is giving me, I will see to it that she gets her rights. If I don't, she will keep on coming and finally wear me out!' "

⁶ And the Lord continued, "Listen to what that corrupt judge said. ⁷ Now, will God not judge in favour [*sic*] of his own people who cry to him day and night for help? Will he be slow to help them? ⁸ I tell you, he will judge in their favour [*sic*] and do it quickly. But will the Son of Man find faith on earth when he comes?"—*Good News Bible.*^{*†‡} [That is a frightening thought!][‡]

Philippians 4:6: Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart.—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

Colossians 4:2: Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God.—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: ¹⁶ Be joyful always, ¹⁷ pray at all times, ¹⁸ be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.—*Good News Bible.*^{*}

22. Once again, we remember that “there are no atheists in foxholes.” Paul was reminding his listeners that the threat of spiritual battle against an array of supernatural enemies was dire and real. However, God promises spiritual strength and ultimate victory.

[EGW:] **An army in battle would become confused and weakened unless all worked in concert.** If the soldiers should act out their own impulsive ideas, without reference to each other’s positions and work, they would be a collection of independent atoms; they could not do the work of an organized body. **So the soldiers of Christ must act in harmony.** They alone must not be cherished. If they do this, the Lord’s people in the place of being in perfect harmony, of one mind, one purpose, and consecrated to one grand object, will find efforts fruitless, their time and capabilities wasted. Union is strength. **A few converted souls acting in harmony, acting for one grand purpose, under one head, will achieve victories at every encounter.**—Ellen G. White, *Spalding and Magan Collection** 121.1.††

23. One might wonder why Paul was calling for arming for battle when he himself was an ambassador in chains! Did Paul think that he would escape from prison and be able to lead the charge? What is the usual work of an ambassador? Paul knew that he had been fighting his whole life since his conversion on the road to Damascus for the most powerful and benevolent General in the entire universe. He did not want his friends to forget that.

24. Our world is engaged in war. However, for most of us, it seems far away. So, is it difficult or easy for us to “wage peace”? What efforts are Satan making to defeat us? What “fiery darts” are being hurled in our direction? Are other Christians around us suffering because they are wounded by the Devil’s darts?

[BSG:] Paul starts the fragment of Ephesians 6:10-17 with a triple reference to power (*Eph. 6:10*), using three different words: the verb *endunamoó*, “to empower,” and two nouns, *kratos*, “strength” or “might,” and *ischus*, “strength,” “might,” “force,” or “ability.” The apostle used the same words, all three in noun form, at the beginning of his letter (*Eph. 1:19–21*) when describing God’s greatness and power, as revealed in Christ. Now, at the end of his letter (*Ephesians 6*), Paul tells the Ephesians that this power is available to them. The apostle appeals to the theme of power because he is introducing the theme of conflict, war, fighting, and overcoming.

Unfortunately, the Christian life is closely related to struggle and overcoming. True, all religions, philosophies, sciences, literature, and history—indeed, all such narratives as evolutionism, Marxism, Nazism—perceive and describe life as a struggle, as a conflict. In fact, anyone who wants to sell a story needs to plot it on conflict and struggle. In such stories, the protagonist or hero is fighting against something or somebody: for instance, a protagonist fights a superpower, another hero is struggling to overcome a black hole, and a third hero fights an incurable disease.

But the **Christian’s struggle, Paul explains, is against the “devil’s [sic] schemes”** (*Eph. 6:11, NIV*). The war he describes “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” (*Eph. 6:12, NASB; see also Eph. 1:19–21, Eph. 2:6, Eph. 3:10*). **This spiritual battle in the “heavenly realms” has direct and crucial repercussions on our lives. We are directly involved in this war, and we must pick a side. However, in the entire epistle, Paul explains that we are not involved in this war simply because two superpowers are fighting, and we are innocent collateral victims, entangled, or caught up, in this battle against our will.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 172.^{†§} [Think of the story of Job and its impact on the entire universe!][‡]**

25. It might seem like we are fighting a battle on our own with little help. However, remember that the war began in heaven, not on this earth. It is all about God. And God came to this earth as a Human Being and lived that remarkable life which ended in His death for us.

[EGW:] Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan. The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours. **With the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption. These were the temptations that overcame Adam and Eve, and that so readily overcome us.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 116.4-117.0.^{†‡} [Try to imagine the conferences that Satan must have held with his associates almost every day to try to find a way to overcome Jesus!][‡]**

[BSG:] In his extensive work *Systematic Theology*, Norman Gulley highlights that **Christian theology has generally missed the theme of the cosmic conflict or great controversy** (see Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016], vol. 4, p. 478). While for other Christians the great controversy (the spiritual cosmic conflict between God and the evil forces of Satan) is one of the details more related to theodicy. [*sic*] **For Ellen G. White and Seventh-day Adventists, the great controversy is the overarching doctrine that integrates all the other doctrines, not only systematically but historically. For Seventh-day Adventists, the theme of the great controversy is not only a system of doctrines but a story, the story of God. It is the story of His loving act of Creation; of our rebellion against Him; of His sacrificial love for us; of His direct intervention in the history of our world through incarnation; of His death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension; of His desire and work to restore our relationship with Him; of His restoring the unity and love in humanity through the church; of His promises to put an end to the story of sin and evil; and of His promise to usher us into His eternal joy and peace. For this reason, Seventh-day Adventists**

have articulated the great controversy theme as fundamental belief 8, voted by the General Conference in 1980:

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan **regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe.** This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the global flood, as presented in the historical account of Genesis 1–11. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation.—“The Great Controversy,” [sic] available from <https://www.adventist.org/the-great-controversy>. —[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 173-174].^{†‡Ω§}

26. Another able Seventh-day Adventist scholar, Herbert E. Douglass, put it in these words:

[BSG:] **“For Seventh-day Adventists, the GCT [great controversy theme] is the core concept that brings coherence to all biblical subjects.** It transcends the age-old divisions that have fractured the Christian church for centuries. It brings peace to theological adversaries who suddenly see in a new harmony the truths that each had been vigorously arguing for. **Herein lies the uniqueness of Adventism.** That uniqueness is not some particular element of its theology, such as its sanctuary doctrine. Rather, **the distinctiveness of Adventism rests in its overall understanding of the central message of the Bible that is governed by its seminal, governing principle—the Great Controversy Theme.**”—“The Great Controversy Theme: What It Means to Adventists,” *Ministry*, December 2000, p. 5.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 174].^{†‡}

27. On a day-by-day basis, do you feel like you are in a war zone? Do you feel like you are fighting successfully for God?

28. Almost no one in the broader Christian community and certainly no one outside the Christian community understands the issues in the great controversy as Seventh-day Adventist with the help of Ellen G. White can and do. Why do you think that is? How could we explain those issues better?

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