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Wear Your Armor, Take Your Vitamins
Ephesians 6:10-17

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was perched peacefully in his cage. The next moment, he was sucked in, washed up and blown away by life. He was left, literally stunned.

It all began when Diane decided to clean the cage with the vacuum.... the phone rang, and she turned to say hello just as she heard a big ‘ssop’ and Chippie was sucked in. She gasped, put down the phone, opened the bag, and there was Chippie—still alive, but reeling.

Since the bird was covered in dust,
 she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom to hold him under running water.
 Then realizing Chippie was soaking and shivering,
 she did what any compassionate bird owner would do...
 she reached for the hair dryer and blasted him with hot air.
 Poor Chippie never knew what hit him. (In the Eye of the Storm, Max Lucado, pg. 2)

Can you relate to Chippie? If so, you’re not alone.
 One minute life can be fine, the next minute all you can see is a pink slip.
 Divorce papers. A bounced check. The policeman.
 The doctor speaking in what seems to be Greek.
 A memory that blasts in from the past.

And just like Chippie you start to feel sucked in, washed up, and blown away by life. You are left, literally stunned by life itself.

When Christians get sucked up by life,
 We call it spiritual warfare—
 It’s when you’re attacked by everything that’s wrong,
 just about the time you’re trying to do what’s right.

If it's any indication...I'd say we're trying to do something right around here.....unfortunately we are walking through tough times.....
 right now many of you are suffering in one way or another....
 job problems, physical and emotional illness, family struggles, past and present trials, cancer, legal battles, you name it we've got it going on here.

And when the tough times hit, as they always do,
 we all have a choice before us.
 To draw closer to God, or pull farther away.
 We can either draw nearer to our source of strength and power,
 or try to make it out there on our own and see what happens.
 People make both choices every moment of every day.

You already know which direction I'm going to point you.
 But do you know *why and how*?
 Let me tell you about how Jesus dealt with
 the most stressful times of his life.

Do you know about the *second worst day* of Jesus' life?
 (the first one being the crucifixion of course, and we know with what grace
 he dealt with that)
 Max Lucado recounts it in a great book, *In the Eye of the Storm*
 And did you know that all four gospels recount most of this one day?
 You can find it in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6
 It's like they really wanted us to know about this horrible day, and what
 Jesus did in response to all the stress.

It started when he heard that his *cousin and dearest friend*—
 the guy who knew his life better than anyone else—John the Baptist—
 was murdered, decapitated by Herod.
 And Jesus knew that he was probably next on the list.
 He was surely devastated and afraid.

Then his disciples came back to *him all excited* about the wonderful
 ministry they were doing in his name....
 and right behind them came 5,000 men (a crowd that could have been
 25,000 counting men, women, and children) who were tired and hungry, and
 who wanted to be healed. He was overwhelmed!

He tried to get away for just a moment of quiet by taking a boat to the other side of the lake, but the crowds followed.

So what did he do?

Instead of just getting back in the boat and rowing back to the other side, He stayed....and realized **he understood** how each of those people felt, how desperate they were....so he helped them.

But he didn't do it alone.

He looked **straight up to God**, relied on God's provision, blessed a little boys lunch box, And miraculously fed the 25,000 people with it.

Then he did what every stressed out person needs to do
When the time is right....

He left the crowds once he had turned to God, and helped as well as he could, and he went up on a mountain by **himself to pray**.

The disciples meanwhile were out in the boat once again, when a big **storm** came up on the water....

And what did Jesus do?

Refreshed from his time with God....

he just walked right out to them on the water. Right into the **waves!**

They thought it was a ghost. He told them not to be afraid,

And he invited Peter to come out and join him on the water.

Peter did, and was fine, until he looked at the waves, instead of Jesus.

When Jesus got into the boat, the waves ceased.

We can learn something from the way Jesus handled stress.

He **relied on God**—he knew he couldn't handle those crowds alone.

He saw **people as people**, not just problems.

Why? Because He knew how they felt.

He took time to **get away and pray**.

Why? Because he knew how people feel.

In our off times we so rarely take time to do anything truly good for us.

So often we eat junk, drink, watch TV, or surf the web...

But prayer promises to restore and renew us instead of bringing us down.

And Jesus got **back in the game**...went back out to the storm, after being refreshed in prayer.

The very fact that all four gospels account for this difficult day is a testimony to the fact that *Jesus knows how we feel* in hard times
And he is our role model for dealing with hard times.

But there's something more.

You know the show *Undercover Boss*?

When the CEO goes undercover to see what it feels like to be one of the underlings in the company?

Ok—Jesus did NOT come to earth to be like that.

He went way beyond that....He became *ONE OF US*.

It's what Emmanuel means—God With Us.

Hebrews 4:15 He knows our every weakness, because he himself experienced *all* of human life.

Some people *balk at this idea* that Jesus was real, that he ever got angry, or had acne, or was stressed out, or irritated.....

if Jesus was God then we should have a safe God who is...

distant and not like us, but like, God.

But do you really want a God that is cold? Or distant?

If you are reading the same Bible as I am,
that's *not the kind of God* that we've got!

We've got a God who became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth,
who was totally human, while totally divine.

And He knows how we feel when we get sucked up into the vacuum of life,
Like little Chippie the bird.

And because he knows how we feel,

He is our *role model* for handling the problems in life.

And our passage from Ephesians today is a *tool for us*.

We are after all, just like Jesus was,

In a spiritual battle between good and evil.

(remember Jesus' time with Satan in the desert)

And because Jesus wore this armor of God we should too
 We see him always wearing the *truth*—he was honest at all times.
 He loved people for who they were.
 He was honest about his need for God.

We see him wearing *righteousness*—nothing could stop him from doing the
 right thing at the right time.

We see him sharing a gospel of *peace*. Bringing peace wherever he was.
 He kept the calm in the midst of 25,000 people,
 In the midst of the raging waters.

We see him wearing a shield of *faith*—what faith it took for him to keep
 going and encourage everyone else along the way.
 To heal the sick, teach the lost, send out his followers.

We see him showing others the way of *salvation*
 in everything he said and did.

And always relying upon God's *word*, the sword of the Spirit.
 His own words are God's word.

And of course, we see him *pray*—time and again—he takes time to pray.

The truth is, the more good we try to do in this world,
 the more we might just might come up against evil.
 So we've got to be prepared and turn to the places Jesus turned, to
truth, faith, righteousness, peace, salvation, the Bible, and prayer.

But I don't know if putting on armor is as compelling an image as it was
 back in the day Ephesians was written.

Plus, I'd like to think that all these tricks of the trade from Jesus,
 Should be *preventative* measures, not just defensive weapons.
 So what if we called them *vitamins* instead of weapons?

So what if I ask you to turn to your Bibles?
 Read those words of life,
 Learn the lessons of Jesus' own life,
 And **take those vitamins**---take them every day, just like you pop your
 vitamin C to prevent colds, or your calcium to prevent broken bones?

I just went to the Dr. and found out that I'm **vitamin deficient** in a few areas,
 so I'm taking supplements and shots...so what if I ask you to take stock....

Little lacking in the **truth** department?
 Ask God to help you get back on the straight and narrow.

Need to do more of the **right thing** at the right time?
 Practice taking some of that vitamin, read what Jesus did and would do.

What about **faith**? Find it waning? Read the psalms, the gospels...
 Study the life of Jesus, and know that every Bible hero had doubts.

What about being a **peacemaker**?
 Look up peace in your Bible concordance and find those verses.

Behind in your **Bible** vitamin?
 Start with just 10 minutes of reading a day.
 Same with **prayer**?
 Start while driving your car, or by turning off the news at night before bed.

Where are you vitamin deficient? What could you use a little more of?

We need **these vitamins** more than anything else we could possibly
 Put into our bodies for our health or sanity.
 These are the things that help everything else work well!

And these are the very things that **kept our Lord and Savior going** under
 times of stress and strain....on his good and bad days.

These are the things that can keep us going....
 When like little Chippie the bird, we get sucked in, washed up, and blown
 away by life itself.
 May we turn to the **Way, the Truth, and the Life** when Life comes crashing
 in, Amen.