

# The Belt of Truth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Hi, my name is Mitch Sefton. I'm the youth pastor here at the First Christian Church, and I wanted to say that I'm excited to have a chance to just talk to you coming into week three in our sermon series called Stand, talking about the armor of God.

I just want to take a moment to give you a quick update about the things that are going on in our youth ministry and just how excited we are for the completion of the youth room. For those of you that don't know, we have had many, many kids coming on Wednesday nights. We have up to 65 or 70 kids last year, and it got to the point where we were just busting at the seams. We had so many people that we had to have people standing outside at times, and it was just, it was an amazing, wonderful problem to have. But we went ahead and we talked to our leadership team just to kind of come up with an action plan of what we're going to do looking into the future. And I just want to say how much I appreciate our eldership and just the way that they give such resounding support to our youth in the youth center remodel that we're currently doing. We're finishing that up to where we're going to be able to go from about 65 students uncomfortably to where we're going to be able to hold about 110 to 120 students comfortably. See, this has been a huge blessing for not only myself as the youth pastor, but also for our youth leaders and the students in our youth ministry.

I'm really excited about what this is going to be able to offer our kids here at the First Christian Church. I'm really excited about what God is doing in our youth ministry. And I just want to say thank you for all of the prayers and support that you give our students in our youth ministry. You see, it's an honor to be such a small part of just the relationship that our students are developing with Jesus. I don't get a chance to do this too often. So when I do get a chance, I just want to take an opportunity to kind of give you guys an update about what's going on in our junior high and our senior high ministry. But I'm going to ask you to do me a favor because this past week we had our youth group kickoff and we also had our very first Wednesday night evening here at the church. And I just want to give you about 15 to 20 seconds. And I'm just going to ask you while you're sitting there right there in the comfort of your home or listening to it in the car or wherever you're taking the moment to do so, if you would just take about 15 to 20 seconds and just lift up our youth ministry in prayer. We know that we believe in the power of prayer here at the First Christian Church and we are so excited about what's going on with our youth. And I'm just going to ask you to do that if you would please. And then I'm going to pray for us, pray over our youth together so that we can do that together. And then we're going to dive into our message for the day.

God, I thank you for the opportunity just to be able to serve the students in our church and in our community. I thank you for the opportunity just to be able to have a place where they can come that's a safe place for them to learn about you and your love and Jesus being their Savior.

[ 2 : 5 0 ] And Father, I just pray your richest blessings over our youth ministry for this upcoming school year. And I ask you, Father, just to be able to minister to our kids in a way that is powerful and meaningful. And I ask you to just be with our youth leaders and just to be able to pour into them in that aspect as well. And I pray, Lord, that you can be glorified through the things that are being done here at the First Christian Church. We thank you for Jesus and all that he is in his precious and holy name. Amen. You see, one of my favorite parts about playing or watching the game of baseball is the chess match that happens within the game. You see, about 70 pounds ago, I had the opportunity to have a pretty successful baseball career and the blessing of getting to coach some of the best players that have ever gone through this particular area. You see, baseball has always been a huge passion of mine. But the reason that I love it so much is because someone that is not super gifted physically can still be successful at the game that I grew to love. You see, I can probably tell you, I was never able to be the greatest athlete, but what I lacked in athleticism, I made up for in attitude and effort. You see, no one was going to outwork me in practice and no one was

going to care more about the outcome of the game than what I did when I put myself on the field. You see, I put myself into every ground ball, every single pitch, every at-bat, and then every coaching opportunity.

At the end of one of my seasons at the University of Indianapolis, I was sitting in my individual player meeting with Coach Gary Vought, and Coach Vought was one of the best baseball minds that I've ever been around. He has forgotten more about the game than most people will ever know, to be honest with you.

I learned so much about baseball just being around him. Coach, at the end of the year, would always sit down with us individually and have this meeting just to kind of talk about this season. And in one year, I sat across the table from him, and he looks at me, and he says, Mitch, I really wish I could take your heart for the game and put it into some of my athletes.

I really didn't know what I should do with that particular piece of information. I didn't know if I should take it as a compliment because he's talking about my heart for the game or for the fact that he has just insulted me because I'm not one of his good athletes. You see, baseball is a game where you need to have a game plan, a plan of attack. You need to be able to take your opponents and understand their strengths and their weaknesses. Which hitters can and can't hit the curveball?

Where on the field do we want to position our players to know because of the tendencies of where this particular player hits? Or the tendencies of the opposing pitcher? Do they start every at-bat with a first-pitch fastball? Do they tip their pitches by something that they're doing on the mound?

[ 5 : 26 ] Can we steal bases on this catcher? Can we bunt because this third baseman doesn't field the bunt very well? There are so many things that go into it that I love just the mental aspect of the game. You see, from time to time, I could pretty much walk out to the day, out and have my dad go out and hit baseballs with me or hit in the front yard or whatever it is. And I've had that throughout my entire life. I've had someone to learn from, which allowed me to help create some sort of a game plan on my baseball career. But there was a few lessons that always stuck out with me when it came to my dad being my coach that he always kind of just held on to. One of which was that you have to be a good man much longer than you have to be a good baseball player. And that's something that stuck with me. And I value that particular thought so much. And I've used it with my players.

And the second one comes from a man by the name of Leo DeRocher. Leo was known for some pretty good quotes, such as, I believe in the rules. Sure I do. If there weren't any rules, how could you break them? And then another one, he said, I did say that you can't be a nice guy and win. I said that if you are playing, if I was playing third base and my mother was rounding third with the winning run, I'd trip her up. But the one that we're going to focus on today is this. Baseball is a lot like church. Many people go, but few understand. You see, this week we're going to be continuing our series called Stand. We're going to be camping out in the book of Ephesians chapter 6. And this week, we are going to be focusing on the first part of the armor of God. God gave us this particular book in this particular analogy to help us understand that we need a battle plan. So if you would go ahead and bookmark that spot in your Bible, and we're going to get to it in just a few minutes.

Last week, Pastor Ray gave us the picture of the battle plan of Satan and what he does against us. He talked to us about the enemy and the ABCs of Satan's battle plan. Our enemy being the world, being our personal flesh, and then being the devil or Satan himself. He also spoke about Satan's army being the A, and that he is fighting for our souls. His battle plan is laid out in John 10 10.

The thief comes to only steal and to kill and to destroy. You see, Satan's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy anything in our lives that will draw us closer to God. And then it comes to the C portion of the ABCs, and that is the character of Satan. If you didn't get a chance to hear that message, I really, really encourage you to go back and listen to that one and the first week, and that way you can get caught up in what we're talking about here, just laying the groundwork of what we're going to be talking about as we continue to teach from Ephesians about the full armor of God.

You see, Paul being the author of the book of Ephesians would have written this book from prison and would have had a daily interaction with Roman guards, using this illustration as part of the battle plan used by believers to fight the schemes of Satan. Paul also knew that this would be something that those who would read this letter could also understand because the Roman soldiers were present in their culture. We're in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10 through 17, and it says, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but

against the rulers and the authorities, and against the powers of the dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything to stand, stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes to the gospel of peace. In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

[ 9 : 41 ] And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me that whenever I speak words may be given to given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. I see I love the beginning of verse 18 where Paul is asking for prayer. And I know that this is also the desire of mine as I have been, have the privilege of preaching this week. You see, our desire is always to stand on the truth of God's word. Before we go any further in the message, I'm just going to ask you to once again take a moment just to pray with me. God, thank you for the opportunity just to dive into your holy scriptures. And I pray right now, Father, that these are your words that are spoken and spoken fearlessly just as scripture says in your precious and holy name. Amen. You see, just like a coach may have a game plan in baseball like what we talked about earlier, God gives us a game plan in life. It is like we're being told what pitch is coming before the pitcher ever releases the ball.

Scripture is the ultimate cheat code. God gives us all of the battle plans of the enemy and we just need to know how to follow them. This may be redundant as it may seem like what we would talk about in Sunday school, but the final answer in this particular passage is Jesus. You see, last school year in youth ministry, we tackled a lot of the different topics, a lot of different topics, but one of my all-time favorites that I've had the privilege of teaching on and also that I got the privilege of learning about as I studied to teach to our students was all of the I am statements from Jesus in scripture. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the true vine. And then the one that we're going to hold on to today is I am the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the truth. When Jesus is stating that he is the truth, we have to understand that when scripture is taking, when scripture is talking about the belt of truth being wrapped around our bodies to go into battle, that we are wrapping ourselves in the truth of Jesus, the Son of God, Most High, that died on a cross for our sins to be forgiven. That is what we are truly wrapping around ourselves as a support. Jesus is what is holding everything together. You see, the belt would have been the first part of the armor that would have been put on. We wrap it around ourselves, the belt of truth, which means that we wrap ourselves in the love of Christ himself and the love of Jesus. Jesus is truth. And the belt of truth is what is holding everything together for a soldier, just like Jesus is what is holding everything together for us.

You see, the belt of truth also, excuse me, the belt of truth is what prepares one to be ready for action. It allows us to have the support of the Christ and to hold on to whatever we need to hold on to for him to be able to help us through these moments. You see, we choose scripture and scripture teaches us. Scripture tells us in John 14, 6, I am the way, just like what it says in these I am statements. I am the way, the truth. That's the one I want you to hold on to, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. These are not my thoughts, but those of God, his kingdom, his rules. When we say with our mouths, Lord, Lord, we are saying that we love and accept his entire book, not just the parts that we want to cherry pick because it makes us feel all warm and fuzzy, or it reassures us of all of our things and all of our opinions and all of our thoughts. You see, opinions are something that we all have, but that doesn't make them right.

[ 13 : 46 ] I heard the saying one time, opinions are like armpits. Everybody's got them and they all stink. But the best part of all of this, however, is that all of us are invited and he is willing to prepare a seat at the table just for you and just for me. It doesn't matter if you were born in the church or if you were born in the streets, if you have a high paying job or if you don't have a job at all, if you have lived a picture-perfect life according to the world, or if you have had your fair share of bouts with sin. Jesus is for you. The truth is for you. He is asking you to wrap yourself in him, the one who loves you unconditionally, even after what you did last night, what you did last week, or what you're going to do tomorrow. Just like last week, Pastor Ray talked about the world being our enemy. The enemy is in our face all the time telling us what we have to believe and what we must accept to be

inclusive to everyone. You see, this book is written for everyone, but not everyone is going to take it as the truth. You see, Satan whispers lies to use and to begin to help us try to believe him. We have to wrap ourselves in the spirit of truth to be able to fight off these attacks.

These happen to us in all sorts of fashion. You see, Satan has taken it upon himself to try to make you question the true Word of God. He wants you to question yourself. Satan says, you're not good enough.

You're not pretty or handsome enough. You can't do anything as well as another person. They have a nicer home than you, or they have a nicer car than you, or they have nicer clothes than you, but Scripture says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made and are a true image bearer of God. You see, when we listen to the father of lies, it will absolutely ruin us, which is exactly where Satan wants you. He comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. Satan says, what you have done is way too bad for salvation, and is Christ really for you? It is great for all those other church people, but I don't think Jesus would do that for you, would he? And he just whispers, and he gets in your ear, and he gets in your head, you're too bad.

You're not good enough. You can't be forgiven for all that you've done. And those are all just lies. Jesus died for each and every one of us. He has already paid the price for your sins on the cross. You see, Satan wants to take as many people to hell with him as he possibly can. He will do anything by planning lies and division among our churches, among our families, among the body of Christ. We have to be vigilant. We have to be prepared on how to battle this very formidable adversary. However, once he loses one of us to the light of Christ, he does not give up. His battle plan will change from keeping you from Christ to trying to make you the most ineffective follower of Christ that you can be. Resist the ways of the world and hold strong to the word of God as the true truth. But Jesus comes as the author of all truth and says, I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you. I hate the idea that I have friends and loved ones that will never say yes to Jesus. When you go back into the scripture and read that no one comes to the Father except through me, this is a pretty clear expectation of it all. But Mitch, my friend is a really good person. But do they love Jesus? But Mitch, my aunt has gone to church since she was just a kid, and she's been in the pew every Sunday her whole life.

[ 17 : 44 ] But does she love Jesus? But Mitch, my grandma gave so much money to help build this beautiful building that we all get a chance to worship in. But does she love Jesus? Truth is truth is truth, and Jesus is truth. And if you don't know him, you cannot know the Father in heaven. No one comes to the Father except through me, is what scripture says. As we continue to dive into this topic of the belt of truth, it is important to understand the cultural relevance to all of this as we begin to study what Paul is teaching in Ephesians 6. You see, the belt was designed to hold everything together.

It was a support for all that was needed to be able to be successful to defend and protect yourself as a soldier. You see, the belt would have had straps of leather with small brass plates that would have hung down the front side of your torso, and it would have protected your abdomen, and your groin area. You see, this would have been the first piece of protection that a soldier would have put on when getting ready for battle. The belt of the soldier protected some of the most vulnerable areas of their body. This has to be part of our battle plan against the schemes of Satan.

He is going to attack where you are the weakest. He's going to attack your most vulnerable areas of life. What do you need to do to protect yourself against these schemes?

What are your stumbling blocks in life that make you vulnerable in your walk with Christ? Is it your friends? Is it your family? Is it your job? Is it your desire for things?

Your pride? Your lustful desires? Your desire to please people? And the list can go on and on and on.

[ 19 : 42 ] Where do you have the most trouble standing firm and putting on the belt of truth and wrapping yourself in the support that Jesus gives us? You see, the belt of the Roman soldier would not just be of value to protect. The belt would also be a place to hang the sheath for his sword.

Something else that was interesting that I found about the Roman soldier is that the Roman soldier, even on the day that he did not have to put on the full armor to protect himself, he would always put on the belt. The belt would always go around him before he would leave his home to go get ready for the day, which tells us that we are to always wrap ourselves in the truth of Jesus. And we are to have a daily relationship with him. You see, being that baseball kid, we went countless nights at the ballpark.

And to go along with that, my dad served on the baseball board for many years. So I was kind of one of just this ballpark kids that I would go with the first pitch of the first game and I wouldn't leave until the lights would turn off. And in that time, it was not always a night where I would have a ballgame. And I would just be out there hanging out with friends and doing fun things and playing cupball, for those of you that might remember that, or playing kickball on a diamond that maybe was not being used, or just playing tag in the outfield. And that's where we bring ourselves to this story. It was at North Park.

And I can take you almost to the exact location where this particular event happened. And one thing that I think it's really important that you know is that you never mess with a baseball player's hat. It's just one of those unwritten rules of the game. And that needs to be, and if it is not a written rule, if it should be a written rule, to be honest with you, but if it is not, it definitely should be one of those unwritten rules that you just don't mess with a baseball player's hat.

Well, on that particular night, I had a friend of mine that we had decided we were going to try to mess with each other a little bit. We were just playing around. We were playing tag, having some fun. And at first, it was fun. But then it continued.

[ 21 : 42 ] And let's just say that it did not end well for this other young man. You see, he took my hat once, and it's one of those that you kind of joke around, you play around, and you give the hat back, and then it's done.

Well, in this particular situation, it was something that continued repeatedly, and I had just got fed up. And I will say that I could take you to the exact location at North Park where I had my first and last fight.

And see, what I did was, I can guarantee you, I was ready. Because what happens is, you don't take a kid's hat. And I'm going to be honest with you, I wasn't the fastest guy, as you could probably tell by my body style. I was not the quickest guy, but like I said, no one could beat me in my effort. And so I finally caught this kid. He was faster than me, but I finally caught him. And I got him down, and I'm on top of him, just throwing haymaker after haymaker, one after another, UFC style, in the middle of the outfield of North Park.

You see, what happened was, and this is what I think about, that when you are ready to gird up your loins, which basically means that you're ready to get yourself ready for battle. I can just think maybe I was pulling up my sleeves, or maybe I was pulling up my pants, and I was just ready to go.

[ 22 : 47 ] But I want to tell you, I don't encourage this. I don't encourage this type of behavior. So if you're sitting there listening, please know, I'm not telling you to go out and get in fights because someone took your hat. That is not what I'm telling you.

But what I want you to know is I want you to think about the visual of somebody that's getting ready to go and getting ready to just throw down, and they're getting ready to have that fight. They're girding up their loins, and they're getting ready.

But that's what Scripture talks about. When it talks about girding up your loins, it means you're getting ready to do some sort of physical labor or some sort of battle. And see, back then, both men and women would have worn these long, flowing robes that would allow them to have a breeziness that would be cool as the air would flow through them.

But the extra fabric would get in the way when they needed to do some sort of physical labor or to fight. And see, this is where that term to gird up your loins comes from.

This was done in preparation for battle or any kind of physical activity. And what you could do is you would take a look at the picture that you're going to see on the screen. Take a look at this picture, and it's going to kind of walk you through what it looks like to gird up your loins.

[ 23 : 50 ] So what you would do is you would gather all of the extra fabric and hold it up above your knees. This would give you the mobility. And then what you would do is you would gather all of that extra material in the front of your body.

It would cause you to have a snug on the backside. So now what you've done is you've pulled it tight against your backside. Once it is all snug, you would put the extra material through your legs to your backside, and now it's wrapped around you, kind of like what you would have if you were wearing a diaper.

Then you would gather all the material in the back, you'd wrap it back around the outside of your legs, and then you would tie it together in the front. And now you're able to have the mobility that you need to be able to ward off a physical attack or be able to do some sort of physical activity.

And this is just a picture of what you need to do to be able to be prepared to defend ourselves against the evil one. And when they talk about this term, girding up your loins, that is exactly what they mean.

That means you're ready to go. You're ready to take care of the business that you need to take care of. You see, like I said, I don't encourage it, but I can just imagine myself as this nine-year-old kid that's getting ready to have his first and what would be his last fight, because I'm pretty sure word on the street got around of what kind of a fighter I was, which was probably not very good, but this kid was pretty small compared to me.

[ 25 : 08 ] And so anyway, but you think about just getting ready, and we're going to take care of this, and I got my hat back. But we have to continue to fight like that kid that took your hat when it comes to standing on the truth of Jesus.

And he has already claimed victory for you and for me. When we say yes to Jesus, we are saying yes to victory. We don't have to be the best player. We don't have to be perfect.

We don't have to rely on ourselves. He has already claimed victory for us. But you have to do it for yourself as well. You have to say yes to him.

You have to be willing to believe the truth. It can't be because of anyone else. You see, one day we're going to be standing there on Judgment Day, and we're not going to be standing there next to Grandma.

We're not going to be standing there next to our husband or our wife. We're not going to be standing there next to our children because they have ushered us into heaven. No, we have to be accountable for ourselves. And God is going to ask you one day, what did you do with my son?

[ 26 : 13 ] You see, you can't rely on your neighbor. You can't rely on your pastor. You can't rely on your friend. You personally are going to be standing for the creator of the world to be accountable with what you did with Christ, the truth.

But until then, God is calling us to gird up our loins, wrap ourselves in the belt of truth, and get ready to ward off the schemes of the evil one. Church, it is time that we do just as what it says by Chip Ingram.

He says, we as believers in Christ, we do not fight for victory. We fight from victory. The battle has already been won.

Just like last week, Pastor Ray taught about the battle plan of the enemy. And this week, we get a chance to see the beginning of the battle plan of the kingdom of God. The difference in these two plans, the story has already been written.

We win. Because Jesus already won. Pray with me. God, I thank you for your holy message. God, I thank you for the truth of your holy word.

[ 27 : 26 ] I thank you for just the picture of the armor of God and what it does to help us understand what it means to truly get ready to be able to defend and protect and to wrap oneself in truth.

Father, we thank you for Jesus and what he's done for us. Thank you for your grace and your mercy and your precious and most holy name. Amen. Have a great week, church.