

## Weekly Newsletter: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### Reflection: Prepared for action

By Lorna Ferguson

*"Therefore put on the full armour 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 then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist..." (Ephesians 6:13-14)*

If you come into my house, you will notice a large backpack sitting in my hall. This is my earthquake preparedness kit, a common item in a Japanese home. It contains items such as bottled water, packet foods, a mobile battery, towel, torch and a small first aid kit. If an earthquake strikes and I need to evacuate, I can grab the backpack as I leave and have sufficient emergency supplies to last a few days.



The Bible talks in various places about the need to be prepared to take action. One phrase in particular is used, although it is not apparent in our modern English translations: to 'gird your loins'. We see this for example in Jeremiah 1:17 – "Get yourself ready"; in Job 38:3 – "Brace yourself"; in Exodus 12:11 – "with your cloak tucked into your belt"; and in Luke 12:36 and 37 – "Be dressed ready for service". In the original Greek or Hebrew, all of these verses talk about 'girding your loins'. In Biblical times, people wore long garments or tunics which could easily get in the way if they needed to move quickly, do manual labour or engage in a battle. So, in order to get ready, people would 'gird their loins' – that is, pull up the loose ends of the garment and tuck them into a belt. Then they were prepared for action.

Another place we find the phrase 'girded loins' is in Ephesians 6:14 where Paul describes the armour God gives us so that we can stand our ground in the spiritual battle we face. The NIV translation is "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist", but the original Greek is more like, "Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth". The belt is not actually a piece of the armour as such, but rather essential preparation for wearing the armour. Soldiers would not only tuck the ends of their tunic into the belt but also use it to help keep their sword and breastplate in place. If a soldier's loins were not girded properly, then everything might come undone and the armour would not be much use in the battle.

Paul tells us here that the belt we use to gird our loins in the spiritual battle is the truth. What is meant by truth? Firstly, Paul is referring to the objective truth of the gospel, knowing God and his word. Earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul talked about the "message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (1:13). Knowing this truth, and understanding it in an increasingly deep way, is an essential part of being prepared. It is

our belt, helping hold everything else together. When David had cancer, the verses in Ephesians about the spiritual battle and God's armour was one of my favourite passages. Reminding myself each day of the truth that I knew about God, that he was loving, that he was in control and working his purposes out was one of the things which helped me to remain standing.

However, objective knowledge of the truth is not enough. We must also be soaked in the truth so that it becomes a very part of us. God's truth is not just something to believe, we also need to live it out. As James writes in his letter, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22). Sadly, we hear too often of people, even pastors and Christian leaders, who knew the truth and were even able to preach it, but who were not living it out themselves and so came undone in face of the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6:11).

To be prepared for the spiritual battle, we need to ensure that our loins are girded with truth. Do we have our belts firmly fastened? This is a question it is good to reflect on with God regularly. Are there areas where we need to grow in our understanding of God's truth? Are there any areas in our lives where we are not actually living out what we know to be true? Then we can be prepared for action.

## Pastoral Care Team Update

Due to a variety of factors, the pastoral care team has temporarily been disbanded so that we can rethink how best to look after the needs of church members. This is partly as a result of changes on the team over the last twelve months. If any pastoral care needs arise in the weeks ahead, please contact your home group leaders, or, if you are not actively involved in a home group, please speak to one of the elders. If the need is particularly sensitive, you can get in touch with Joe directly.

## Ladies Breakfast – this Saturday!

Our next **Ladies Breakfast** will be this Saturday (2<sup>nd</sup> March) from 9.30 to 11am. Our speaker will be Amy Wicks (Associate Pastor for Women and Pastoral Care from St Silas in Glasgow) and it promises to be a great morning. Breakfast will be provided and we're asking everyone to bring along a couple of pounds as a contribution towards breakfast.

We need an idea of numbers so please complete this [form](#) by **Thursday** this week or email [Liz@holyroode-vangelical.org](mailto:Liz@holyroode-vangelical.org) to let us know you're coming. If you have any questions, contact Liz and please invite other women along, it's a great way to share fellowship together.

## Holyrood Youth – First Fridays

Our youth are meeting on the first Friday of each month in the lead up to the summer. Here are three dates to save if you're between the ages of 12 and 18!

- 1 March: Mario Kart Tournament at the church
- 3 May: Treasure Hunt - leaving from the church
- 7 June: Beach night (location TBC) – games, bonfire and marshmallows

The first Friday in April falls in the school holidays so they won't be meeting then. They'll each be at **7pm** unless you hear otherwise and contact Joe or Andy if you have any questions.

## CARE's Protect Life Tour



On **Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> March** at 7.30pm, we're hosting CARE's Protect Life event in Edinburgh. The new assisted suicide legislation will soon be debated at Holyrood. At this event we will consider a theological and medical response and provide tips on political engagement. Tea and coffee will be served afterwards and everyone is warmly invited to attend.

## Children and Youth Discipleship Workshop at HEC

We all long to see our children and young people grow in their faith. What does it look like for us as a church family to disciple and evangelise our children and youth well? What are the spiritual needs of children and youth? These are questions that we need to keep asking as parents, Sunday Club leaders, and church members.

On **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March** (from 9.30am – 12pm) David Kunzi, the UK Director of the International ministry *Word of Life*, is going to do a workshop at HEC. There will be two sessions with a coffee break and Q&A after. This event will help us refine our vision for youth discipleship both as individual families and as a congregation. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, volunteer with children's ministry, or just a member of the church family, please feel welcome to attend. If childcare is an issue for the morning, please let Liz know.

## Church Calendar

- Tuesday:
  - Men's Discipleship at 6.30am on Zoom
  - Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm in the church
  - Women's Bible Study at 7pm on Zoom
- Wednesday: Prayer meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday: Men's Discipleship at 11am in person
- Friday: Youth 'First Fridays' at 7pm in the church
- Saturday: Ladies' Breakfast from 9.30-11am
- Sunday:
  - Communion Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
  - Equip at 6pm (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
- Monday:
  - Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
  - Warm Space from 12noon - 3pm



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