

Feature Article: DC665

## THE COVERING: GOD'S PLAN TO PROTECT YOU FROM EVIL

further discussion between  
Hank Hanegraaff and Lee Strobel

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### SYNOPSIS

*The Covering: God's Plan to Protect You from Evil* (W Publishing Group, 2002) is Hank Hanegraaff's much anticipated sequel to his best-selling book, *The Prayer of Jesus* (W Publishing Group, 2001). During the week of the one-year anniversary of the attacks of 9/11, Lee Strobel interviewed Hank on the *Bible Answer Man* broadcast (12 and 13 September). Having previously brought Hank and Lee's dynamic discussion of *The Prayer of Jesus* to JOURNAL readers (vol. 24, no. 2), we now bring an adapted and modified version of their enlightening exchange on *The Covering*.

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**Lee Strobel:** After having written *The Prayer of Jesus*, what prompted you to write this new book, *The Covering*?

**Hank Hanegraaff:** The last petition of the Lord's Prayer is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).<sup>1</sup> Whenever I pray that prayer, I'm immediately reminded to put on the full armor of God because that is the only way we can be delivered from the power of the Evil One. Without the full armor of God, we are simply pawns in a devil's game. With it, we are invincible in the invisible war. The frustration I had — and you and I talked about this when I was writing *The Prayer of Jesus* — was I didn't have time or space to fully flesh out the full armor of God. So I'm delighted to have the opportunity to fulfill that part of the vision in writing the sequel.

**L.S.:** Talk about the covering — God's plan to protect you from evil and to give you supernatural protection in this invisible war. Do you think that most Christians really live as if they're involved in an invisible war?

**H.H.:** No, I think most people probably don't need the full armor of God because they're not engaged in the invisible war. Most people don't stand for truth and righteousness, so they're perfectly "protected" by putting on Saran Wrap. They don't even recognize that there's a war going on. It's analogous to what we were as a nation prior to September 11 a year ago, and to the war on terrorism. The terrorist threat was just as great, but we lived as though there were no threat at all. As Christians, we are engaged in a war. We have an enemy who wants to totally marginalize us, and so we need to put on the full armor of God so we can be victorious in this invisible war. The problem is most of us have this idea of spiritual warfare that comes right out of the pop culture. It's driven by the entertainment industry. It comes from *The Exorcist* rather than from Ephesians.

**L.S.:** There are a lot of books on spiritual warfare. I think there are about 500 books on that topic on *Amazon.com*. One scholar said, "At no time in the history of the church has more been written about the

topic of spiritual warfare than in the past decade.” What makes your book different? Why write *The Covering* in light of all these other books already out there?

**H.H.:** I’m asking people to make a paradigm shift from seeing spiritual warfare from an exorcism and deliverance motif to seeing spiritual warfare from the perspective of spiritual disciplines and discipleship. Ultimately, we are called to engage in a war, but we want to make sure we’re in the right war, and the way we win the war is not through deliverance. I mean, that’s what the pop culture tells us: “You have the demon of lust? Well, let’s exorcise that demon. Let’s give you a quick-fix solution to a long-term problem.” In *The Covering* I’m demonstrating that there are no quick fixes, that it’s not about exorcising demons; it’s about exercising spiritual disciplines.

**L.S.:** That’s very important. You’re seeking to initiate a shift from a deliverance motif to a discipleship motif, and that shift makes all the biblical teachings on spiritual warfare suddenly fall into place and make sense.

**H.H.:** We’ve become cultural imitators rather than cultural initiators. All too often we derive our views on spiritual warfare from the popular culture, rather than Scripture.

**L.S.:** What is popular culture telling us about spiritual warfare?

**H.H.:** The basic idea is that spiritual warfare is physical. So we see levitation episodes, we see green slime, we have demons scrawling messages on fogged-up mirrors, we have demons biting Christian leaders. In contrast, biblical spiritual warfare always revolves around the battle for the mind. Ultimately, Satan’s greatest achievement is not to possess our bodies — it is our righteousness he covets most. While he cannot bite us or cause us to levitate, he can tempt us to cheat, steal, and lie. Satan sits on our shoulder, as it were, and whispers into our ear. The whisper cannot be discerned with the physical ear; it can, however, penetrate the ear of the mind. Thus, it’s about mind-to-mind communication. We can’t say how such mind-to-mind communication takes place anymore than we can explain how the mind causes the physical synapses of the brain to fire, but that such mind-to-mind communication takes place is biblically indisputable.

**L.S.:** C. S. Lewis made the comment that we generally make one of two mistakes about Satan. We either underestimate his power and influence on us, or we overestimate it. Where are we as a Christian culture today?

**H.H.:** In general, I fear we have a misplaced emphasis. Often we are more focused on the power of Satan to pillage than we are on the power of God to protect. That’s what the full armor of God is all about. If you put on the full armor of God, what I call the covering, then Satan has no power over you. Satan must flee. If you do not put on the covering, you are a guaranteed casualty in the invisible war. So Paul starts out talking about spiritual warfare by saying, “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” (Eph. 6:10–11). He does not want us to overestimate the power of the Evil One. Ultimately, God is sovereign over all things, including Satan. As Saint Augustine put it, the Devil is “the ape of God.” Likewise, Luther said the Devil is “God’s devil.” So while he is a roaring lion seeking whom he will devour, he is, after all, a lion on a leash the length of which is determined by the Lord.

On the other hand, Paul does not want us to underestimate the cunning and craftiness of our adversary, so he parades the powers of evil before our eyes.

**L.S.:** Well, let’s talk about that. What *is* the power of Satan? How powerful is he? How smart is he? Can he influence Christians and others? Can he affect us physically?

**H.H.:** Satan can’t directly affect us physically, but he is incredibly brilliant. The vastness of his intellect exceeds that of anyone who’s ever lived, from Solomon to Socrates. So we shouldn’t suppose that, unaided from above, we’d ever be a match for such a malevolent being. He knows us intimately and has an accumulation of knowledge. Thus, in the battle for the mind he is an incredibly formidable foe.

**L.S.:** So the threat is not a physical one as much as it is this kind of mind-to-mind communication, the ability of Satan to influence our thoughts, our fantasies, the direction that we decide to go in our lives?

**H.H.:** Right He can't read our minds, but he can influence our thoughts. Yet, in the final analysis we are still morally responsible for the decisions we make. Satan can tempt us to sin, but there must be an inner response to the outer suggestion for sin to occur.

**L.S.:** So we don't lose our responsibility. We can't say, "The Devil made me do it and, therefore, I'm absolved of any responsibility."

**H.H.:** The Devil cannot control us against our wills. The quintessential example of overestimating the power and province of the Evil One is to suppose that he can possess or control us against our wills.

**L.S.:** That brings us to a controversy within evangelical Christianity, and that is the question of whether or not authentic born-again followers of Jesus Christ can be possessed by Satan.

**H.H.:** I think a vast preponderance of books today in the evangelical Christian community purports the notion that a Christian can be demon possessed — that is, controlled against his will. Therefore, if you are possessed by the demon of murder, you can murder someone and legitimately use Flip Wilson theology to say, "The Devil made me do it."

**L.S.:** You've pointed out that there are Christian leaders who take precisely that view. Neil Anderson says 85 percent of all believers are ensnared in some level of satanic bondage. And Bob Larson goes so far as to say that believers have no business trying to cast a demon out of someone who *isn't* a Christian. The bottom line, Hank, is that if a believer sins, he just might be offering Satan a foothold whereby the Evil One can enter that believer to take control.

**H.H.:** If you are a believer, you cannot be possessed, you cannot be demonized, you cannot be controlled by a demon against your will. And this is something that comes from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. Using the illustration of a house, Jesus asked, "How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?" (Matt. 12:29). Well, in the case of a demon-possessed person the strong man is obviously the Devil. In a Spirit-indwelt believer the strong man is God. So the force of Christ's argument leads to the conclusion that in order for demons to possess believers they would first have to bind the One who occupies them, which is to say they'd have to bind God Himself, which is an impossibility.

Jesus offers an equally airtight argument in John 8. Once again the Jewish leaders are accusing Christ of being demon possessed. Rather than circumvent their accusations, Jesus responds to His accusers with reason. The essence of His response is, "I can't be demon possessed because I honor the Father" (see John 8:49). The point is impossible to miss. Being demon possessed and honoring God are mutually exclusive categories.

**L.S.:** In *The Covering*, you talk about seven steps to freedom that the apostle Paul outlines in Ephesians 6. Walk us through these seven steps, this full armor of God, and explain to us what Paul is talking about. The first step, you say, is the covering of truth, which stems from Ephesians 6:14: "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." What is the belt of truth, and how does it relate to the squishy truth in our relativistic world where you have your truth and I have my truth (which doesn't seem like much of a belt)?

**H.H.:** "What is truth?" is the same question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus Christ (see John 18:38). He was standing toe-to-toe with the very personification of truth and yet missed its reality. We, as postmodern people, find ourselves in much the same condition. We stare at truth but fail to recognize its identity.

Truth is rooted in the very nature of God Himself. So to put on truth is to put on Christ, for Christ is Truth. As Os Guinness explains, Christianity is not true because it works. It is not true because it feels right. It is not true because it is "my truth." Christianity is true because it is anchored in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As representatives of Christ, Christians are to be truth-bearers. Tragically, all too often we have become truth-twisters instead. Sometimes we even try to justify the fact that we twist the truth by suggesting it is for a greater cause. It's kind of like what filmmaker Oliver Stone does. He gives us all kinds of false

information in his movies, but he says he's still right because he is depicting Evil with a capital E. Some Christians reason in a similar manner: "I can tell a contemporary resurrection story because Christ rose from the dead. It doesn't matter if my resurrection story can't be substantiated because it will help substantiate the truth of Christ's resurrection. After all, I am defending the Resurrection with a capital R." But as Christians we cannot play fast and loose with truth in order to try to substantiate a larger truth. For another example, we cannot perpetuate the legend of Darwin's deathbed conversion in order to substantiate the larger truth that evolution is false and creationism is true. We cannot defend the larger truth of the historicity of the Gospels through such well-known forgeries as the Pilate letter. We cannot argue for the inspiration of Scripture on the basis of embedded Bible codes. We must not do that. We are to be bearers of truth.

**L.S.:** There's so much stuff out there. The Internet is full of junk and inaccurate information. I'll go to a Web site and think, "I know this is not true." And yet this kind of information is floating around the world. So truth becomes squishy in the sense that people don't know what to believe anymore.

**H.H.:** An Internet lie can travel halfway round the world before truth has had the chance to put its boots on. That's why Paul tells us, with urgency, "Put on the belt of truth." I think it's more appropriate today than ever before. As your waist is the center of your body, so truth is central to the full armor of God. Without truth, the covering that protects us against the Devil's schemes simply crumples to the ground and leaves us naked and vulnerable to believe and do just about anything.

**L.S.:** People can believe whatever they want, but what you're saying is, unless it's anchored to truth, it's irrelevant and even harmful.

**H.H.:** There is such a thing as objective truth, and we have a Truth-giver who is God. So we can either say truth is based on what we merely think is true, or we can say, "God has condescended to reveal truth to us, and whether we can fully comprehend it or not, we're going to accept it." Yet, we don't accept it through blind faith, but we accept it through faith based on evidence. How do we know the Bible is true? We can examine historical evidences and other objective proofs using the tools God Himself has given us to determine whether or not the Bible is true. It's faith, but never blind faith.

**L.S.:** That's the big distinction. The first step, then, is to put on the covering of truth. The second step, Hank, is the covering of righteousness, and Ephesians 6:14 continues, "Stand firm then...with the breastplate of righteousness in place." You offer a quote from a writer named William Gurnall in this regard.

**H.H.:** Gurnall was one of the great Puritan writers, who in 1658 wrote, "An orthodox judgment coming from an unholy heart and an ungodly life is as ugly as a man's head would be on a beast's shoulders. The wretch who knows the truth but practices evil is worse than the man who is ignorant."

**L.S.:** You say that righteousness is the core of Christianity compressed in a single word. What do you mean by that?

**H.H.:** Truth without righteousness is abhorrent. No matter how correct our worldview or resplendent our orthodoxy, if it's not coupled with righteousness, we forfeit the moral authority to speak. Righteousness is the core of Christianity compressed into a single word. Although the forces of darkness are bent on frustrating it, Christ came to fulfill it. Righteousness is what the book of Romans is all about. In fact, it might well be retitled "The Breastplate of Righteousness," for in it the gospel of "righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last" (Rom. 1:17). Thus, the breastplate of righteousness protects us against self-righteousness, which Scripture likens to "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Additionally, we put on righteousness as a breastplate by becoming slaves to righteousness.

How do you become a slave to righteousness? To use a golf analogy, you don't become like Tiger Woods by putting on a Nike hat or droning the Nike "Just do it" mantra. You become Tigerlike through mental and physical disciplines. In a similar fashion, you become Christlike not by taking on the trappings of Christianity or mouthing Christian slogans. You become Christlike through spiritual disciplines. As the former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, Tom Landry, used to say, a good coach will "make men do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be." That's the same way we

become Christlike. We are called to do what we would not naturally do — practice spiritual disciplines — in order to be daily conformed to the image of Christ. As prayer, fasting, and meditating on God’s Word characterized the life of Christ, so too such spiritual disciplines should characterize the lives of those who sincerely desire to become Christlike. That’s what discipleship is all about — becoming a learner and a follower of Christ!

**L.S.:** Yes, a “learning follower” is literally what the word “disciple” means. We’ve started to get into this question of what constitutes the armor of God. You’ve talked about, first, the covering of truth, and then you talked about the covering of righteousness.

**H.H.:** And, of course, Paul goes on to talk about the gospel of peace.

**L.S.:** Let’s talk about that — Ephesians 6:15. Let me just read it. “Stand firm...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” What struck me is that you used the very unusual illustration of Shaquille O’Neal’s big toe in your book. How does that fit in there?

**H.H.:** I was writing *The Covering* while the L.A. Lakers were on their way to another NBA title. One obstacle stood between the Lakers and a three-peat — Shaquille O’Neal’s arthritic big toe. Despite Shaq’s strength and skill, a tiny foot problem threatened to bring down the game’s big man. If Shaq could not stand, the Lakers would surely fall. Thus, to prepare him for battle, Shaq’s size 22s were fitted with a technologically advanced carbon orthotic device. As Shaq’s special sneakers were essential to winning the basketball wars, so, too, our feet must be properly fitted in order to prevail in spiritual warfare.

All of the resources humanity had to offer were brought to bear in making this special shoe for a \$30-million-a-year basketball star. But that pales by comparison to the price that was paid to have our “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” Indeed, the priceless material with which God has fitted our feet for readiness in the battle “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12) is nothing less than the gospel of peace. The emphasis here is first and foremost peace with God. That peace with God allows us to have peace with others and is a portal to perfect peace in paradise. With peace in our souls, we’re spiritually ready to face all the trials and tribulations life brings our way.

Horatio Spafford personified this peace when he penned the words: “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say ‘it is well, it is well with my soul.’” More profound than the words themselves is the context in which they were written. Spafford’s son had recently died; his real estate investments were obliterated in the Chicago fire of 1871; and his four daughters had drowned in the Atlantic Ocean. Yet, in the midst of the rolling sea billows that stole his prize possessions, the words spilled forth from a broken heart: “Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed His own blood for my soul.” Spafford had an eternal perspective. He had peace in the midst of the storm.

God has given every believer peace in the midst of the storm, and that’s what the Christian life is all about. It’s not about perfect circumstances. No, it is peace in the midst of decay, destruction, disease, and, yes, even death because we know that one day we will have perfect peace — perfect bodies in a perfect paradise where we’re going to learn and grow, develop without error, and forever explore the glory and grandeur of God and His created handiwork.

**L.S.:** Jesus said, “In this world you will have suffering.” I think about that and the circumstance with the person I love who is going through a health crisis — and you know what? I need God’s peace and she needs God’s peace right now in the midst of what’s going on. And we need courage to face tomorrow. And we can do that because we know that our faith in Christ is anchored in reality.

**H.H.:** Postmodernity seeks to deny death by driving it into the closet or to trivialize it by treating it irreverently or to circumvent it by the use of clichés. In sharp distinction, Christianity demonstrates that death is defeated. Cultural thanatologists may urge us to accept death as a friend, but Christian theology sees death as the enemy. I love what Philip Yancey says: “Christian faith does not offer us a peaceful way

to come to terms with death. No, it offers instead a way to overcome death. Christ stands for life, and His resurrection should give convincing proof that God is not satisfied with any 'cycle of life' that ends in death. He will go to any extent — He *did* go to any extent — to break that cycle." Of course, Christ ultimately did so through His resurrection.

**L.S.:** Wow! I can't think of a better word for America to hear in light of what we just saw this week with the first anniversary of 9/11. The pain, the suffering, and the confusion that so many people are in. We have a choice in the midst of it. We can run the other way from God or we can run to Him. That's our choice.

**H.S.:** And you know what? That hits the nail on the head, because the worst thing that can happen is not to die under the rubble of the twin towers. The worst thing is not even to die young. The worst thing is to live a long, robust life and never know the Master. The only ultimate tragedy is to spend not a lifetime, but forever, separated from the love and grace and truth of Jesus Christ — a Christless eternity. That's the real tragedy. And in the midst of mourning 9/11, we must never forget that every single person who does not know Jesus Christ is a heartbeat away from that tragedy.

**L.S.:** It should energize those of us who know Jesus personally and are assured of spending eternity with Him in heaven to reach out to loved ones and neighbors and tell them, "This is the message that will change your life today and tomorrow, and for eternity as well!"

**H.H.:** One of the things that I have loved about my relationship with you, Lee, is that your passion for evangelism has never waned. You're always looking for ways to reach those who are as yet unreached, and there are so many people.

**L.S.:** There are too many people on my list. I think of my father-in-law, 89 years old, who had rejected Christ his entire life. I started praying for him the day after I became a Christian, November 8, 1981, and I shared Christ with him time after time. He was resistant like a brick wall. Then he had a stroke and was dying, and I looked him in the eye and said, "Al, you know you're dying. I don't want to spend eternity in heaven without you. Your wife and your daughter and your grandchildren — they're going to be in heaven without you. Would you just confess your sin and receive Christ?" He was still resistant, but at the last moment he received Christ. Two hours later he had another stroke — he lingered and he died. In his last conversation of his life, he received Jesus Christ. There is hope. You are praying for someone, you love someone, you know that God loves them more than you do. Don't give up. Keep looking for those opportunities to bring them this message of peace and hope that we've been talking about.

Hank, you've talked about the coverings of truth, righteousness, and peace. Let's go now to the fourth covering, the covering of faith. The Scripture says in Ephesians 6:16, "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

**H.H.:** Faith is a channel of living trust. It's an assurance that stretches from man to God. In other words, it is the object of faith that renders faith effective. Faith is ultimately rooted and grounded in the nature of God Himself, and nothing is more crucial to Christianity than a proper understanding of who God is. In Christian theology He is portrayed as the Sovereign of the universe. He is described as spirit, perfectly wise, self-sufficient, omnipotent, omniscient. The Bible depicts Him as the One who sees all and knows all from all eternity, the One who wields supreme and absolute authority. So faith is good only if the object of our faith is faithful. Thus, it's never faith in our own faith, which would be misplaced faith. It must always be faith in God, who is the One who spoke and the universe leapt into existence, who is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe and of every detail of our lives.

**L.S.:** Draw a distinction for us between knowledge and faith, because they're not the same thing. They're quite different.

**H.H.:** While we can *know about* Jesus Christ, and even *agree* that He's the Savior of the world, that does not mean that we have true, saving faith. To have true, saving faith, we must add trust to knowledge and also assent. Genuine justifying faith not only knows about the Gospel and agrees that it corresponds to reality, but it also is a faith by which we are transformed, which is to say that we no longer trust in ourselves — we trust in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life.

By way of illustration, you could have pneumonia. You could know that penicillin is the cure. You could know it has cured thousands or even millions before you. But unless you actually take it, you are demonstrating that you don't really trust it. That's the same way with Jesus Christ. You have to take that step of trust and embrace Jesus alone and believe what Jesus has done for you.

**L.S.:** Let me ask now about the fifth part of the armor of God. This is the covering of salvation. Ephesians 6:17 talks about the helmet of salvation, and in your book you talk about how this helmet can blunt the blow of death by enabling us to view our circumstances from the perspective of eternity. That change in perspective changes everything, doesn't it?

**H.H.:** It really does. In *The Covering* I start almost every chapter with a personal story of some kind, the most personal of which comes in chapter 7, "The Covering of Salvation." On November 14, 2000, I walked through the front door and shouted, "Kathy, I'm home!" No response. I looked in all the usual places — the kitchen, the laundry room, the bedroom, but Kathy was nowhere to be found. Suddenly I became aware of a soft sobbing sound, and I called out, "Is that you, Kathy?" As I moved toward the sound, still there was no answer. When I walked into the bathroom, Lee, I saw my wife looking down at a tiny form in the palm of her hand. Sensing my presence, she looked up resolutely and said, "Her name is Grace."

As I looked down at my ninth child, Kathy shared a vision she'd experienced earlier that afternoon. She had returned home. She was deeply troubled after a visit with her doctor. The doctor had expressed real concern regarding the viability of our preborn child. So she went straight to bed and began to pray. "Lord, show me Your will," she pleaded. "You know how much I want another baby." In the ensuing hours she asked God to show her His grace. After a protracted period of intensive prayer, she saw an image. A little girl was walking away from her, hand-in-hand with the Lord. The girl bounced along in perfect peace and then suddenly turned and looked directly into Kathy's eyes. "Goodbye, Mommy," she said. Instinctively, Kathy blurted out, "I just want to hug you." At that very moment she felt an intense presence — and then she began to bleed.

When I encountered Kathy standing in the bathroom, she was cradling a perfectly formed embryo in her hands. "Why Grace?" I asked. Without a moment's hesitation she responded, "God has answered my prayers and given me His grace. He has shown me that I didn't lose our baby. I know exactly where she is." That day, Lee, I gained a fresh perspective on the helmet of salvation. In the midst of the deepest pain a mother can experience, the helmet of salvation had served to protect my wife's perspective. The helmet of salvation blunted the blow of death and enabled her to view her circumstances from the perspective of eternity. For Kathy, the death of our baby was the ultimate disorienting blow; yet, a glimpse of the salvation that was to come blunted its edge. The helmet of salvation allowed her to take her eyes off the present and fix them on the future. It enabled her to look beyond her sorrow and see the promise of salvation. It healed her broken heart when nothing else could.

Ultimately, that's one of the great benefits of putting on the helmet of salvation. It blunts the blow of death, it allows us to see events from God's eternal perspective, and it also blunts the disorienting blows of doubt and despair. Despair and discouragement, of course, don't always manifest in the dramatic. Disappointments accumulate over time, burying hope under an avalanche of despair. The helmet of salvation, however, grants us perspective. In this chapter, "The Covering of Salvation," I demonstrate how putting on the helmet of salvation can guard us against the most devastating discouragements that Satan brings our way.

**L.S.:** There really is no other answer, is there? I mean, for Kathy, at that moment, nothing could bring her solace and peace other than the helmet of salvation; to know that Grace is not gone, that she will be with Grace some day in eternity.

**H.H.:** As Kathy said, "If you lose something, you don't know where it is. I know where my baby is, and I know whom she is with."

**L.S.:** You have a quote in the book that really struck me. You say, "The solution to our disappointments is never found in answering the question 'why.' It is found in trusting God in the midst of our whys."

**H.H.:** Kathy received one glimpse of glory and all her “whys” faded to black. The helmet of salvation enabled her to look beyond death, doubt, and disappointment toward her destiny. In Kathy’s vision baby Grace was walking away in peace and harmony, hand-in-hand with the Lord. But when Kathy next lays her eyes on her, baby Grace will be walking into her embrace. The beautiful thing that we understand as Christians — whether you have suffered the death of a preborn child or whether you’ve had an abortion — is that it’s not all over. It’s not irreparable. We believe on the basis of Scripture, science, and sound reason that such a child has full personhood from the moment of conception — not a fully developed personality, but full personhood. Our baby is with the Lord, and the body that died, as small as it might have been, contains the blueprint for a glorified body, and that blueprint one day is going to flourish in a pristine universe.

**L.S.:** There’s no comparison to the hope and assurance of Christ. Now we’ve looked at the coverings of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. Let’s go to the sixth covering in the armor of God — “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17) — and our need for the covering of Scripture.

**H.H.:** It’s not enough to have the Word of God in our homes or in our hands; we must deftly wield it on the battlefield of life. That means we’re equipped to mine the treasure that is buried in the Word. Spurgeon once said, “Let it never be said that God has recorded truths in His Word that you have not read. Study the Word and work out its meaning. Go deep into the Spirit of inspiration. He gets the most gold who digs the deepest in this mine.” Well, the deeper you go under the Spirit’s guidance, the larger is going to be your reward. Wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, involves memorizing Scripture as well. No single spiritual discipline is more prudent or practical than Scripture memorization. One more point: to take the sword of the Spirit involves meditating on the Word of God.

**L.S.:** Hold on. When you say meditate, some people get images of all kinds of meditation. What do you mean when you say Christians need to meditate on Scripture? Why is that important?

**H.H.:** Pagan meditation should not preclude proper meditation. In biblical meditation, the whole person is centered on the personal Creator of the universe, and that is best done by focusing yourself objectively on the Word of God, engaging in deep and prayerful reflection on biblical teachings.

**L.S.:** In your book you talk about meditation being the missing link between Bible intake and prayer, which is really the seventh and final covering in the armor of God. What do you mean by “missing link”?

**H.H.:** George Müller discovered this in his own prayer life. As a person of prayer, he discovered that when he meditated deeply upon the Word of God it was a portal into effective prayer. Ultimately, our prayers are only inspired according to our intake of Scripture. Scripture feeds meditation, and meditation gives food to our prayer. Müller discovered that after meditating on Scripture, he was enabled to more naturally transition into a marvelous time of meaningful prayer.

Prayer is not a mere piece of the covering. It is more — much more — than that. Prayer is indelibly woven into each piece of the covering. It is to the armor what oxygen is to the lungs. It is the given, the foundation, the first principle of spiritual warfare. Little wonder then that the apostle Paul urges us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (Eph. 6:18). For to do so is to pray in concert with the will and purposes of God, which we discern through His Word. Only as the Spirit empowers our prayers in accordance with God’s will is the covering finally complete.

## NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the New International Version.