

Main Idea: When it comes to our spiritual armor, we have two vital responsibilities according to Ephesians 6:14-17.

- I. When it comes to armor, there’s something we need to know.
 - A. We have what we need.
 1. The armor is Christ.
 2. The armor is complete.
 - B. We need what we have.
 1. We must appropriate all the armor.
 2. We must appropriate all the armor all the time.
- II. When it comes to armor, there’s something we need to do.
 - A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a).
 1. A person puts on the belt of truth when he affirms that Jesus is the truth.
 2. A person puts on the belt of truth when he resolves to walk in integrity.
 - B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b).
 1. We need positional righteousness.
 2. We need practical righteousness.
 - C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15).
 1. The gospel protects us.
 2. The gospel prepares us for action.

“What tool do I need to use to do this job?”

That’s what I asked our friendly neighbors at Ace Hardware this week. Sherry and I have been doing a little remodeling project in our laundryroom recently. One of the tasks was to replace a cabinet and light fixture, which involved putting in a new box to attach the light fixture. I didn’t know, so I asked the salesman.

“Here’s what you need,” he said, and pointed me to a particular drywall knife. I bought it, took it home, and used it, thinking, if I hadn’t bought that tool what a challenge the job would have been.

If you don’t have the right equipment, even a simple task can be a great frustration. That’s true in the kitchen, for you cooks, and for you athletes, and mechanics, and in just about every phase of life.

On the other hand, if you have the right equipment for the task, it’s makes all the difference. Having what you need, and of course, knowing how to use what you have, produces confidence and satisfaction and the achieving of the task.

That’s one of the reasons not a few believes struggle in the Christian life. And that’s what this series is all about. They don’t know what they have, or they do know but don’t know how to use it.

Last week we began a series on the Armor of God. The truth is, we are at war and we have a vicious enemy, and yet we can fulfill the task that our Savior has given us, to make Him known to this world.

What makes that possible? The God who sent His Son to save us has given us in His Son the equipment we need to fulfill our mission. It’s called the *armor of God*.

We learned about the nature of our spiritual battle last time, from Ephesians 6:10-13. We’re not wrestling against a physical enemy, but a spiritual one. And so we need spiritual protection, which Paul calls the armor of God. This week we’re going to learn that, when it comes to our spiritual armor, we have two vital responsibilities according to

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

² For an earlier development of this text, see the series on “Living with a Warfare Mentality” at WBC in 2003.

Ephesians 6:14-17. One, there's something we need to *know*, and two, there's something we need to *do*.

I. When it comes to armor, there's something we need to know.

Specifically, we need to know two vital truths.

A. We have what we need. Verse 11, "Put on the *full* armor of God." Verse 13, "Put on the *full* armor of God." Let that word sink in. We have available to us the *full* armor of God.

What do you need armor for? You need armor if you are at war. And we are. We are in a battle. You and I are under attack. We have an enemy. A fierce, cunning, powerful enemy.

How can we survive? Ephesians 6 tells us. Ephesians 6 is our warfare manual. According to Ephesians 6:10-13, we must fulfill three responsibilities if we're going to survive the attacks of the evil one. We must *depend*, namely, depend on the Lord and on His power (10). We must *display*, that is, we put on/display the armor of God as we face the attack of the devil (11-12). Finally, we must *defend* (13). Our mission isn't offensive, but defensive, to stand.

But how can we prepare for the battle? What must we do day by day if we are to stand when so many are falling?

We'll find out this morning as we move to Ephesians 6:14-17. God has given us the necessary spiritual equipment, and those who stand are those who know that we have what we need, the *full* armor of God.

Just what is this armor? Simply put...

1. *The armor is Christ.* In a moment we'll begin to look at the six pieces of armor one by one: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and so on. As we'll see these six virtues or qualities belong to Christ. To put on the armor is to put on Christ. Using a clothing analogy Paul communicates the same truth in Romans 13:14, "Rather, *clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ*, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Keep this in mind. The weapons we have are not moral qualities but divine realities.³ If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are fair game for the enemy. In fact, you're his prisoner. But if you have come to know Christ as your Savior-King, you have all you need for the battle, for the armor is Christ Himself. What's more...

2. *The armor is complete.* Again, it's the *full* armor. There is no chink in the armor that Christ has provided for His people. You have what it takes.

Back in 1865 William Tecumseh Sherman wrote a letter to U.S. Grant, and said, "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come--if alive." This is the unwritten, unspoken and unbreakable contract of the battlefield: You will leave no one, dead or alive, in the hands of the enemy.⁴

This is the commitment of our Commander in Chief to us, beloved. The One who died for us, who endured hell for us, who delivered us, will never surrender us into the hands of the enemy.

Let this sink in, fellow soldiers. We have what we need, and though every day is a battle, and every day involves dangerous struggle, if we know Christ, we have all we need. This also is true.

³Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. 1995, c1985. *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Translation of: Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. W.B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Mich.

⁴ [U.S. News and World Report, July 29, 1991, p. 5.](#)

B. We need what we have. We have what we need, but we also need what we have. What does that mean? Two things...

1. *We must appropriate all the armor.* “Put on the *full* armor of God.” The *full* armor is needed. You do not have what it takes in your own strength to stand in this battle. You do have what it takes, but it’s not something within you. It’s external. It’s something you must put on. And you must put it *all* on.

You see, Satan will attack at your point of vulnerability.

“But,” you say, “I’ve put on most of the armor. There’s just one little habit I want to hold on to. I’ll be okay.” Look out.

Or maybe it’s, “Me? I get along great with people. It’s not that big of a deal if there’s just that one person I’m not willing to forgive, is it?”

Look at Ephesians 4:26-27, “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” To excuse one so called “little” relational sin is like a soldier saying as he heads into battle, “But I’ve only left one part of my body unprotected.” How big of an opening does a flaming arrow need?

Brothers and sisters, we have what we need. But we must appropriate it, *all* of it.

2. *We must appropriate all the armor all the time.* We must not underestimate our enemy. Verse 12 is clear. We don’t wrestle against flesh and blood. We’re up against demonic forces. Listen. Satan is not omnipresent or omnipotent. He’s not divine. He’s a created being, a fallen angel. But Satan has at his disposal forces that are highly organized and extremely active. They are powerful (Mark 5:2-4), intelligent (Acts 16:16), and deceptive. They promote false doctrine and religions, can inhabit bodies, inflict illness, hinder Christian workers (I Thes 2:18), oppose the spread of the gospel, and are able to work miracles.

If you want to read a vivid description of how Satan works, check out 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. “And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

You say, “Well I’m a Christian. I’m safe in Jesus’ arms. Satan can’t touch me.” Be careful. Take a close look at what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, “And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, *who has taken them captive to do his will.*”

Yes, even believers can be enticed and duped by the devil so that they act as if they were his subjects. Satan incited David into sinning against God’s command (I Chr 21:1). He deceived Peter into denying the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice (Matt 16:21-23). He filled the hearts of Ananias and Saphira to lie (Acts 5).

So we have a great enemy. But thankfully, we have a far greater Savior!, who came to the earth 2000 years ago, went to the cross, and according to Colossians 2:15, “...disarmed the powers and authorities” and “made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

So what must we do? First, make sure we are IN CHRIST. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ personally? Then secondly, live like it. Stand in Christ. We do not fight *for* victory, but *from* victory.

One night last week I woke up with this verse in mind. “We are more than conquerors *through Him* that loved us (Rom 8:37).” How do we conquer? *Through Him.*

This is the life of a Christian soldier. It's a life of putting on our armor, which is a life of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the exchanged life.

Last week someone introduced me to a song that Horatias Bonar wrote over a hundred years ago, called, "*Upon a Life I Did Not Live.*"

*Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die
Another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity*

*Not on the tears which I have shed
Not on the sorrows I have known
Another's tears, Another's griefs, on these I rest, on these alone.*

*Oh, Jesus, Son of God, I build on
What thy cross has done for me.
There both my life and death I read my guilt and pardon there I see.*

*Lord, I believe, oh deal with me
As one who has thy word believed.
I take the gift, Lord look on me
As one who has thy gift received.*

Friends, it's not about what we do. It's all about Him and His work. In Christ we have all we need, and we need to know that. But it takes more than mere knowledge.

II. When it comes to armor, there's something we need to do.

Practically speaking, how do we prepare ourselves so we can stand in Christ? Paul tells us in verses 14-17. We need to *do* something. We need to take specific action with regards to the armor we have.

This is critical to see. Each piece of armor is something we *have*. But each piece of armor is also something we must *appropriate*.

A welder exposes himself to dangerous light every time he does his work. That's why he has a shield. But the shield will do him no good unless he *uses* it. That's what we need to do with the armor of God. *Use* it. How? Let's find out. We'll look at the first pieces of armor this week and the rest next time, the Lord willing.

A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a). "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." The word "stand" is a command. It's followed by a series of participles which tell us HOW we are to stand.

When Paul wrote Ephesians, he was a prisoner in Rome. According to verse 20 he was in chains. It's possible he was actually chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Here Paul identifies the six main pieces of a Roman soldier's equipment: the belt, the breastplate, the boots, the shield, the helmet, and the sword. He says that each of those portray a spiritual resource available to us in Christ.

He mentions, first, the belt of truth. The soldier's belt was usually made of leather. He put it on first. Actually it was an undergarment, and not a piece of armor. Yet it was essential. The belt held his sword. The belt wrapped around the soldier's waist in order to draw up his tunic and keep it from dangling down to his feet. He couldn't go to battle if his garment was loose fitting.

Football players don't wear loose fitting clothes. Why not? They don't want to leave the opponent any handles by which they can grab hold.

The belt gave the soldier mobility and freedom. What is our belt as Christians? Paul says our belt is *truth*. Truth is that which is solid and secure, not spongy or unreliable. Absolute truth brings freedom and confidence. The person who tells the truth and lives by the truth experiences freedom in his life.

What is truth? In the Bible, truth can refer to the content of the Word of God, but ultimately it refers to the person of Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the way, the *truth*, and the life,” He said (John 14:6).

So how do you put on the belt of truth? It involves two actions.

1. *A person puts on the belt of truth when he affirms that Jesus is the truth.* That happens at conversion. But it also needs to happen in our lives every day. Satan is a liar. One of his primary tactics is deception. We need to affirm that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the truth.

But the word “truth” also carries the sense of integrity and sincerity, even the idea of dependability and faithfulness. Thus, a second action...

2. *A person puts on the belt of truth when he resolves to walk in integrity.* As Jesus walked. Friends, at all costs Christians must be honest and truthful, not shady, not unethical in their dealings. Why? Because when we resort to dishonesty and scheming, we are playing the devil's game, and we'll never be able to beat him at his own game. He is a liar and the father of lies.

Charles Hodge observed, “Let not anyone imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle of spider webs. They give way at the first onset.”⁵

There's a powerful word picture. *A girdle of spider webs.*

Let's be honest. There is a great lack of truth in people today, including many who call themselves Christian. Their word means little. You can't count on them. Their motto is, “If it works, do it. If it makes you feel good, go for it. Just don't get caught.”

Live that way, and you're wearing a girdle of spider webs when it comes to defending yourself against the enemy.

“Put on the belt of truth,” says our text. This is where it starts. You'll never, never stand against the powerful forces of Satan unless you affirm that Jesus is the truth and, by His grace, resolve to walk in truth and integrity every day.

Remember, you have what you need, and you need what you have. Put on Christ, who is the truth. And choose to walk in His steps. When you're closing that business deal. When you're doing your homework for school. When you're doing your tax return. Put on the belt of truth, and then you'll be able to stand against the wiles of the evil one.

How can you stand in the battle? You begin by putting on the belt of truth.

B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b). “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.”

Satan is the accuser (Rev 12:10), and he loves to accuse God's people. “You call yourself a Christian. There's no way you can be a Christian, not after what you just did,” he whispers. How do we withstand his accusations? With this. The breastplate of *righteousness*.

⁵Hodge, C. 1996. *Commentary on Ephesians*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Christian Classics Foundation: Simpsonville SC

No Roman soldier in his right mind would ever go into a battle without his breastplate.⁶ The Romans had different kinds of breastplates. The most common type was a molded metal chest plate that covered the entire torso, from the neck to the top of the thighs, on both his front and back. Obviously the breastplate was critical.

Friends, a soldier could be in great shape, a great warrior, great at hand to hand combat. But he'd be a fool if he went into battle without his breastplate. Why? What did this piece of armor protect? It covered the heart and the rest of the vital organs. One arrow through his heart and he's done, no matter how physically fit he is.

What is our breastplate? Paul says we must put on the breastplate of *righteousness* (lit. "breastplate which is righteousness"). Which raises the question, what is biblical righteousness? Basically, there are two kinds in the Bible (and we need both).

1. *We need positional righteousness.* Positional righteousness is a right relationship with God. We enter this world as sinners cut off from God. We need to be reconciled to God, made right with God. The Bible calls that justification.

When a person repents of his or her sin and believes in Christ, God declares that person to be right with Him. He does so on the merit of His Son. He gives to the sinner the perfect righteousness of Jesus' perfect life.

That's where spiritual protection starts, with *positional* righteousness. Listen to Isaiah 61:10, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness..."

Has God clothed you with a robe of righteousness? Is your heart protected by the righteousness of Christ? That's our greatest need. Secondly...

2. *We need practical righteousness.* We could call that moral righteousness. Again, we have what we need. 2 Corinthians 6:7 says we have "weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left." But what we have we are to put on. Ephesians 4:24 tells us "to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

We obviously need both, positional and practical righteousness. In fact, you can't separate the two. Being righteous is just as important as being declared righteous.

The name "Satan" means adversary. The word "devil" means slanderer. The evil one loves to attack us by flinging accusations against us, by inflicting us with thoughts of doubt. And he has a hay day with those who fail to put on the breastplate of practical righteousness.

I chuckled at first, but the more I reflect the more I agree with an observation made in MacArthur's book, *The Believer's Armor*. He says the typical breastplate many Christians are putting on today resembles a paper bib more than the breastplate of righteousness in Ephesians 6. A paper bib may keep baby food off an infant but it won't protect him from a sniper's bullet. What are some examples of paper armor? When we substitute programs, techniques, and methods in the place of biblical righteousness, we're exchanging the biblical breastplate for a paper bib!

Here's something you'll never see in the military. They don't say, "Well thanks for coming to boot camp. Since you're here, it would be nice if you'd wear our uniform. And oh, if it wouldn't be too much of an inconvenience, would you like to live in our barracks, eat our food, and take our orders?"

No way. You're expected to do that! So for the Christian. You have all you need, but you need all you have. You need to put on the righteousness of Christ daily. How?

⁶ Observation by John MacArthur

Every day you need to review your position. Perhaps quote 2 Corinthians 5:21 out loud and affirm its truth. Then resolve to live according to your position. “Be holy as I am holy,” God says in 1 Peter 1:21.

Can you say the following words truthfully as the testimony of your life? Here’s what Paul trusted in (Philippians 3:9): “I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a *righteousness of my own* that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the *righteousness that comes from God* and is by faith.”

Are we ready for the battle yet? No. We're but a third of the way there.

C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15). “Stand firm then...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”

Some people love shoes. In our society shoes are to a large degree a fashion item. Originally shoes were for protection. One commentator observed (MacArthur), "Frankly we don't need that much protection for our feet. Our streets are paved. Our cars, churches, and offices are carpeted. For the most part we aren't walking over rough stones, wading through mud, or strolling across thorny bushes. We need to understand how terrible the terrain was during the time of Christ."

A soldier needed shoes. But not just any shoes would do. The Roman soldier wore a battle boot. It was like a leather sandal with hob nails on the bottom, tied up with leather straps around the ankles and shins (like a studded tire). Why the studs on the bottom? To keep the soldier's feet from slipping! In close, hand to hand combat, sure footing was critical. One slip and you're done.

What is it that gives the Christian stability in his or her life? Paul tells us in verse 15. We need to have our feet fitted with the “readiness” that comes from something. The term “readiness” is "preparation" in the KJV. It means “made ready or equipped.”

What does that mean? Paul says our feet need to be equipped. How? They need to be shod with something. With what? The “gospel of peace.”

Listen. The Gospel *is* peace. Man was at war with God, but God made peace through Jesus Christ. We are at peace with God. That means we aren't enemies any longer! Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That’s why the devil hates the gospel. That’s also why we need the gospel. Yes, we believers need the gospel. The gospel does more than just save us. The gospel is part of our armor. The gospel does two things for us.

1. *The gospel protects us.* That’s why we cover our feet with it. Habakkuk 3:19 says, “The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.”⁷

2. *The gospel prepares us for action.* Do you know who the most stable Christians generally are? They’re the ones who are sharing the gospel of peace with others. Do you know why? If the gospel doesn't mean enough to me that I'm willing and ready to share it with someone else, then it doesn't hold the proper place of affection in heart. But if I have on the gospel of peace boots, if I am taking the gospel with me wherever I go, then my footing in life will be certain and secure.

Friends, why are we here? In His final words to His followers in Acts 1:8, Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses.” He left us here to spread the gospel to others.

⁷Hodge states, “As the Gospel secures our peace with God, and gives the assurance of his favor, it produces that joyful alacrity of mind which is essential to success in the spiritual conflict. All doubt tends to weakness, and despair is death.” Hodge, C. 1996. *Commentary on Ephesians*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.). Christian Classics Foundation: Simpsonville SC

That's what the armor is all about, standing so we can spread. Standing strong, so we can spread the gospel long.

And that brings me to share something very important with you. This past Wednesday evening, after a several weeks of meetings, dialogue, and prayer, the Combined Board of this church reached an important directional decision that we now present to you.

First, we made an assessment. As a church, by the grace of God we have two areas where we've seen considerable fruit. Training and missions. Through the teaching of the Word, we've been privileged to train many servants of Christ who are now serving faithfully in this church and all over the United States (17 States at last count). And we have a wonderful team of missionaries, some that we've sent and others we support.

But one area that needs significant attention is our local outreach. Our mission statement begins, "We are Wheelersburg Baptist Church, a church that cares because of Christ." And then it goes on to identify our missional assignment, "We are dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the responsibility He has given us, locally and worldwide."

It's those two phrases that convict me. *Church that cares*, and *locally and worldwide*. I believe this is a very caring church, and I hear that regularly, but are we known in our community as a *caring church*? I think personally that's true. Many would conclude that as individual followers of Jesus, we care. But corporately? I don't think that when most people drive by our church and see our sign, they conclude, "Now there's a church that cares about this community."

Granted, that's not our primary assignment. It's to wear gospel boots and make Christ known, for sure. But ask yourself this. Is a person more inclined to listen to the gospel if it's spoken by an unknown entity, or by someone who has proven he or she cares?

It's obvious. People don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care.

That brings me to the second phrase, *locally and worldwide*. We devote a lot of attention to the *worldwide* part, but *locally*? Yes, we have CRADLE and Scioto Hills Camp and our Counseling & Counseling Training ministries, and these are significant, corporate demonstrations of care in this community, as feedback to that end testifies.

But there's more that could be done, and the question remains, "Does our community know that WBC cares about it?"

About seven weeks ago our Township trustees approached us and said, "We have a Community Center that we'd like to sell you. It seems only natural. You own the parking lot. It's across the street from you. Are you interested?"

That's interesting, isn't it? Our community leaders want to know if we're interested in purchasing a building that's known in this community as a place that meets practical needs.

That question led to a series of steps. In June our Board (deacons, trustees, treasurer, and pastors) met to deliberate this request. We determined, yes, we're strongly interested in considering the possibility, and we communicated that to our township trustees. But we needed to do some careful investigation, knowing this would ultimately be decided by the congregation.

The deacons were assigned the task of determining whether this purchase would fit our mission and purpose, for even good opportunities aren't wise if they distract us from our God-given mission.

The trustees were assigned to research the logistics of the potential purchase: utility costs, maintenance costs, personnel needs, etc.

We also made this opportunity known to you as a congregation, so you could pray with us, and give us your initial thoughts and questions.

The last couple of weeks the Board has met two more times, at two hours a meeting, and I've been greatly encouraged by how the Lord has enabled us to speak the truth in love to one another.

At the meeting two weeks ago, some said, "It's a great opportunity. It's a good price. There are so many things we could do with this building. We must move on this."

The price for the building is \$120,000, a decent price considering we spent around \$60,000 ten years ago for the property next to it, which we demolished for parking. This building has two meeting rooms that will hold 75 and 50 people, with a nice kitchen and restroom facility in between. We learned that we could easily finance that amount, at about \$1,000 per month for mortgage payments and utilities.

But others rightly asked questions like... What specifically would we do with this building? Can we really afford it? We don't have the money, so it is wise to borrow, especially in this economy? And if we borrow, how will that affect our other commitments, like staff needs, specifically increasing our assistant pastor from his current one-third position, and increasing missionary support, etc? And shouldn't we be putting our money into people rather than buildings?

That led to other questions. If we don't buy it, what will happen to it? What if someone buys it that wants to use it for unwholesome purposes? After all, where would they park? We own the parking lot. So what will we do, for instance, if our community changes its liquor sales laws, and a bar buys it, and they start using our parking? And what's going to happen if we should grow and need additional space for Sunday School, etc? Would't having this building be a good asset for our future?

Maybe, said others. But in the present it seems like there's a lack of clear purpose for it.

And so we left that meeting eleven days ago with a clearer understanding of the issues at stake, and the realization that we had some unanswered questions. And so we agreed to pray for another week, and to seek input from various ones in the congregation regarding these questions.

This past Wednesday, we met again. We all left very encouraged. By the end of the meeting the Lord had worked in a wonderful way, and the result was a unanimous decision to bring to the congregation a recommendation. It's not just a recommendation about this building, but regarding the future direction for our church.

We believe it's time for WBC to take some strategic steps to show this community that we care for it. This is not either/or, but both/and. We're still passionate about training the saints through the teaching of the Word, and about world missions. But now it's time to roll up our sleeves regarding community care.

Here's the proposal. It involves several components.

One, we don't believe it's wise to go into debt for this venture. But thankfully, neither is it necessary. The board recommends that we sell the parsonage to its pastor and use the income towards the purchase of the township building. We would also then be able to use the General Fund money that's currently budgeted for the parsonage to pay for the utilities of the township building. Sherry and I have prayed about this, and believe it's wise and good for us, as well, to have our own home, with equity, and particularly, a place for Sherry to live should something happen to me.

Two, we see a tremendous opportunity to purchase this building and use it, not primarily for our own interests (although that could happen; meeting space for SS classes,

etc), but as a *Community Center*, with a strategic set of objectives designed to show this community that we care in tangible ways, all with a view towards communicating the gospel. More specifics about that in a moment.

Three, we also recommend that we move Pastor Matt's status from one-third time to one-half time, so that Matt can devote the time that will be needed to identifying specific ministries to serve our community, recruiting and resourcing leaders for these ministries, and helping with the ongoing needs to provide the volunteer base that will be needed. Since the general fund giving through the first six months of the year was \$300 *over* budget, we believe this increase is manageable.

I did several things that helped clarify that all three of these proposals are necessary. One, I called our State Representative, Dave Warren, to seek his input regarding churches that are doing this. That led to conversations with the secretary and Associate Pastor at Washington Heights Baptist Church. We learned that there's tremendous potential for influencing a community with such a venture. For instance, they use their facility for a monthly program to reach senior citizens, and 85% who come are from *outside* their church. We also learned that utility and maintenance costs exceeded their budget. That's why we don't believe it would be wise to add a large mortgage payment to accomplish the purpose. The other big challenge, we learned, is supplying the ongoing need for volunteers. This is why we believe it's vital that we increase Pastor Matt's position so he can devote the needed time to volunteer recruiting and support. We do not want to buy a building that will sit there empty.

Something else I did was to google "Churches that have community centers" and learned several things regarding potential ways to demonstrate care. That leads me to sharing the following specifics. Again, keep in mind this is still in the draft stage.

The Potential of a WBC Community Center

Our Mission

The WBC Community Center is a facility/ministry that exists to show in tangible ways that we care about our community, with a view towards communicating the gospel.

Our Motivation

Jesus Christ's work on the cross powerfully shows the love of God, and because of that great love, we seek to love God and love others by being a blessing to the community.

Our Programs

We see four primarily programs, although others will certainly be considered. The specifics listed below under the four headings are merely examples of what another church is doing with its community center (Faith Church in Layfayette, IN).

1. Community Assistance

Some examples:

- Food Pantry
- Clothing Closet
- Car Works
- Blood Drives
- Election Voting Center
- Red Cross Disaster Shelter
- Team SCCReM (construction ministry)
- Christmas for Everyone

- Community Thanksgiving dinner

2. *Community Partners*

Some examples:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Scioto County
- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Parent Mentor Program
- Community Foster Care
- Habitat for Humanity
- Lifecare Services
- Mental Health Shelter Ministry
- PETE's PALs (for kids with disabilities)

3. *Ministry to Seniors*

- Monthly Program for those above 55
- Providing services for seniors

4. *Ministry to Young Adults*

- Cup O'Faith Café – an attractive meeting space for relationship building

Are there other possibilities? Yes! We welcome your input. For this venture to work, the efforts of the whole church will be vital.

Are there challenges to this proposal? Yes. Here are some of them.

Challenges:

-Paying the purchase price for the building without going into debt (the board continues to investigate the possibility of selling the parsonage, and other options, including a love offering, towards purchasing without debt)

-Ongoing utility and maintenance costs

-Need for volunteers to do the ministries

-Drift to “social gospel”

-Federal and State laws regarding using church buildings for certain community groups, and doing things that may compete with “for profit” businesses (e.g. meeting space, coffee house, etc)

There's the proposal. We'll be making a similar presentation next Sunday morning, realizing some are not here today. We'll also be putting this in written form. The Lord willing, we will vote as a congregation on this proposal in three weeks (August 25).

I'd like to lead us in prayer, and then open the floor for a “church family” discussion. We'll do the same Sunday. Also, if you'd rather talk one on one, please feel free to contact your deacon, or me. It would be our joy to hear your thoughts.