

## Fresh Faith | Gear Up

Aaron Brockett | Ephesians 6

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It's good to see you. I want to just welcome all of our guests and first time visitors wherever you may be joining us from. We are one church gathering in multiple rooms and locations around our great city. I want to give a great big shout out to each and every one of our campuses. Come on. Put your hands together for all of our campuses. I know that a number of you watch on your screen around the globe or maybe a little bit later this week you're watching on demand. I want to welcome you wherever you may be tuning in from.

Today we're wrapping up this series called *Fresh Faith*. But before we jump into that just a couple of things I want to make you aware of. First is: Next Sunday we're going to begin a short, two-part series of messages called *On Edge*. We're going to be talking about the very heavy but very relevant subject of anxiety and depression.

So next Sunday... I've actually already got the message written and I'm excited about what God is going to do and say through this. We're going to be talking about freedom from anxiety next Sunday. So I want to encourage you, at all of our campuses, to be here for that. Invite a friend or family member to come with you.

I know that for some of you, you might get nervous because this is our subject and I understand that. I just want you to know that this is a subject that touches all of us, including me, and all of us find ourselves on this spectrum at some place and God actually has a lot to say about it. It's going to be an encouraging message so I want to encourage you to be here next week for that.

The second thing is what you saw in the Church News clip. Today is Stand Sunday and what that is is that as a church we just want to take this stand for vulnerable kids all across our country who are the victims of abuse and abandonment and neglect resulting in them being put into the foster care system.

This is a problem all over our country but it's a big problem in our state. According to some of the latest statistics coming from the Indiana Department of Child Services, in our state alone there are almost 16,000 children who are in foster care. Now that's gone up 67 percent since 2012.

On average kids in our state spend more time in the foster care system than in any other state—an average of about 570 days. And as a church we're just not okay with that for a number of reasons. The Bible says in numerous places that we should look after the orphans. In Psalm, chapter 68, God refers to himself as a father to the fatherless.

So we're going to be talking about this issue more and more as a church in the coming year. We're just asking the question of ourselves: What if we could take the size of our church and really lean in on this? Put a shoulder in on this by elevating the issue and seeking to eliminate it. And I think that we could actually reduce this statistic alone.

We talked about how in our city there may be people who don't believe what we believe and don't understand it but they're grateful that we're here. And this is one of those issues. Would you not agree? I hope you agree. I think that we can actually do something about it. There are three things for you to consider.

First of all, I know that a number of our families are already foster care families. But maybe God is laying this on your heart. Maybe you might want to sign up to foster a child—they are of all ages and backgrounds.

Number two: You could sign up to be a part of the Care Community. Care Communities come around foster families and just try to help them. They provide childcare and meals and try to help with different projects around the house.

Or, number three: You might just sign up to serve in one of the DCS offices. Regardless of where God is leading you to serve, you can get all of that information at: [tpcc.org/standsunday](http://tpcc.org/standsunday).

Well, I want to encourage you to get your Bible or maybe a Bible app and get to Ephesians, chapter 6. If you are just now joining us, we're actually wrapping up this series. But that's okay. I think that you'll be able to get caught up pretty quickly with where we've been. We've been in this series called *Fresh Faith*. And we've been taking a close look at this letter that Paul writes in the New Testament.

In fact, the majority of the books in the New Testament—they're letters to just regular, ordinary people not so different than you and me. And Paul writes this letter called Ephesians to a group of his friends living in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a fast-paced, high-pressured kind of environment and it was just sort of chipping away at their sense of peace. And I think many of us can relate to that.

It was just chipping away at their identity and the understanding of who they were. So Paul writes this well-timed letter to remind them. It's six chapters long. In the first three chapters he spends a lot of time talking about the character and the nature of God. It's thoughts on God. That's what theology is. He just sort of lays the groundwork.

He says: Listen. I don't know what your view of God is or the picture that's in your mind or what others have told you about him, but you need to know that he's a loving God, he's an intentional God, that he chose you in advance, that he decided long before you ever existed that he was going to set his love on you. He wasn't going to wait for you to earn grace. He was just going to give it to you in advance. He was going to make a way through Jesus.

And then in the last three chapters he says: Because of that understanding this is the way we should now live our lives. Live your life out of that truth. And that should change the way that you see others. It should change the way that you interact with them. It should change the way that you walk—stay upright in this upside down world.

Now as we conclude this in chapter 6, here's what Paul's going to do. He's going to pull back the curtain, so to speak, and he's going to show us that there is more going on behind the scenes of this life in this world than what we might imagine. Now I don't think it is too far of a stretch for us because I think that most of know that there is something not right in this world.

Would you not agree with this statement? Life is hard. Anybody agree with that? You can talk to me by the way. It's okay, even if you're watching on the screen just talk out loud. That's totally fine unless you've got ear-buds in and then that's weird. Would you not agree that life is hard? I think we'd all agree with that.

Let me just look at this past week. We see another shooting. We see wildfires. We see all of the turmoil going on around the world. I think, regardless of who you are, regardless of the generation you find yourself in, regardless of how you voted this last week, or your social views—every single person, globally, would say, "Yeah, life is hard." There's something about this life that's messed up.

What we can't seem to agree on is who's to blame and how to fix it. And Paul's actually going to say in this letter: There's actually a reason why life is so hard and it's not necessarily because there's somebody to pin the blame on. It's because we actually have an enemy who is attacking us behind the scene. So Paul is going to say that you and I—we're in the middle of a very ugly war that we can't necessarily see.

Look with me at verse 10 in chapter 6. He starts off here and he says a final word because this is the conclusion of his letter. He says, "**Be strong** in the Lord and in **his** mighty power. Put on all of God's," what's the word? Just say it with me out loud, "**armor** so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil."

So what's he say here? It says, "A final word: Be strong." He doesn't say get strong. That's different. Get strong would be: Get yourself to the gym and start throwing some weights around. Just get jacked. But he says: No, be strong. That's like instant. That's automatic. You can't get strong in a minute but you can be strong in a minute.

He says: It's by tapping into the Lord's power that is readily available to you by his Spirit and then he says put on all of God's armor, which is an indication of battle. He doesn't say put on God's t-shirt. He doesn't say put on God's parka. He says put on his armor, which shows us that we are actually in a battle whether we realize it or not.

Would you not agree that the gear that you pack determines where you are going? If you were packing for a vacation, which by the way there is a difference between a trip and a vacation—did you know that? A trip is when you are travelling with small kids. There ain't no vacation involved. That's work, alright? A vacation is when there are not kids. You can just let your hair down, right?

Regardless, you're packing for a trip or a vacation. It doesn't really matter. If you're packing and I kind of walked in while you were packing, you don't have to tell me where you're going. I kind of just creep up on you and look at what you're packing and I'll be able to tell you.

So, if you're packing a swimsuit and short sleeved t-shirts and sandals I'm like, "Well, you're going to the beach. I despise you. I want to go. It's cold in Indiana right now." But if you're packing boots and scarves and gloves I'm going, "Oh, you're headed to the mountains. You're headed to somewhere cold."

You don't want to get those mixed up. If you're going skydiving, you don't want to be wearing scuba gear and vice versa. The gear that you have is really important to where you are going.

Paul says here: Man, put on some armor. Now, when do you put on the armor? After you're in a battle or before you get into one? Yeah, before. You go ready. He says we need to put on this armor of God.

He says in verse 12, "For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the **unseen** world, against mighty powers in this **dark** world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."

So the first thing that he wants you and me to know is that we are in a battle. But the next thing he wants us to know is that we have an enemy. So if we were to outline these verses together, I might start this way. Paul is just simply saying: Know your enemy.

First of all know that you have one—and that's recognition that there is an enemy out there. I don't know if you've ever felt this before, but have you ever felt such animosity from another person that you knew they were thinking ill toward you. They wanted to hurt you in some way. You know what that feels like? Whether it's physical or whether it's emotional, that is not a fun feeling when you know that somebody doesn't like you and they want to bring you down.

Several years ago our family was traveling. We'd been gone for several weeks. And I get this phone call. I didn't recognize the number so I let it go to voice mail. And I listened to the message. It was somebody claiming to work for the IRS and he told me that there was a warrant out for my arrest and that I owed fifty-five hundred dollars in back taxes. I needed to call him right away.

Now, I don't know why I called him back but I did. I'll blame it on just being road weary. We'd been gone for several weeks. I thought, "Well, maybe they have shown up at my front door with an arrest warrant. And maybe I just need to call him and figure out what this is all about."

So I called him back and he's trying to fish. He's trying to get as much information out of me as he can. And I said, "I need to call my accountant." He said, "No, your accountant doesn't have anything to do with this. This is just between you and the IRS." I'm like, "Well, my accountant did my taxes. I think I need to call him."

He's just arguing back and forth with me. And finally he said, "Hey, this can all go away if you just give me your credit card number. I'll take care of the fifty-five hundred right now. And that's when I was like, "Now, wait a second. I don't think this sounds right." And I realized that this was a scam. I was a little late for the party but I got there, alright? And then the guy was like, "Well, good luck in jail," and hangs up the phone.

I've got to tell you, my palms were sweaty, my heart was beating out of my chest, and my adrenaline was pumping because I realized just how brazen he was. I'm sitting there going, "Man, he could care less about me. I've got a family to provide for and he was trying to take me down." Immediately I was like, "I've got to get on one of those identity theft things and I've got to protect myself." It is not a fun feeling to know you have an enemy.

And Paul is saying to us—this is a word of encouragement and love to say: Hey, listen. We've got an enemy here and it's not a flesh and blood person. It's not somebody that you can see in front of you. It's somebody that you can't see. And that may sound a little strange to some of us. Maybe some of us are a bit skeptical of that whenever he talks about an unseen world. I understand that. I can be kind of skeptical of that as well.

Paul believed in an unseen spiritual realm and Jesus did as well. Jesus was oftentimes in direct conflict with the demonic. In fact, Jesus even said—something he said to anchor his whole ministry is: I've come to bring liberty to the captives. That's the word he used. That's a terminology of war—that somebody is held captive by someone else. And Paul says this enemy, you can't see him but he's very, very real.

In 2 Corinthians he refers to him as an angel of light, which means that he will blend into whatever is required to deceive you and to cause you to put your guard down. In other words, he doesn't make himself obvious. Why would he?

He doesn't work... Some of us have seen way too many horror movies. And we think the unseen world, the dark world, the satanic is like... Satan is not going to announce himself by causing somebody's eyes to roll back in his head or to crawl up a wall or to levitate six feet up in the air. He's going to be much, much more subtle than that.

We've looked at this verse quite a bit. If you've been around here for a while—it's 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 8 where Peter warns us. He says, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great **enemy**,"

and then he names him, he says, “the devil. He prowls around like a roaring **lion** looking for someone to devour.”

There are a couple of things I just want to point out here. The first thing is that he says that we have an enemy. He has a name. His name is the devil or Satan. And he describes him as a lion, which means he’s part of the cat family, which just reinforces that cats are demonic, which is why I don’t like them, alright? You need to get them out of your house, alright? And don’t send me an email. Take it up with God. There’s a Bible verse for this right here, alright?

The second thing that he says here... He says: This enemy prowls. That’s like hunting terminology. And so he is like a hunter. And some of us may have thought that the idea of Satan...

Statistically speaking, more people believe in God than believe in Satan. So what comes to mind is this cartoon character with a pointy little mustache and horns and a pitchfork. And he would just rather you think of him that way and just kind of laugh it off as some sort of a cartoon character. I think that he is more than okay if you don’t believe in him. In fact, I think he really could care less if you believe in him or not because he is not after your affection he is after your destruction.

And hunters don’t announce their presence, they would rather their prey not see them. I don’t know how many of you are deer hunters or turkey hunters. I can guarantee you though you don’t walk out into the woods with a bunch of neon colors and announce your presence: Turkeys I’m here now. What do you do? You stay camouflaged. Paul says he will camouflage himself, he’ll be unseen, he’ll masquerade as an angel of light.

Now listen. I think the reason that some of us are skeptical of this kind of talk is because we know people who have maybe have fallen into one of two categories. There are a couple of mistakes when it comes to the unseen world. Some of us can attribute every single negative circumstance to satanic attack. You know those people? You work with some of those people? Every time they have a bad day it’s a satanic attack.

Author C. S. Lewis put it this way. He said, “When it comes to Satan, people usually fall into one of two errors—we either take him altogether too seriously,” in other words we give him too much credit, “or we do not take him seriously enough.”

So we take him too seriously. What does that look like? Well have you ever talked to somebody and you’re like, “Hey, how’s your day going?” And he’s just like, “Well it’s just really awful. I’m just under such demonic attack.” Well, what do you mean? “Well, my alarm didn’t go off this morning. And I got a flat tire on the way to work. And I went to the grocery store to get some avocados and they weren’t ripe. It’s just a lot of demonic attack.”

I don’t know that Satan is in your avocados, alright? We give him too much credit. Yes, he’s a lion. But I’d like to offer how Ann Voskamp says it, “He’s a lion on a leash.” Jesus has already

defeated him. I mean, you need to be aware of him but you don't need to be paralyzed by him, right?

The other area we can make of him is that we just neglect him all together. We just laugh it off as something silly. But the great preacher, Martin-Lloyd Jones, says it this way. He says, "I am certain that one of the main causes of the mess we are in today is because the devil is being forgotten."

We are so focused on thinking that that person over there is our enemy or that government over there is our enemy that we fail to see the real one. He says that your enemy is not flesh and blood. Your enemy is unseen and so make sure that you understand that because that other person—you might disagree with them all day long on every single issue—he is not your enemy though.

We have a common enemy who wants to take us down and one of the ways in which he does it is that he'll cause us to turn on each other. Why do you think that there is so much division in this world today? It's because he's distracting us with differences of opinion.

Here's the thing. What fuels your spiritual apathy and mine is that oftentimes we forget that we have an enemy. So what's worse than being in a war with someone that you can't see, not realizing that you are in it? You wander out into the battlefield in a pair sandals and shorts and a t-shirt when you should be wearing armor.

Have you ever noticed—has there ever been any time in your life when you just felt that some temptations were just too perfectly timed? It's like maybe you and your spouse haven't been connecting lately. You've been running a million miles an hour and you're like, "Man, something needs to be done. I know something needs to be done. I know that we need to connect."

So maybe you schedule a date night and you get the babysitter and you make the dinner reservations. You need this time to connect and on the way out the door you get into some petty argument over something you can't even remember and it just ruins the whole evening. Is that a coincidence or is that just something really well timed?

Maybe for some of us right after we make the decision to be generous the car needs a new transmission. Maybe for some of us when we're feeling lonely or stressed or tired there's that dark thought that flashes across our mind and we're like, "Where in the world did that come from?"

See, we have an enemy. He will take a shot at you when you're down and he actually will take an even bigger shot at you after some of your greatest victories. He's been doing this a lot longer than you've been around and so he knows how to deceive you. He knows when your guard is down. He knows that part of the body armor that's left you exposed because you haven't been paying much attention to it.

So sometimes his attacks are really subtle and sometimes they are really direct. And I think for many of us sometimes we just need to realize that maybe in life this is more than just struggles and temptations, but there is actually an enemy who is seeking to bring us down.

I don't know that I've ever said this from the stage but there have been strategic moments in my life when I've felt the presence of an enemy just planting thoughts in my head, getting me to self-talk to myself—deception. I would never preach those things. I know that they are not true. He's placing me in a moment of temptation where I know that if I went down that trail that it would cause a whole bunch of hurt. It's been those moments where I can almost feel the breath of an unseen enemy that has reinforced my belief and trust in a good God.

And some of us, we just need to recognize the kind of battle that we are in.

Now here's the good news. Some of you are like, "Please, get to the good news." Here's the good news. I'm just understanding this. This could drive you toward a greater dependence upon God like never before.

Hey, get this. You show me a room of passionate worshipers; I'll show you a room of people who know they're in a battle. You show me a room of people who are apathetic and just sort of like asleep at the steering wheel—unaware. They are unaware that they have an enemy.

So Paul says here at the end his letter. He says: Prepare for battle. And the battle cry is Jesus.

So he says in verse 13, "Therefore, put on **every piece** of God's armor," that's so vital. Don't put on eight pieces out of 10. Put on every single piece of God's armor, "so you will be able to **resist** the enemy in the time of evil." Well, when is the time of evil? I don't know. But I'm guessing when you least expect it—when you let your guard down. "Then after the battle you will **still** be standing firm."

So he says there that we are in a battle with an enemy who is powerful and deceptive and who fights dirty. And you and I are too weak and we are too prideful and we are too easily satisfied. And he says to just put on the armor that God's made available to you and to me. He shares it with us but you've got to take it up and you've got to put it on.

It says in verse 14, "Stand your ground," I love that. Do you know that there are only two places in the Bible where it tells us to flee? That's whenever we come face to face with financial sin or sexual sin. He says don't even get into the octagon with those two things. They are way too fueled for you. Be like Joseph, just run. Everything else is says: stand. It says stand firm, "putting on the **belt of truth** and the **body armor** of God's righteousness.

So he starts with the belt. The belt is so important, right? You don't want your pants falling down in a battle. You don't want your pants falling down anytime, right? Just put on that belt. He says that the belt is truth, it fortifies you. The belt is the truths of God's word. That's why we

rehearse it every single time we gather together here. We need the truth of God's word because where the truth fortifies you Satan cannot attack you. So the question is whose voice are you listening to?

And then he says put on the body armor of God's righteousness. Body armor is that thing that just covers over vital organs and he says the body armor that you put on is God's righteousness. That's what Lordship is.

I don't know about you, but anybody who puts on body armor what they're saying is, "I'm a mortal being. I can be taken down." And God says: Hey, you need my righteousness to cover over some of your vital organs because weakness is an advantage because dependence is the objective. And whenever we put on the body armor of God we're saying, "God, we are completely dependent upon you."

In verse 15 he says, "For **shoes**, put on the **peace** that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared." Everybody knows that a good pair of kicks is so important. Can I get a good Amen? They are. You're not ready to go 'til you've got your shoes on. And your shoes just provide some stability. Shoes, once again, indicate what you're getting ready to go do. Like, you're not going to go run a marathon in work boots. You've got to put on the right kind of shoes. And he says make sure that your feet are steady and ready for whatever it is that might be thrown at you.

In verse 16 he says, "In addition to all of these, hold up the **shield of faith**," that's interesting. He says hold it up; it doesn't do you any good down low. He says hold up the shield of faith, "to stop the fiery arrows of the devil." And this piece of armor communicates maybe more than any of the others that no matter how skilled a warrior you might be, you're not invincible. You can be taken down.

So what a shield says it that no matter how good you are on the battlefield, one random arrow can still take you down, which is why you need a full body shield because you and I, we are as sick as our secrets. And if you are hiding something that means that there is a place in your life that's uncovered.

You know what's better than one shield? Two shields. See how I did that right there? Do you know what's better than two shields? It's a whole bunch of shields. And do you know that there's a Roman shield that was designed to link up to the warrior's standing next to you? It's kind of like a picture of a wall and ceiling of shields protecting the warriors from arrows. When they got into a really heated battle, like they needed somebody to watch their backs and their sides...

Can I say that that's maybe a really good visual of what being in a group is, which is why we keep harping on you to get into one. It's not because I want all of you to be in one of our groups. If you don't want to be in one of our groups, it doesn't need to be here just get in one. And what a group is is a group of people you are meeting with sometime during the week in

which you're actually just getting vulnerable with, you're actually doing life together, you've actually linked up arms, actually they've got your back. You are linking shields together because we all can be taken down.

Then in verse 17 he says, "Put on **salvation** as your **helmet**, and take the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**." See, your head is where you think and everything else emanates from there. We're going to talk a lot about our head and our thoughts next week—next couple of weeks.

He says: Man, put on the helmet of salvation. Remember what God did for you through Jesus, which is why the book of Ephesians provides fresh faith. It's that Paul is just rehearsing who God is and where our salvation comes from and what that means.

And then he says to pick up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The sword of the Spirit is not your feelings, it's not your impressions, it's not your experiences, it's the word of God so pick it up and use it.

Then he wraps it up in verse 18. He says, "**Pray** in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. **Stay alert** and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere."

You know, we oftentimes forget that prayer is a piece of God's armor. James tells us that one of the most effective things we can do is pray. The prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective. So prayer is not the only thing that we do but it is the first thing that we do and we stay consistent in it.

So Paul says: Man, don't give up. Don't give up. Know that you have an enemy, prepare for battle, but don't give up. And all three of those things are so vital in our walk with God. Some of us, maybe we know we have an enemy, maybe we prepared for battle, but we gave up. We let our guard down. Or maybe we get to this place where we're like, "I don't think I need to keep the shield up anymore. I think I'm pretty good."

But see, here's the thing. If Jesus was attacked then what makes you and me think that we won't be? Right after Jesus was called into his ministry, when he began his formal ministry at the age of 30, he went off into the wilderness and he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. But that made him weak physically and that's when Satan attacked him. And Jesus was able to fend off all of his temptations through truth. He had put on, he demonstrated for us, the body armor that God has given to us.

So here's this thought or question that I just simply want to leave with you: Are you aware of the battle and do you know who your real enemy is and are you prepared? Don't give up.

See, I'm afraid that for many of us we're just sort of spiritually apathetic. Tonight, after you went to bed, if you woke up in the middle of the night and you heard the shattering of glass and you heard strange footsteps downstairs, and you knew that somebody had just broken into

your house, there was an enemy in your midst, I can guarantee you that you're not just going to shrug your shoulders and roll over and say, "Oh, well," and go back to sleep. But yet, many of us, that's what we're doing spiritually. We know that there's an enemy in front of us and half of the battle is just being aware of it and being alert.

Maybe today... Some of you have brilliant minds. You are intellectuals. And you know what? He's so good, the enemy is so good, he can take that intellect and he can use it against you by causing you to think that you're just simply too smart for God, too smart for all of this like unseen world stuff.

Some of you are really, really gifted. You've got amazing talents and abilities and he'll use those against you because he'll get you to be too dependent upon what you can do. So whatever it is, you and I, we're just simply out-matched. And for many of us the best thing we can do is just to recognize how weak we really are and to just cry out to God.

You know for me, one of the sobering realities is that just life in general, but even the Scriptures more specifically—when you study history and you look at the Bible very, very few people finish well. A lot of people, when they get down to the end of this life, maybe there are some decisions that they made that maybe ruined them financially, or maybe damaged them relationally. And I long to hit the tape at the end of my life knowing that I didn't live a perfect life, but I do want to finish well.

And the way in which we finish well is by being consistent and persistent every single day—not to be strong in our own power but to tap into the power that God wants to give us. Not to get strong, to be strong. To put on the armor that he has made available to us.

And I think that one of the first steps toward the fall is thinking that you can't fall. Do you know that only 30 percent of the leaders in the Bible who are clearly identified finished well? Let me say that again. Only 30 percent finished well, the rest didn't. So if they can't then what makes me think I can? I can't in my own power.

You want to know when Satan hits me the hardest? Usually right after I preach. Usually on Sunday nights. Or oftentimes in those seasons of my life when I feel like I've just achieved my greatest victory and I maybe let my guard down. Or maybe I allow too much self-talk to run through my mind and then all of a sudden he starts to deceive me with the same question he deceived Adam and Eve with: Did God really say?

So today as we spend just a few moments taking communion and reflecting upon the message and as we begin to sing, can I ask you at all of our campuses not to leave right now? It always seems like about 100 people bail out of here right after I pray. Maybe you've got places to go. I understand. Maybe you've just got to go to the bathroom. I don't want to judge you, alright? But the moments that we're getting ready to spend next are the most important moments of our time together because worship is war and we need this time to cry out to God who wants to give us his armor.

So let's do that today in a spirit of weakness.

Father, we come to you today and we need you because we have an enemy who has been at war way longer than we've been alive, way more skilled, and way more deceptive, and way more camouflaged than we oftentimes give him credit for. So God, we've just become aware of that. We're not afraid of him because you defeated him. Yet we want to be aware of his deceptions and how he seeks to cause chaos and division and hatred. God, in Jesus' name we push that stuff back and our battle cry is the name of Jesus.

So, God, I pray that as we reflect through communion and as we lift our voices together that you would be pleased by what you see and that it would fortify us and encourage us.

I pray that if there are some here now who are alone, or feel alone, that they would know by your Spirit that they are not. They are family. So meet us in this place, God. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.