



Fully Protected: A Look at PPE and the Armor of God

ABSTRACT: *The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic can be compared with a Christian's spiritual protective action of putting on the armor of God as described in the New Testament. The use and significance of each item of PPE is compared with the equivalent article of the spiritual armor of God.*

KEY WORDS: *armor of God, COVID-19 pandemic, nursing, personal protective equipment (PPE), spiritual protection*

A COMPARISON

The recent COVID pandemic made personal protective equipment (PPE) an integral part of nurses' lives. Nurses must utilize this equipment to minimize exposure to hazards, illnesses, and injuries (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). The use of PPE can be equated to the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17) that Christians should access daily, creating a firm spiritual defense against our enemy, the devil (1 Peter 5:8) and his schemes. Ephesians 6:12 outlines the battles fought every day among spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. Personal protective equipment is essential for

healthcare providers and also for the safety and health of people of all ages and cultures. To maintain spiritual health, believers need to take spiritual precautions by daily putting on the whole armor of God. As PPE offers layers of physical protection, the armor of God has multiple components for offensive and defensive measures of spiritual protection (see Table 1).

Hand Hygiene and the Helmet of Salvation

From the start of their training, nurses learn to clean their hands by performing hand hygiene; this is the most fundamental way to reduce the risk of infection. Hand hygiene is a reoccurring process, as it is completed before each patient interaction to minimize the transfer of microorganisms. Similarly, the helmet of salvation shields Christians from the heavy mental blows of Satan. This piece of spiritual armor is vital because without it, believers' minds and thoughts are exposed to many injurious assaults. When believers apply the truth of Scripture to situations of daily life

(the helmet of salvation), they grow in their faith. While choosing to follow Jesus as LORD—salvation is a one-time event—it is the only beginning of the Christian's journey: the process of becoming more like Christ. This process is ongoing and requires daily maintenance, like the continual process of hand hygiene.

N95 Respirator and the Breastplate of Righteousness

The N95 respirator protects users from liquids and airborne particles that could contaminate the nose and mouth (U.S. Food and Drug Administration,

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2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) describes how these masks further safeguard users because of the capacity to filter out small and large particles during inhalation. Interestingly, the N95 respirator can filter 95% of small air particles, hence the name (CDC, 2020). Similarly, Christians use the breastplate of righteousness as a weapon of defense, shielding their hearts from desires that are not godly, just as the N95 respirator shields the upper respiratory tract from harmful particles.



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Gown and the Belt of Truth

The PPE gown is a layer of protection that prevents harmful substances from coming into physical contact with the skin or clothing. The gown also decreases the potential for health-care workers spreading infection between patients, as it is changed after each patient. Just like nurses tie gowns securely around their waists, Christians equip themselves with the belt of truth. What was the belt used for in the Roman army of New Testament times? Known as the cingulum or balteus, the belt held the scabbard, the holder for the sword. From the belt “hung strips of leather to protect the lower body” (United Church of God, 2020, para 3). “Imagine an overzealous ancient Roman soldier charging into battle—but without his belt, and consequently without a weapon!” (United Church of God, 2020, para 5). This soldier would be unprepared to fight, as the belt girds on the other pieces of the armor. Truth should cleave, or adhere tightly, to believers as a belt cleaves to the body (United Church of God, 2020). Christians are called to have the truth at their disposal at all times to confront and overcome the deception and lies of the enemy.

Gloves and the Sword of the Spirit

According to Medline Plus (2020), “wearing gloves helps protect both patients and health care workers from infection” (p. 1). Thus, it is vital for nurses to don gloves when assessing, treating, and caring for patients. Gloves

also enable nurses to safely administer medications and therapies.

Similarly, the sword of the Spirit, which Ephesians 6:17 says is the Word of God, helps Christians battle spiritual adversaries. Hebrews 4:12 describes the sword this way: “For the Word of God

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is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (NIV). Kioulachoglou (n.d.) in the *Journal of Biblical Accuracy* states, “The Word of God is the best offensive weapon that we could have and the only one by which we can beat the enemy” (p. 2).

Face Shield and the Shield of Faith

The face shield deflects potentially hazardous elements from the nurse, such as projectile vomit or sputum, as well as things not seen, such as airborne pathogens. According to the CDC (2021), face shields provide barrier protection for the face and related mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, and lips) as an alternative to goggles. The shield of faith protects a Christian in encounters with spiritual enemies, as noted in Ephesians 6:16 which directs

believers to “take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (NIV). According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (ESV). Believing in Christ as LORD requires faith in him and in his sovereignty. Although faith in God does not necessarily prevent one from being attacked by evil, faith repels the attacks. “Faith protects us from Satan’s attacks because faith takes hold of the power and protection of God himself” (Duguid, 2019, p. 3).

Feet Coverings and the Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

When preparing to enter a patient’s room, a nurse may put on shoe covers along with the rest of the PPE, another step in being physically ready to care for a patient. Similar to the precautionary physical preparation required to enter a patient’s room, the Christian nurse should be ready to come alongside patients to offer comfort, to serve, and to advocate on patients’ behalf. The shoes of the Gospel of peace represent the readiness every believer needs to share with others the Good News of life in Jesus. Isaiah 52:7 says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation” (ESV). As appropriate for the setting, we can be prepared at all times to share the faith we possess. “Putting on these shoes means that we are ready, whenever the provider of the armor calls us, to move for the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Kioulachoglou, n.d., p. 2).

DIFFERENCES

Although many similarities exist between the armor of God and PPE, there are also stark differences. First, PPE is based on best practices which constantly change. What would have been acceptable PPE garb 10 years ago

Table 1. PPE and Armor of God

PPE Item	Armor Item
Handwashing	Helmet of salvation
N95 respirator	Breastplate of righteousness
Gown	Belt of truth
Gloves	Sword of the Spirit
Face shield	Shield of faith
Shoe covers	Shoes of the Gospel of peace



is not standard attire now. In addition, nurses eventually remove PPE; it is worn for a specific time when nurses must protect themselves as well as their patients, as PPE's purpose is to "prevent contact with the infectious agent, or body fluid that may contain the infectious agent, by creating a barrier between the worker and the infectious material" (CDC, 2021, p. 7). PPE is fairly easy to don and doff and does not require much practice to get used to, but it provides invaluable physical protection against hazardous substances.

In contrast to PPE, the armor of God is a collection of strategies and weapons that enables believers to fight the evil intentions of the adversary, the devil. These spiritual weapons are forged on absolute truth, God's Word. Therefore, Christians do not fight their battles alone. The armor of God is for constant use. A believer must always be prepared to fight off temptation and spiritual perils. "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NLT).

CONCLUSION

When tempted by Satan while on earth, Jesus fought back with the truth of Scripture (Luke 4:1-13). Likewise, we can be ready, attired in the armor of God, to take a defensive or offensive

stance. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV). Learning to rightly handle the Word of truth takes

Ongoing practice of wearing the armor of God will shield believers from the spiritual enemy.

diligence and practice. By utilizing the pieces of the armor of God, believers will gain confidence in God and will have supernatural protection from Satan, who, according to John 8:44 is "a liar and the father of lies" (NIV).

During the COVID pandemic, people sometimes have worn their masks underneath their noses or on their chins, which does not provide the protection needed to stop the spread of the virus. However, nurses who care for COVID patients have been extremely careful; they have made sure their PPE is worn properly. In this same fashion, believers need to correctly put on the armor of God, a sure defense against the schemes of our spiritual enemy. 🙏

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