

Sessions – Godbytes – myfishbites.com

Godbytes

[Download the PowerPoint for this session here](#) (as a zip file)

We live in a computerized, deiced and inter-connected world through the web. Just 20 years ago people would never have predicted the kind of world we have now. The web can be used for great good, but it is also used for great evil and really just reflects the world around us. It's also quite hard to stay safe and keep our computers, tablets, phones from viruses and harmful things.

In this session, we're going to look at some of the ways we can protect ourselves spiritually, but using computer security to illustrate!

The session is fairly long, with 6 different sections so it may be a good idea to break it down to use over two sessions. The PDF download is in two sessions to help you.

1. Passwords



Everyone knows that whether it's for your computer itself (for security) or whether it's when you're using internet sites or any kind of thing on the web, you need a password - and you need a strong password that people will struggle to think of or hack into.

A bad password is the name of your dog or cat or birthday! A good password can either be a long one like:

RabbleRousingIsGoodForNOTHING. Or something totally random like:
a*J71Pev/o6zZ!4IKy

In 2012, the Right Reverend James Langstaff apparently suggested that we could use Bible verses as passwords [according to one report](#) (link checked April 2019). Maybe this could improve Bible knowledge all round!

So let's start at the beginning - being made right with God!

Unfortunately there are quite a lot of even Christians making wrong claims like Jesus isn't the only way to God or that everyone will be with God in heaven, whether they have accepted Jesus or not. In this wrong way of thinking, being good or seeking after God is seen as the way to heaven. While we don't fully understand God's ways and won't know everyone who will be in heaven, we do know what the Bible says.

Matthew 7.14 tells us that not everyone will be in heaven - ["But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."](#)

This makes God incredibly sad.

The truth is that Jesus is the only 'password' - the only way to God.

John 14.6 says, "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

There are many other places we can go to prove that Jesus is the only way - places like Ephesians 2.13, Hebrews 2, Hebrews 9, Romans 5 and on and on it goes. Jesus is the legal route to God - only Jesus paid the price that our sin cost. Only Jesus paid the price, so Jesus is the only way! We'll look at one other place which gives us the passcode to be made right to God...

John 10.7-10 – "Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Yet again, we find that Jesus testifies that he is the gate. He doesn't say that he is 'a gate' or 'one of many gates' - Jesus is the only gate that enables us to be 'saved' (to be made right with God). If you have a password on your computer to login for example, you can only use this password. You may get lots of characters wrong or you may just get one character wrong, but either way the password will be wrong. You may be the best person in the world, but the path to God is only one way - by accepting Jesus.

2. Firewall



A firewall is something that works like a wall around an ancient city. It protects the city from bad people getting in and stops the wrong people escaping. The firewall does this for your computer and should always be ON. So should our defences be ON, ready and armed!

The firewall that we have comes from the various 'weapons' that God has given us to stand strong. They include prayer, worship, thanking God, knowing the Bible and using it as a form of defence and attack (speaking it, or saying it out loud as if the Bible verse is just for you, or for your situation). We need every weapon that we can use. But we must also make sure that we don't "leak" any information out of us. What does this mean? It means asking God to keep your tongue from speaking any evil or even speaking negatively about

yourself. It means getting good people around you to support you and to be a support for them. Let's check out what the Word says:

Ephesians 6.13-18 (MSG) – “Be prepared. You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it’s all over but the shouting you’ll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You’ll need them throughout your life. God’s Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other’s spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.”

In Zechariah 2.5 we find that God (talking about the city of Jerusalem) says, *"And I myself will be a wall of fire around it," declares the Lord, "and I will be its glory within."* God was (and is) the original firewall !

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Bible, we find that the people started to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. It was a long process, but with Nehemiah's leadership and God's help, they did it. They protected the city with the walls. Each person did their duty - building the wall, standing against opposition and being prepared with their swords to fight (today we don't use swords but the Bible which is the 'sword' of God because we're fighting evil, not people)! So stand strong with God's help, keep your defences up and know that God is your firewall - pray Psalm 91.1 for God to be your protection.

3. ddoS



This stands for 'distributed denial of service' and is a way of people stopping access to a website, making the website either incredibly slow or un-workable. This kind of attack floods the website server with huge amounts of data making the website or even web hosting company stop dead in its tracks.

What about us? We are overloaded with information today. In some circles it's call 'infobesity', letting us know that 3/4 time we're awake we are taking in information. Americans 'consume' 100,500 words each day. But information itself isn't necessarily bad. But it is when there is loads of bad and wrong things that are fed to people every day. This can be bad news, evil things on the internet, false information and thinking that deliberately goes against God. We have to protect our heart and mind from these things.

So how do we protect our hearts and minds from a 'DDOS' attack?! We find one way in the Bible as we focus our minds on God and on what is good and Godly, instead of allowing negativity and wrong thinking to mess with our lives! As in our picture, it's like being infected with deadly scorpions that can kill. So don't touch the scorpions or allow them anywhere near you! Your defence is knowing, speaking and obeying the Word of God - the Bible:

Philippians 4.8-9 – “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Psalms 34.3 – “Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.”

So what can we do? Turn off the TV when you know you shouldn't watch it; choose not to visit dodgy internet sites; walk away from so-called 'friends' who feed your mind with bad ideas; choose not to gossip about people. Instead do what The Message translation of Philippians 4.8 says:

“I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.”

4. Viruses, Spyware, Adware and Malware



A virus in the medical world is something that attacks the body and makes a person unwell. The computer virus does the same thing to your computer, designed only to do harm to your computer or be used for criminal purposes. To protect yourself, you need anti-virus software, maybe anti-spyware software and to make sure that you don't visit bad websites or download bad software.

No-one wants to be infected with a virus. At their 'best' they can make you feel pretty rough. At their 'worst' they can kill you. This same idea is true in our spiritual lives, our life with God. We need to be on guard against viruses - against our enemy, the devil. We find this truth in Ephesians 6.12:

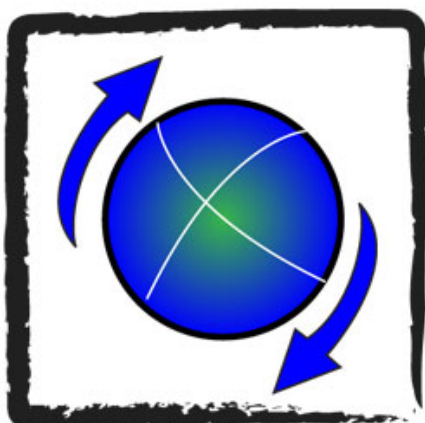
Ephesians 6.12 – “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

So how do we prevent ourselves from getting viruses? Well, we need to know both the anti-virus maker and the one who can disinfect us! Just like going to a hospital to get better, or using bleach to kill germs, there are times where the virus needs more treatment than other times! In a spiritual way, there are times where we get people to pray for us; when we maybe even fast (giving up something like food for a short time to focus on God and ask him to break through) and pray. We may even need professional help (eg if you've been addicted to alcohol or drugs etc). But God will also help us be restored back and to help get rid of the virus as we work with him!

2 Corinthians 10.4-5 – “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

We also have another secret weapon! God has given us the power to fight off the enemy when he messes with our head. What goes on in the head that needs help? Well, it can be thinking wrong things, it can be anger, lust, not forgiving people. Or it can be things like doubt, fear, feeling useless, feeling ugly, feeling unwanted or not feeling good enough. None of these things come from God. When God fills our life it's with good things - like love, joy, peace, kindness. So when the enemy tells you lies (when you think things that are bad), you can actually say 'no, get out of my head, I refuse to think about that. I am going to think what God says about me. I am loved by God. I'm his child. He chose me' and things that God says about you - truth and stuff that will bring you help and life.

5. Software Updates



When you get a computer, it comes with a different operating system - Mac, Windows, Linux, Google/Android etc. But over time, the software needs updates within the version of software (eg Mac 10.7.4 to 10.7.5) and you may even need to upgrade the software to the latest version (eg Mac 10.8).

So how does this play out in our Christian lives? Well, the good news is that when we accept Jesus in our life, we don't need any other 'software' (even though the 'hardware' may grow a bit weary over the years!) God puts his Holy Spirit in our lives and gives us everything we need

2 Peter 1.3 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

So we know that our 'operating system' from God (the Holy Spirit) has given us everything we need to live for God. But we do need 'updates' all the time. Like any good 'computer or phone operating system', we need these to stay fresh as we follow God. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 4 that we are like lights that shine increasingly brightly. 2 Corinthians 3.18 also tells us we are going from 'glory to glory'. Stuff in the world may be getting worse, but we're getting better if we're following God as he helps us become more like him - sounds like lots of spiritual upgrades and updates to me! But we have our part to play too:

Romans 12.1-2 tells us this, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

And here is one of the things we can do to stay 'updated' - we give ourselves completely to God and live totally and only for him. We say to God, 'I give you all my life, I give you all I am'. God has already given his life for us so we can live (John 10.10) but Paul lets us know in Romans 12 that we need to make an active decision to give our whole selves to God. Paul tells us to be a living sacrifice - to serve God and people.

We should also make a decision not to do what everyone else does around us but to be different and be like God. So don't join in with wrong things like bullying, gossip, violence or things we know aren't right.

In a way, we're a bit like a cup - whatever goes in comes out. So if we fill up with God, we pour out God!

6. Backups



It's really important that when you have a computer, you keep all your files backed up. This can be to 'the cloud' (over a network like the internet) or to a physical location like another hard drive, computer or memory stick etc.

Backing up is like having a spare set of keys for your house in case you lose the first set. It's always worth backing up data as you never quite know when you may need that information or when something may go wrong!

A few years ago I heard a talk from a person who had been imprisoned

for their faith in a country that imprisons people simply because they are a Christian. They talked about how they and other people had managed to stay strong, while other people had actually given up on their faith (and been released from prison). The man who stayed strong said that it was because he had learned the Bible and really got the Bible deep down on the inside of him. He didn't just know a bunch of words, he knew the Bible and God.

It's a bit like this... If you're really into breakdancing and practice every week as part of a crew, you may know about the best break dancers or the pioneers, about the moves and all their names, the warm ups, facts about the best surface to break on, have video clips of bboys and bgirls performing etc. You will really 'know' about breakdancing. But say you then go to school and have a history test on something you're not into but have to learn - say 'controlling plant growth', you may revise a bit to get through but it's not something you really know.

[2 Timothy 3.16 \(MSG\) – “Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another - showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”](#)

2 Timothy tells us how important the Bible is - reminding us that it's all from God and all useful. It shows us truth; exposes sin and rebellion; it corrects our mistakes and trains us to live God's way. The Bible actually shapes us to be ready to do all God wants us to. Now imagine you didn't have the Bible, you wouldn't have this truth; wouldn't have all this training and help and wouldn't be ready to do all God wants you to do and enjoy doing!

In the longest Psalm in the Bible (calling it The Word), Psalm 119 we learn about the importance of the Bible. The Psalm writer stores up the Word in their heart so they don't sin; they think about the Word night and day; they love the Word of God; they put their hope in it; they put the Word into song etc. So the Bible is incredibly important. It's not just an instruction manual for life, it's life itself! Jesus said that man doesn't live just by bread, but by every word that God speaks! The Bible = true life so make a commitment to know the Bible, speak it out, pray it out, think about what it means and live it out.

Response

You may want to have some kind of response here... Maybe a prayer or some kind of action where the young people can respond. One idea is to have a laptop available and get young people to type up something as a response to what has been said (obviously delete the less than serious entries!) You could even then project the responses on to the screen, or save them and message them around the group later.