

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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GIRDED WITH TRUTH

Parker Webster

If forced to surrender one piece of armor, many would instinctively protect the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, or the sword of the Spirit. A belt might seem less vital as a disposable article of clothing. Yet Paul lists it as essential armor, underscoring its strategic importance in ancient Roman culture. Without the belt of truth firmly buckled, the other pieces shift and fail under pressure.

Paul says we should “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth” (Eph. 6:14). This girding forms the foundational piece of the armor of God, securing every other element so that the believer can stand firm amid opposition (Eph. 6:11, 13). Paul is communicating a practical and pertinent truth to the Ephesian church: truth binds every member and every activity together. Every piece of armor Paul describes holds value and purpose, yet all are tied together and made effective by the belt of truth. It is this “girding” or “buckling” that enables the rest of the armor to function with stability and strength (Eph. 6:14-17).

At times believers live as though truth alone suffices. We walk into battle, and to use Paul’s imagery, we stand against the “evil one” with nothing but a leather belt—perhaps even one with a great big Texas rodeo buckle. We quickly discover that we were unprepared for battle. We practically live this way because we are influenced by a culture drastically drifting from objective reality. We actively resist relativism by standing for truth (John 17:17; Ps. 119:160), yet truth detached from love quickly becomes rigid and harsh. Scripture repeatedly shows that truth reaches its greatest power when united with love and the other pieces of armor, such as the breastplate of righteousness and the gospel of peace. Separated, truth risks blunt force that

wounds rather than restores, while love risks sentimentality that compromises with error. Combined, they produce the stable core needed for faithful endurance (1 Thess. 5:8; Eph. 4:15).

Paul’s desire is that this God-given truth, joined with love (Eph. 4:15), will produce greater resilience in the day of testing. He wants us to completely and competently “withstand” (Eph. 6:13). Using every spiritual protection

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THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ross Haffner

In the daily spiritual battles we all face, God does not leave His people defenseless. The Apostle Paul urges believers to “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). This armor is essential for every Christian engaged in the good warfare (1 Tim. 1:18). As Paul told Timothy, we must “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” refusing to become entangled in the affairs of this life so that we may please the One who enlisted us (2 Tim. 2:3-4). The command is clear: “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:14).

The Roman soldier’s breastplate offers a powerful picture of this piece of armor. Earlier metal breastplates were rounder and could prove deadly if a soldier fell; he would lie helpless on his back like an overturned turtle. By the first century, the Romans had adopted the *lorica segmentata*—overlapping metal strips that covered the chest and shoulders. This design provided excellent protection against spears, swords, and arrows while allowing mobility. In the same way, the breastplate of righteousness protects the believer’s vital spiritual organs.

What Is Righteousness?

Righteousness is simply doing what God requires—living in alignment with what is right in His sight. The Lord declares in Isaiah 45:19, “I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.” When we obey God’s Word, we are acting righteously. Paul connects this to faith and love when he writes, “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love” (1 Thess. 5:8). Even God Himself is pictured wearing “righteousness as a breastplate” (Is. 59:17).

Righteousness That Comes from God

Scripture reveals these important truths about this righteousness:

- 1) It can and must be known. God has not hidden it. “The righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed... through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe” (Rom. 3:21-22). The Lord speaks openly so that we may find Him (Is. 45:19).
- 2) It can and must be achieved. Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). For Christians, putting on the breastplate of righteousness means reflecting God’s righteous character in daily actions. It is faith in Christ that produces a changed life.
- 3) It cannot and must not be boasted in. Our own attempts at righteousness are insufficient. “For by grace you have been saved through faith... not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). We wear armor God Himself provides, the righteousness that comes “through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

The Protective Power of Righteousness

A righteous life guards the heart against emotional guilt and the weight of sin. When we walk in obedience, we experience the confidence that comes from pleasing God (Heb. 11:6). This breastplate separates us from the ways of the world. It makes us stand out, much like a Roman soldier would have stood out in a crowd. This separation sometimes draws opposition. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10). Jesus warned that the world would hate those He chose out of the world (John 15:18-19), yet He also called us the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Our good works should ultimately point others to the Father.

Righteousness protects us from the enemy’s accusations. Satan is “the accuser of our brethren”

(Rev. 12:10), but we can stand confident in our armor. The old life of slavery to sin has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 5:24). We no longer live as we once did.

Every believer faces spiritual conflict, but God has provided everything we need. By faith, put on the breastplate of righteousness. Let it guard your heart and enable you to stand firm in the evil day. A life clothed in God's righteousness shines as a powerful testimony to the transforming power of the gospel.

CW



FEET SHOD WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL...

Tyler Hill

Before a soldier would ever lift his sword, he laced his sandals. For him, sure footing could be what turned the tide in the heat of battle. The shoes of the legionnaire do not fight the battle, nor do they have any offensive quality. They burrowed lightly into the dirt and helped the soldier to stand his ground.

Paul writes to struggling Christians about their common goal: to win a spiritual war. This passage encourages believers to prepare for constant battle with evil by *living out* and *living in light* of the victory achieved by Christ. The “preparation of the gospel of peace” is not a riddle to the readers. Peace has already been explained in his greeting (Eph. 1:2), in his declaration on unity in doctrine (Eph. 4:3), and by describing Jesus as the author of peace

and capable of mending the tear between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-18). Paul was aware of the cultural pressures in Ephesus and might have found the image of a soldier taking charge against the enemy an inspiration to help cut ties with idolatrous living and disunity with the body. While there are certainly offensive qualities to the armor, the stability that ties it all together is the gospel. As the primary focus of “fighting,” the result will be more soldiers in the fight rather than painful physical hostilities.

The gospel is the minister of peace between man and God (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). The center of that gospel is Jesus. Being the believer's peace (Eph. 2:14), He created and preached peace (Eph. 2:15, 17). Everyone who finds His message is called to live as someone who is concerned with bringing about peace (Matt. 5:9). In doing this, God gives peace with Himself, bringing others to reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

Paul urges them to “be strong,” “stand,” and “wrestle” (Eph. 6:10-12), indicating proactivity in all areas of acquiring this armor. That same dynamic action is described in procuring the sandals by the concept of “preparation” (Eph. 6:15). The role of the gospel of peace is to produce personal peace through our newfound connection to Jesus (Phil. 4:7). The result will always be the ambition to reveal the peace of Jesus; this might be on a personal level, but it could also be seen on an evangelistic level.

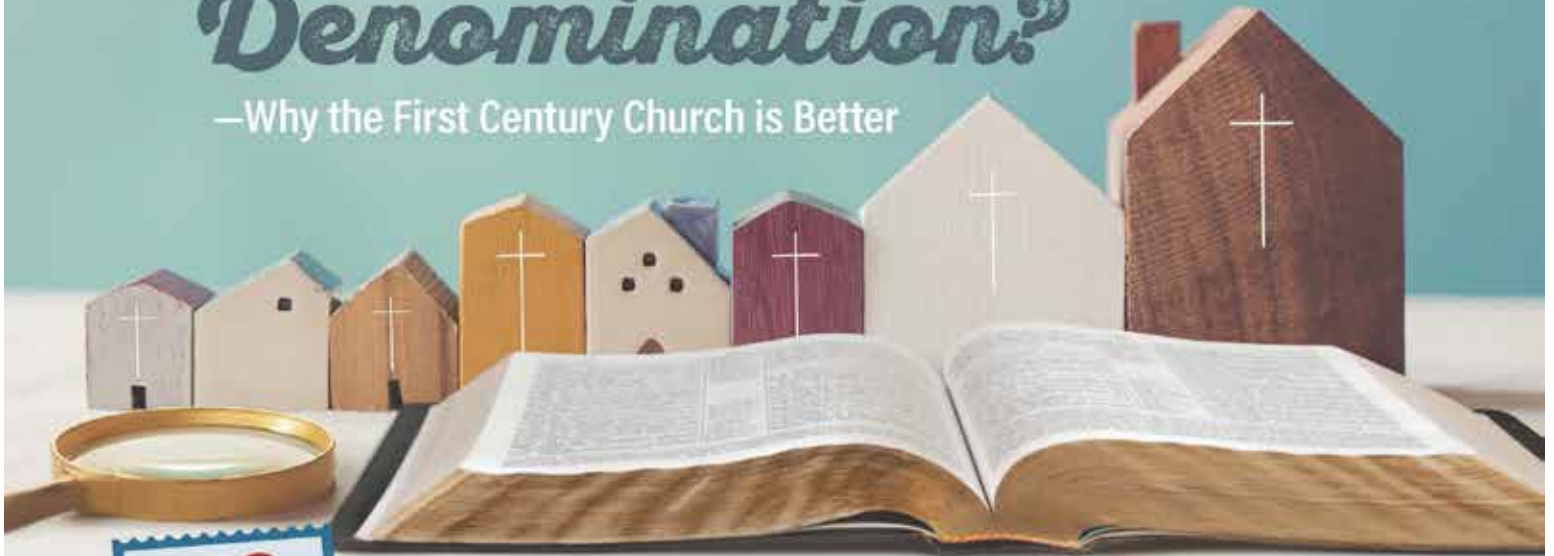
In an effort to secure domestic peace, God helped the Israelites during the final plague in Egypt. To be spared from the death of the firstborn, they were partly instructed to eat with sandals on their feet (Exod. 12:11). Having shoes on one's feet is the picture of readiness. The passage from which Paul quotes is Isaiah 52:7: “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Paul borrows from praising imagery for those “who bring[s] good news.” This reveals the outward function of both the armor as a whole and this specific item. None of the pieces of armor should be viewed as isolated. Therefore, each item produces the same goal. While there are forces of darkness in the world, we only attack Satan. While there are great personal attacks in the world, we only defend against Satan.

The Christian should expend great effort in finding the peace that is in the gospel. Look for the assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13), the unchanging promise of grace (Eph. 2:8-9), and the finished work of Christ (Heb. 12:2). When Christians pursue this perspective, then they are

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DO WE HAVE TO JOIN A *Denomination?*

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ready to dig their heels in and withstand Satan's attacks mentioned in the next verse. Only then will they be adequately prepared to reach out to the rest of the world that is in need of this same peace. Jesus said, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35). Tie up the sandals of readiness with the gospel of peace, not to fight the world, but to defend His peace. Showing the world that they, too, need the peace that only Jesus can give them in a world fractured by sin and suffering.

CW

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Phil McIntosh

The Christian's experience in this life can be pictured by the imagery of a three-fold cord comprised of strands identified as God, the person, and the community (Eccles. 4:9-12). When one becomes a Christian they become one with God and also a part of the body of Christ, which Scripture tells us is the church (Col. 1:24). Since the collective body is comprised of many individuals, it logically follows that the strength of the individual impacts the strength of the collective. This was the closing focal point of Paul in his epistle to the Ephesian Christians; there he utilized three different words to urge them to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10).

Strength is of great import because the journey toward Heaven is arduous and the battle waged on earth is interminable. The Adversary, the leader of the forces of evil, is constantly on the prowl (1 Pet. 5:8-9). All who have devoted their souls to God have entered into the ranks as a soldier of Christ and should be thus engaged with their focus (2 Tim. 2:3-4). The war of the church is a spiritual and mental warfare which is fought on the battleground of the heart and against the backdrop of two armies pitted against one another until the world is called to its end. Each individual Christian is valuable—both as it pertains to their own continued security in Christ and their assistance offered to their fellow soldiers. As one examines all of the spiritual resources at their disposal to successfully execute

the tasks of a "good soldier" they should ensure their shield is operational and ever in hand.

A shield is a defense whereby one is protected from that which otherwise could maim, dismember, or kill. The Roman army's shield, the *scutum*, was referred to as "the legionaries' central means of defense."¹ These shields were rectangular in form and slightly convex to deflect arrows or swords away from the soldier. They also were coated with thick leather and could thus repel such things as fire on the tip of an arrow.² The size and shape of the *scutum* is said to have protected the vital parts of the soldiers' body. Additionally, it allowed them to fight with more efficiency in close combat, even allowing soldiers to push the enemy backward and thus strike with the sword.³ Furthermore, the long, straight edges of the rectangle afforded soldiers the ability to stand side by side and provide protection for the entire unit, implemented by holding their shields together in a formation known as the *testudo* (or "tortoise") formation. Thus equipped they could fight together under a cover of a "protective shell" held in place by each individual soldier. Each soldier's shield protected not only themselves, but their fellow soldiers around them.

God desires spiritual success for everyone (1 Tim. 2:4). Those who faithfully finish the fight are guaranteed to hear the Lord invite them into Heaven on that final day (Matt. 10:22; 2 Tim. 4:7-8). The church, the army of the Lord, will gain entrance into that wondrous eternal abode and you can ensure that you are included in that number if you activate and cultivate a working, flourishing faith. The Roman army was widely successful because their culture implemented purposeful "training and discipline" and they fought "as a unit."⁴ The faith which comes from God's word (Rom. 10:17) and abounds within your person (John 8:31-32) can make you an indispensable soldier in the army of Christ. A working, flourishing faith allows you to simultaneously experience the protective power of God over your soul and express the mutually beneficial defense for the souls of others as you stand shoulder to shoulder for the Lord against the Adversary who will ultimately meet his demise while you live on in eternal security.

¹ Nisa Iduna Kirchengast, "Shields for Rome's Legions: The Fabrica Scutaria of Carnutum," *Carnutum Magazine*, <https://www.carnuntum.at/en/magazine/shields-for-romes-legions-the-fabrica-scutaria-of-carnutum/1207>

² Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, "Meyer's NT Commentary: Ephesians 6:16," BibleHub, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ephesians/6-16.htm>

³ "The Testudo Formation," *UNRV Roman History*, <https://www.unrv.com/military/testudo-formation.php>

⁴ "The Roman Army," *BBC.co.uk*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6qt7yc#zgm33j6>

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HEROES OF FAITH

WEDNESDAYS | 7 PM

June 10: *Noah*—Steven Petrosky
June 17: *Job*—Bill Siebert
June 24: *Abraham and Sarah*—Alan Putnam
July 1: *Moses*—Sam Hatchitt
July 8: *Joshua*—Bobby Burris
July 15: *Samuel*—Russell Speir
July 22: *Daniel*—Winston Kinser
July 29: Congregational Singing
August 5: *Elijah*—Russell Haffner
August 12: *Esther*—Ty McClellan
August 19: *Shadrach, Meshach, and
Abednego*—Adrian Coward
August 26: *Abel*—Branyon May
September 2: *David*—Ross Haffner

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Consider how a helmet would focus a person. By restricting their vision with the borders of the helmet, the soldier would have an easier time marching towards the enemy, without the risk of being distracted. These potential distractions could cost the soldier his life, but also the lives of the soldiers around him. This spiritual imagery of the salvation of God as the borders (filter) for our eyes, how might this impact the way we think and see the world? This is why a helmet originating from/belonging to (the word “of” referring to the origin) would be used to represent our salvation. Because it protects the mind of the inner man, not only from danger but also needless distraction, allowing us to see the world with true spiritual focus, helping us interact circumspectly, even in the most difficult situations (Eph. 5:15-21).

Now how does one put on their helmet, and keep it on? First consider how salvation is gained and from whence it comes: From the Father, through the Son, guaranteed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). Choosing now to walk by the life He has given in Christ, not as we once walked as dead, but made alive by blood and faith in baptism (Eph. 2:1-13). Therefore Paul gives his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21, wherein he states, “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fulness of God;” (Eph. 3:16-19).

Seeing the helmet, which guards the mind and filters the thoughts, is paired with the “Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;” (Eph. 6:17), is placed on by Christ to strengthen the inner man with might by the riches of His glory. It is maintained through the continual knowledge of the Word that one may comprehend the complete and full love of Christ with the brethren, your fellow soldiers. It is about the mindset we must use to be pleasing to God.

It is incumbent upon us to choose to continue to keep the helmet on, just like all the other pieces of equipment, allowing the salvation that we have been blessed with, paired with the Word, to guide our thoughts and actions towards the goal. Fighting the battles we must, knowing God has already made us victorious, just as Christ, our conquering King and savior.

CW

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Michael Wesolowski

The armor of God, found in Ephesians 6:14-18, is broken down into six distinct pieces of equipment. As a part of this protection, the Helmet of Salvation is given by God to His Christians. How do we put it on, and keep it on? In order to answer these questions, we must first ask why a helmet?

The Roman military pragmatically designed their helmets to be easily identifiable, especially in the heat of battle. Also, a Roman soldier was meant to advance toward the enemy, which their helmets reflected, providing maximum protection with deliberate front facing focus. Applying this spiritually, God designed Christians to be distinct from the world, modeled after Christ and desires for us to be focused, especially on and off the battlefield, as victorious conquerors.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

John Voss

There are two opposing forces in this world – God and Satan. As children of God, we are at war with Satan. He is our enemy, and we cannot allow ourselves to be defeated by him. To help us win this victory, Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God. Most of the pieces of this armor are defensive – that is, they help to protect us when we face our enemy. There is, however, an offensive weapon at our disposal: the Sword of the Spirit.

The word of God is powerful. As the writer of Hebrews says, His word “is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). It pierces the heart (Acts 2:37). It illuminates the path that we should walk (Ps. 119:105).

The word of God is powerful enough to train us in every good deed. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is no way that God could tell us specifically every good work that is possible. The book would simply be too long for us to read or comprehend. However, in the word of God, we have the principles that we need for life and every good work. It equips us for everything that is good. For example, Jesus teaches us that the greatest command is to love the Lord our God with all that we have; and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). But then He adds this simple statement: “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:40). Everything that we do is based on our love for God and our love for our fellow man.

If we are going to fully unleash the power of the word of God, we must use it properly. We must study it daily (Acts 17:11). We meditate on it “day and night” (Ps. 1:2). We must “rightly divide the word of truth,” using it in the proper context (2 Tim. 2:15). But the only way we can use the word of God effectively is if it is written in our hearts. When Moses was preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land, he said, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart” (Deut. 6:6). He goes on to tell them that they should teach them to their children; and they should talk about them throughout the day (Deut. 6:7-9). Today, the word of God must still be written in our hearts (Heb. 8:10).

There will always be those who challenge us in our faith.

They (Satan) will want us to give up on God; and they will do whatever they can to get us away from Him. We must rely on the word of God for the answers to these challenges. Early in His ministry, Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). In three different ways, Satan tempted Jesus. Each time, Jesus responded by saying, “It is written...” in order to help Him deal with temptation, Jesus trusted in the word of God. If Jesus trusted in the word of God, we also ought to trust in His word.

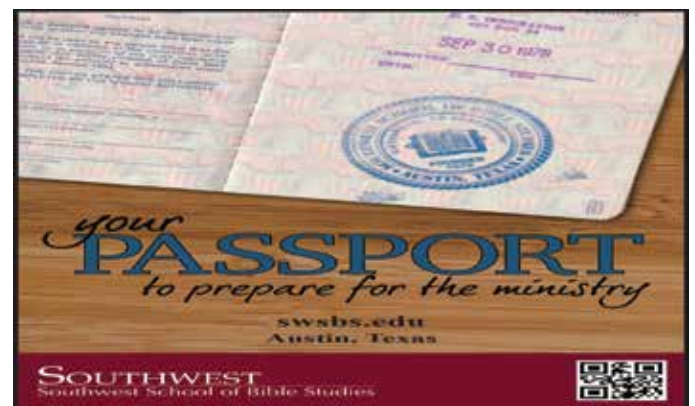
With everything that is going on in our lives, we must always be ready for the battle we face with Satan. The only way to truly be prepared is to put on the whole armor of God, and to arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit.

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and blessing God has given, believers can confront falsehood while living lives filled with grace and meaning. This balance strengthens perseverance and enables the church to withstand cultural and spiritual pressures (Jas. 1:2-4). In an age of polarization and shifting standards, it is vital that we let God’s truth permeate every aspect of our lives. What we discover is that God’s truth produces abundant life and godliness (John 10:10; 2 Pet. 1:3). Relationships are mended, doors are opened, and we remain steadfast, resisting every attack that Satan throws our way (Eph. 6:13; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Christ Himself, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), sustains this union and models its perfect expression. Those who embrace this girding of truth and love find not only protection but the motivation to advance in battle with purpose, to stand without compromise, and to exemplify the One who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). May God bless us with more churches and Christians who love the Truth and love with Truth!

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From the Director's Desk

Southwest Servants' Academy



Trent Kennedy
Director
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For the last decade, SWSBS has hosted a summer youth training academy. Each year, high school students endure the grind of being full-time students at SWSBS. From 8:30am chapel to all-day classes, to evening activities, these few days are packed with study, food, fun, and fellowship.

Southwest Servants' Academy (S2A) is a unique summer experience. Different from camps, the focus of S2A is the hour-by-hour classroom instruction similar to our full-time two-year program. We have textual classes on books or passages of Scripture, preaching and teaching classes (divided into guys and girls), and history classes to help understand the background of the Bible. These courses help teenagers grow closer to God.

Students do not sleep in cabins or tents, but members of the Southwest church of Christ serve as host families while the servants are in Austin. Relationships are built. We have nightly activities to grow closer to one another. Space is limited to about 40 people. Meals are provided. This allows us to keep classes small and the pace moving. Classes are taught by SWSBS faculty and alumni.

We believe that S2A accomplishes at least a few things:

First, with intensive study of Scripture, faith is challenged to grow. Second, SWSBS and the Southwest congregation get to introduce young people to the good work being done in Austin, TX. Third, the church here and the school are strengthened by hosting teenagers who are committed to the cause of Christ, serious about Bible study, and excited about those things of eternal importance.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining us for S2A this year, August 6-9, please visit our website www.swsbs.edu for more information and an application.

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