



# The New Normal

## Session Four: Standing Our Ground

Our fourth session builds upon the last where we studied Influence as both essence and action, the influence of words, understanding the new realities of influence throughout the very minutes of our days in a digital world, and some ways in which We can make better choices about what influences us. If you haven't done so, take a few minutes to consider subscribing to a site, newsfeed or blog which will have a Spirit-led influence in your life<sup>1</sup>. In this session, we'll try to synthesize the broad topic of standing firm, checking the scriptures and other resources to support this important element of the new normal.

### Dicey subject: Women of our Word?

During this course, we have wrestled several times with antithetical issues—seemingly opposing ideas which we seek to reconcile to live our life as women of faith. Some of these issues have included:

- Faith and Works (Ephesians 2: 8-9 and James 1: 22-24)
- Stewardship and Generosity (Luke 12:33-34 and Proverbs 10:4-5)
- Living Fully Today and Placing our Hope in the Future (Matthew 6:34 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- Nature Vs. Nurture (Psalm 139: 13-14 and Proverbs 22:4-6)

There are three more of these antithetical concepts I think it is important to address as we approach the subject of standing firm in today's world. I have posed these concepts in the form of three important questions we might regularly ask ourselves:

Do I expect others to do what I am not willing to do myself?

- We rightly ask for counsel (Proverbs 15:22); advice (Exodus 18:14-15); prayer (2 Chronicles 6:29-30); and for our elders to have standards (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-31; James 5:14)
- We wrongly set a poor example to others (Galatians 3:1, 1 Kings 21:25, Gen 3:6; 1 cor 8:9; 1 Kings 11:3)

If you want what I have are you willing to do what I do?

- We rightly seek to be like others (Phil. 3:17; Galatians 5:22-23); live an abundant life (Is. 58:11; 1 Tim 6:18)
- We wrongly fail make take the steps to live well (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 Proverbs 14:23, Proverbs 6:10-12);

Am I saying one thing and doing another?

- We rightly say or testify to what is true: as Jesus did (John 1:19-25); giving account for our faith (1 Peter 14-15a); speaking with courage (Ps. 56:3-4, Is. 41: 10, 13)
- We wrongly contradict these words with contrary actions (1 cor 13:1-13); Mat 7:16-20)

Certainly, this notion of living lives consistently with our intentions, beliefs and words is not new. Peter, the apostle has a special place in my heart. He came from a word-a-day background, he took the audacious step of following Jesus. But he also asked plenty of questions and didn't always get things right. Read more about Peter in the [Crosswalk](#)

<sup>1</sup> Look for some recommendations at the end of Lesson 3: The Epitome of Influence.

[Summary](#) of his life. In our theme of being women of our word though, Peter's denial of Christ is an outstanding Example of saying one thing and doing another. Think about this, at dinner time—the Last Supper—This is how the story unfolded:

*Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.*

His words and intentions were clear, Peter would not deny Jesus. Watch [this animated version](#) of what happened instead. Like many of us might do under pressure, he lied. Forgiveness followed, Redemption followed, but significant damage had been done.



In our session, we will **discuss a little more about being women of our Word.**

## The Long Game: Ephesus to Eswatini

Last week, we looked at Noah Webster and, among his many accomplishments his authoring and publication of the first dictionary of the American Language. As we seek to understand more about the New Normal, it is relevant to understand the meaning of modern phrases, as well. The Urban Dictionary started online in 1999 as an attempt to capture colloquial and trending phrases and words. This week, I am using this dictionary to understand a phrase now in wide circulation related to anything from business, to casual sex to fraud. I first heard the term far before 1999, as it applied to the film, The Hustler, as it applied to the political fortunes of Richard Nixon and to the stock market.

### Long Game

***long game:** Considering the future implications of current choices, thinking ahead, being deliberate and patient. "He runs his mouth, but he doesn't really have a long game, so he always ends up with cheap and easy." Waiting for someone as long as it takes even when they don't love you. British term for a long-term confidence trick, or con. A multi-step scam, often involving multiple people and aimed at obtaining large sums of money from marks, or suckers. More generally, any strategy with a long-term goal of gaining the upper-hand. Often used to describe politicians trying to*

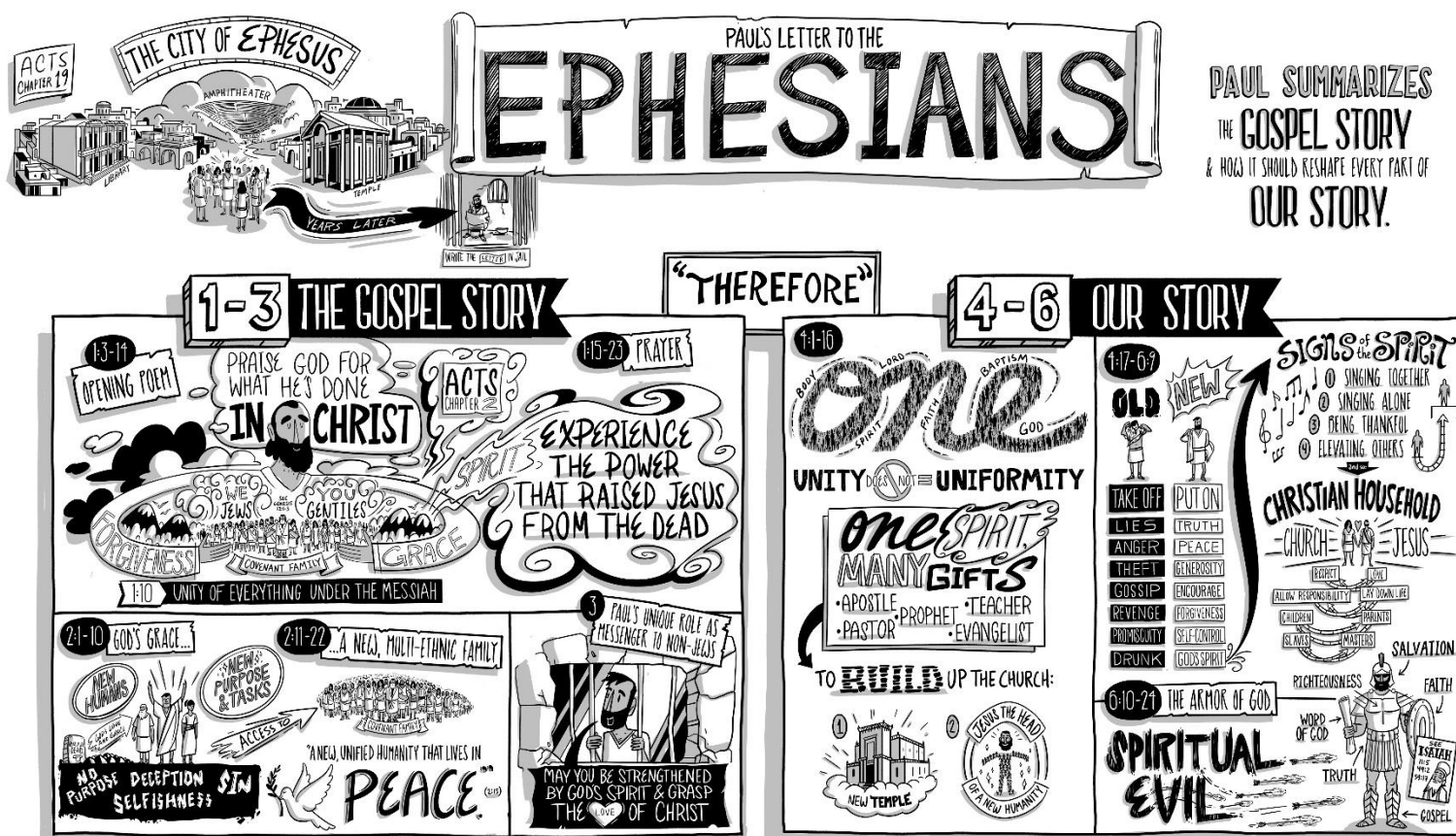
This week, I thought of the phrase when it came to study about Ephesus, the recipient of the epistle written by Paul to the Ephesians. For more about "letters" written in the bible, view [this link from our friends at the Bible Project](#).

Why the Long Game? In the letter to the Ephesians, we find a key verse to study as we consider standing our ground today:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can **take your stand** against the devil's schemes. 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. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have **done everything**, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your*

waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.  
Ephesians 6:10-17

This meaningful concentration of phrases related to standing, certainly gets my attention. But, as you may have noted in the Bible Project video<sup>2</sup>, the context of the letter is the whole of the gospel: God's "long game", if you will. My primary point is that if you desire to stand firm, you must understand why it is important to do so.



created by the Bible Project

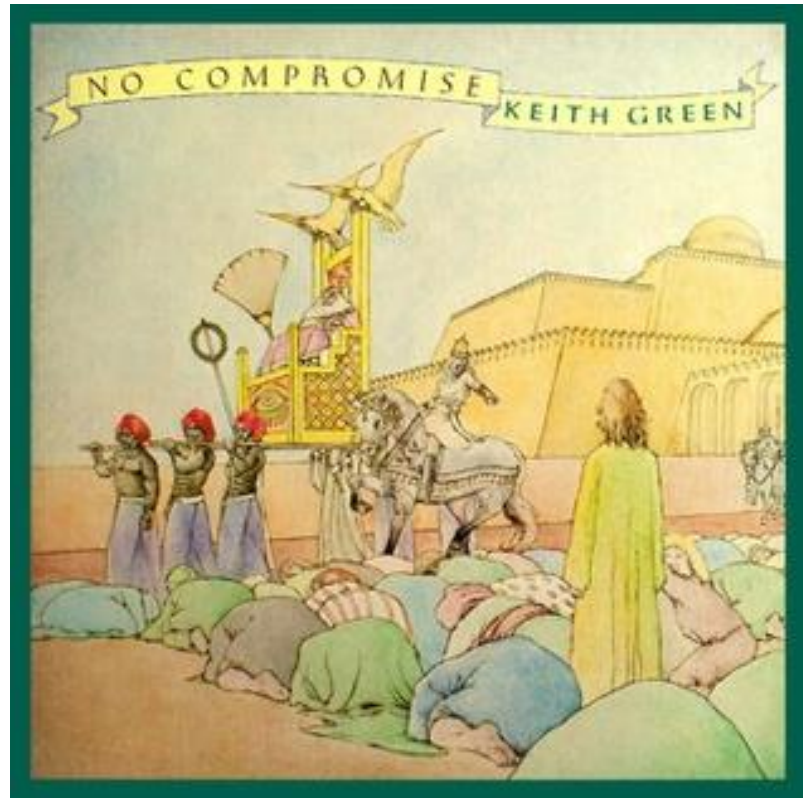
In our session this week, we will discuss a bit more about the long game of faith and the gospel.

## What do we stand for?

What a question. If you are anything like me, a woman who has lived life in association with churches, the answer come easy: I stand for Christ. I was a teenager and college student in the heyday of Christian Rock and saw many predominate "rockers" at the time come to the Lord. There was also a movement of singer songwriters that created music relatable to my generation. In the era of "vinyl" the album cover was almost as significant as the music. There are many compilations of "best of" album covers, and I have included [the Rolling Stone Magazine readers votes here](#).



One cover from the seventies really encapsulates the faith-based cover of the times for me, Keith Green's No Compromise (see image). The cover is based on the scripture in the book of Daniel 3:1-30 and depicts one of the three men in the story Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refusing to kneel and worship a gold image. The story is worth reading and shows in verse 25 that the Lord sent protect to the faithful in their punishment "He said, 'Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.'"



The simplicity of this story is an excellent allegory for what we stand for and against. Some of these include:

- Who the Lord is and is not?
- The authenticity and truth of the scriptures
- All need a savior
- Jesus is who he said he is
- Faith is necessary
- Abiding is essential
- Behavior matters
- Sanctification necessitates action

In our session, I will discuss more about what **we stand for** and where we could exercise more grace to others.

## Standing Tall

While it will be good to reflect a bit more on the armor of God as we stand firm, I think a bit of backtracking is important as we prepare for our live session. In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, just before Paul writes about the armor of God and standing firm, he writes about three necessary subjects:

1. Signs of the Old and New Man
2. Signs of the Spirit
3. How we submit to each other in a Christian household

For the purposes of this new normal study, I think it worth focusing some on the signs of the spirit as enumerated here in Ephesians 5:18b-21:

*Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*



In advance of the study, look at a few sites about some of these signs. Among other internet sites, GodTube, a Christian music site [tells the story behind](#) some of the greatest hymns. I thought it important to look at some modern interpreters of hymns and a few of my favorites are:

- [Page CXVI](#)
- [Sojourn Music:](#)

- [Jill Phillips](#)
- [Acapeldridge](#)

Why not try some time to sing with others in the coming week? I know that singing across the digital spectrum is usually not in sync but try some live singing and see how it influences your spirit.

I am also trying to see gratitude as an action as much as a saying or feeling, so why not try out an app this week that focuses on gratitude. Here a few I found:

- For Apple: [Grateful: a Gratitude Journal](#)
- For android: [Gratitude](#)

These can be a little "self-helper" and are not biblically based, but you can pick and choose what you read. There is a good website on [showing gratitude](#) and Billy Graham wrote a [meaningful article about thankfulness](#).

Finally, elevating others beyond ourselves is a sign of the spirit. Be concrete in the coming week about how you willingly, graciously put others first a few times. Think on this scripture as we conclude:

*"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:3-7*

In our session, I will **discuss some tools and traits of standing firmer in the world.**

