MEN'S FRATERNITY

Knights of the 21st Century

Trail 4

KEITH: What I love about year four Defender, is where we go right after it. Here we are week 4 and we're already talking about polishing your armor. What I love about this is this – this is the hardest thing we're going to teach you. And yet we have to get to it right away because it's all about what defenders do. We need to buy time so that we can help heal the wounds of others. We need to be dealing with the fact that we are own self have wounds and we're not going to get re-wounded or we can't help the people we're trying to help. What's so powerful about this week is that the hard concept of armor needs to be understood that you can do what you need to do in action not reaction. So you can have the time necessary to make the right choice to make all the difference in the world. One of the things, and when you look at a moment like this, it's like I have opportunities all the time, right, to protect, care, defend people behind me, right. And if your armor is proper within you, on top of you, it's going to allow you the freedom to say, I can make the right choice.

Let me give you a great example. My oldest son used to be involved in wrestling at the University of Virginia. He wrestled for Penn State but then he was coaching there and so he's pretty well know and he's pretty well known in what he does as far as profession. And so he had my

oldest grandson with him who was that time probably about 2 and ½ years old. They are at a wrestling match and at the wrestling match, Josh again has this statute pretty well known, Penn State wrestler, Captain of the team, pretty big guy both physically and functionally. And his little son, my grandson, Cole, says, Dad, come. Hope like a frog. Now it's in a full kind of arena with a wrestling mat on the floor. Josh has on armor, right. That armor has to make a decision. How do I come across to the crowd and what do I do with my little boy. He made an incredible choice. He went to very thin armor, got down on all floors and hopped around the mat with his little boy. He decided that what kind of armor he needed at that point was not to protect himself from what people could do to him, but rather how to let his son feel valuable. That's what we're going to learn how to do, guys. We're going to learn how to use armor so it goes behind us and be cared for.

Now we'll deal with two types of armor. The armor that you have that buys time. Jesus Christ was a master of using that armor in his daily walk. It just buys you time to make the best choice. That's what is all about, what God has enabled a man to do in his thought process which allows him to think it through before he reacts. You know, it's just that concept. There's also bad armor. We're going to talk about that, the armor that you actually have against God. When you get that way it runs into trouble. Now what we're going to do, this is for me a very, very serious set of circumstances that we're going to teach today. So I've

asked all the guys to get involved in teaching and we're going to teach you as hard and clear as we know how and then kind of experience it together with a campfire.

The very first thing I want you to look at in your trial, Trial No. 4, is I want you to look at A. It says this. He can use this armor to defend himself from anything that attempts to limit his positive influence. His armor can be given to him to keep him from doing anything that would somehow or another mess us his impact. See, as Josh was seen at that moment, he had to decide do I want to be seen as a father or as a coach. Do I want to be seen as an administrator of company he's involved in? What does he want to be seen of at that moment? And when he does, that causes him to have influence. I am proud to say that my oldest son made a phenomenal choice that day. He chose to influence his son and in turn influenced everyone else. Armor allows you to do those – make those kind of decisions and make that kind of an impact. Listen now as we work through what the armor is and how to polish our armor.

ROY: Man, I want to change but I can't change. Change, I got to change how I come across. I got to do a better job with change, but man, I hate to change. Just like Saint Paul, the things I want to change, it's difficult to change.

B. Helps him recognize that positive change does not occur without overcoming the attitudes we individuals use to resist change. There are several reasons why we may refuse to adapt. You and I both want to

change a lot of things about ourselves, but at the same time we are used to doing the same things over and over again. I take a shower the exact same way every day and I would say this pattern is right.

Number 1. A person's brain works in a series of patterns. It's like ruts and any change to an established pattern temporarily creates an imbalance in their life. We get addicted to the ruts that we live and for us to change, it means that we have to expend energy and do some difficult things that we're not used to doing. As a result, we people are rewarded for sticking with the status quo. We want to do the same thing over and over again, even though we know some of these things aren't good for us.

3. People feel secure when they know what to expect. We don't like something not happening that we're not ready for and as a result, change creates anxiety and leads to a question such as, can I really do this. Every time we choose to go for a new goal in our life we immediately get flooded with all kinds of anxiety because we're not sure. We cling to our patterns, we cling to the status quo and the anxiety is there to signal us that wait a minute, you're about to take a new step and you're not sure what's out there to catch you.

4. Some of the times people have hidden agendas that are very self-serving. Because of this, they fight any type of progress that may threaten their power. How many times have we seen a really good idea from somebody that is watching our life from a different direction and we immediately get resistant to it because it somehow if I go with that

change, it feels like I've got to give up a little power, a little security, something that I'm used to. Am I a male and hang on to the present or am I man and do I go forward and adjust and change to a more Godly future?

T.C.: You know it's interesting guys. We're talking about armor and it's kind of hard to, well it's the concept you got to be careful with because the very thing that we're talking about – this armor here that is designed to protect you – can also be the very thing that gets in your way and stops you from reaching your full potential if you don't quite know how to put it on thick and when to put it down. So that's what we want to talk about now.

So we'll start here with C. The knight has confidence in his strength. He knows he can protect himself and that he has the ability to follow through on his personal quest.

Let's look at 1. He can protect himself from chaos by establishing a well thought out plan. There's some key words there – well thought out plan. These words are words that happen before the problem comes or before the situation comes or before that decision making moment comes. Not when that moment jumps up on you and then you kind of got to wing it. This is a pre-planned method of making decisions. So it is very important to do that.

Number 2. He can protect himself when he faces a moral dilemma by following is principles. I love this one because when you look at this

one, think of a gun, a gun with bullets in it is a powerful weapon, but it's nothing until we pull the trigger. Otherwise it's just a tool that's just sitting there and so is having a plan, and having principles, strong principles. They mean nothing if you don't execute them. If you really don't use them, then they're just great ideas that sit there and they don't help you any, so you got to use them, alright.

Point number 3. He can protect himself from feeling overwhelmed by establishing a support system. He can protect himself from feeling overwhelmed by establishing a support system and this is simply something that if you don't put the armor down, you won't be able to use help, because this is a trust issue. To have someone to support you, to feel like you can be supported, you got to be transparent. You got to be willing to share your problems with another person. That's going to require you to take some of that armor down. And you have to have the _____ of when you can do it, how much to do it, what is the right time, who are the right people. But you don't get a support system if you're just doing to depend solely on the armor and just stand guarded against everybody. It takes a level of trust. It's not easy but it has to happen, alright.

Let's look at number 4. He can protect himself from false ideas by developing his brain that thinks which helps him to analyze and assess the situation and use his judgment skills to make choices. We're talking about the brain that thinks. You know, you do have to think things

through and here's a good example of that. Someone can up to you and say, you need this. You need to be able to think about it and say, is this for me. Do you understand? You don't just accept everything. You got to think it through. A brain has to think. You need to be able to just make discernments of is this right for me? Should I do this? Should I not do this? You need to be able to analyze people's advice to you. You can't just believe everything someone says. You got to think about it, process it, pray about it so you can make the right decisions in your own mind. So that's the brain that thinks.

But now let's look at this one, because there's another part – the brain that feels. Check this out. He can protect himself from long term emotional pain by developing his brain that feels and by grieving the losses that he feels. One thing that is promised to us is that we will have struggle in this life. The Bible says that. We'll have pain. We'll have problems. You know that. It's not easy. If you can't, if you have an underdeveloped brain that feels, then you won't know how to process disappointment. You won't know how to process losses and they can overwhelm you. And that can bring you down because you don't have the strength or the ability to properly process emotions. So having your brain that feels in check will allow you to make decisions that propel you forward and you're not conquered by your emotions. So you want to be a thinking man, a feeling man, not an emotional man, erratic and all over

the place. So hopefully you can look at these concepts and apply them to your life guys.

ROBERT: Armor is some tough, tough stuff. Let's look at this next point. He can protect himself from his own rigidity by not expecting himself to be perfect and by learning to apologize when he hurts others. You know, armor can sometimes be so thick and so tough that when we wear it, it can actually make us quite stubborn. And to be honest with you guys, the easiest solution to stubbornness is simply humility. Be willing to let people in. Be willing to – just because you're wearing the armor does not mean you have to use it against anyone. Keep that in mind. Let's keep going.

7. He can protect his body by exercising, eating and sleeping properly so that he has a reliable source of energy for his daily life. Look this isn't just talking about your body fat index here. The bottom line is you cannot protect your forest, that is the environment that you live in, those closest to you, the relationships that matter to you, unless you're taking care of yourself. It's kind of like a car, you know. My buddy T.C. likes to talk about it all the time. If you put the wrong fluids in your car, it's going to stop working. It's not going to function to its full potential. You got to be careful about what you put in your body so that you can be the knight you're supposed to go. Going on.

Number 8. He can protect himself through the use of his mind's warrior to learn the smartest and most effective ways to express his

personal power. Guys, listen. We are all gifted with special abilities, strengths and weaknesses. But it's the mind's warrior, that part of your mind that actually allows you to strategize, to properly find and plan out a way where you can use those strengths in ways that are actually going to flourish, that are going to help your forest, help the relationships that you're in. Keep that in mind.

Number 9. He can protect himself from the meaningless detours of life by following his soul's inner voice which encourages him to focus on a purpose larger than himself. One of the things I love about an armor like this is that a knight can't just go and be looking out anywhere. No, his focus is very narrow. He's looking right in front of him and that's a beautiful thing, it's a great analogy to think of. We need to focus in that inner voice that we talk about, the Holy Spirit, that tells us exactly where we should be headed, where we should be looking. Listen to that and follow that.

Moving on, number 10. He can protect himself from unknown spiritual forces by developing a spiritual relationship with God. His faith and trust in God can help him accept the unseen aspects of life and understand that there are often greater reasons as to what is happening than what he presently knows. Guys, the best way that we can deal with the problems and the challenges that we face is to develop a relationship with God and the best way to do that is to look in the scriptures.

Defender

You know 2nd Timothy 3:16 tells us the Bible is incredibly useful for many things but then Verse 17 tells us that it equips us, it prepares us so that we can do every good work that we need. Never forget that. Be the knight that God is calling you to be.

KEITH: I think one of the areas that we struggle whenever we talk about armor is not how to make it strong because it's obviously strong. I think what we struggle with when we have armor is to figure out how do we make it to our advantage at the highest level it was designed to be? Because really, this is actually believe it or not about vulnerability.

I want you to look at D. It says this. The knight understands that in order to be vulnerable to someone he loves, he must risk being hurt. He knows that he cannot help someone in an effective and practical way if he's fully armored. Guys, this piece of armor is here because the risk of battle is yours. To love is to risk. If we're going to talk in a few minutes about bad armor, you need to understand what good armor is doing. This is really about you being able to be gentle enough, loving enough to value what's important. It becomes so important and sometimes we just get so arrogant, like in your Knightly News. There's Jehoahaz. He's a king of the nation of Israel. He reigns for 16 years. He's not a good guy. He's a bad guy. There's a prophet that he really likes, he's dying and so he goes to celebrate that prophet's life and actually weeps at losing him. And the prophet gives him an opportunity. He says, Jehoahaz, take off that thick armor of yours. You're so busy trying to protect you that you're not

protecting a nation. And he gives him a challenge. The challenge is pretty simple of a challenge involving arrows. And you know what Jehoahaz chooses to do? He chooses to keep the armor on. As a result of that, the Nation of Israel will not succeed going forward because he didn't have the courage to say, you know what, I'm going to risk being vulnerable. Guys, the good armor is designed to give you time. The bad armor is something else altogether and you need to take a look at that.

CLAIR: I was listening recently to a discussion by Joe Green and he was talking about rookie players coming into the NFL and they had such a healthy fear of how hard those hits were going to be, the young guys, especially the first couple of games, he said you'd see quite a few of them suiting up. They put on so much padding that they almost couldn't move and they talked about the opposing players like Mac trucks. So the question was, can you put enough padding on to take a hit by a Mac truck and the truth is there were other players who figured out later in the game, you're better off being a little bit lighter and trying to avoid the direct hit by the Mac truck. So there's balance between putting enough padding on to protect yourself but not too much that it would slow you down. Well a knight knows. We talk about this armor. It's a tool much like padding is to an NFL player. A knight understands that armor can be harmful if its used inappropriately. So let's talk about the concept of the armor being a tool that may not work well for you.

Defender

Armor, if you touch it, is extremely hard from the outside and there are environments where our armor goes up and it's a great tool to protect us from things that are harmful. However, too much armor, if we're in harms way too often, put on too much armor consistently, you realize that's not a great surface. It's cold. It's hard. People can feel it. Have you ever walked up to someone and I don't know, just physically bumped them on the arm and the kind of pulled back. Or was it just a conversation you were trying to have and you could feel the push. So too much armor, too much of this great tool and you're going to be pushing away people that you don't want to push away.

Moving on to point 2. Armor can also limit the creation of new ideas and limit our ability as knights to learn. Now there's an interesting concept here. There's two sides to this piece of metal. There's the outside which I feel. As I walk up to you I can tell how much armor you have up against me. But there's also an inside. Inside here is also a hard surface and as I'm looking at the ability to make changes and to grow in certain areas, that inside armor can also be a challenge to me. So think about that. Hard surfaces on both sides. What's it doing to other people and what's it doing to you from the inside?

Moving on to point 3. Armor may show up when you meet people who are different from you and that may encourage you to have prejudices. When you meet someone, are you celebrating their differences or are you looking at them saying, whoa, they're not like me.

I've got to put my armor up. I sense danger. Well if you keep putting that armor up, again, you're going to push people away, and you have an opportunity – you've missed an opportunity to celebrate the differences, to get in relationships where they're going to bring something different to the party, and you're going to see a different part of manhood that you may be missing if you put that armor up.

Point number 4. Armor can limit a male from making important changes by helping him avoid the risks that are involved with any change. How many of you guys out there look forward to change? It's not something we're great at. It's something we often fear. Well this armor if we put too much of it up, our risk factor goes up. We look at change and we say, man that's going to hurt or man, that's going to be extremely difficult. I don't want any part of it. Well some changes are good. As you're growing in your manhood, change is going to be necessary.

There's an author out there. His name is Jim Rohn and I love when he talks about the concept of change, how difficult it is for men. He said I find it more interesting that many men will spend more time planning a vacation than they will planning their lives. And he goes on to say, I suspect that is because escape is easier than change. So guys, embrace the change. Don't let your armor get in the way. It's part of growing. It's part of who you are as a man.

ROY: Armor is a very difficult concept to understand because it's not just important to understand how armor goes between me and

others, but armor also can become bad armor and as a result support a male's negative impulses distracting from the identity God have given him. What this means is not only does armor have an external function and protect me in an unsafe world, but armor also has an internal function and that internal function can get inside of me and create several types of processes that limit my ability to grow. One of the processes that armor can get inside badly and break up a man from living a whole life by compartmentalizing his negative attributes which allows him to ignore the parts of himself which he needs to change. So armor comes in and starts to become divisive. Armor can also support a lack of authenticity by encouraging an emphasis on how he presents himself publicly rather than who he really is. The mask that we wear socially is a form of armor. It not only fools other people, but the masks also work inside of us so eventually we don't know who we are because we've been so busy acting a certain way and not telling our campfire guys really what's going on in our life at night, let's say with the computer, and as a result, we act one way but we fool ourselves – not just them but us – and we end up not knowing who we are. Armor, bad armor, when it gets inside of us can create a pessimistic attitude as the male relies on external resources for his strength rather than internal strength that he can develop by learning to rely upon God. That pessimistic attitude can become so fooled in our minds that we fail to see all the strength God offers us. We move from reliance upon who God is and we mess up because we start to rely upon

who we are and that is that bad armor that causes us to focus on such a negative direction when we have the King of kings, the Lord of lords, every moment in our lives but we choose, because of bad armor, to realize it.

It gives us also a false sense of strength by utilizing addictive behaviors and substances to distort the difficulties that we have in order to face life. Drugs and alcohol are major bad armor. You know, we get so blitzed using various kinds of different drugs and drinking too much and caffeine and all kinds of stuff that we fail to be able to be fully present to the world that we're trying to live in because of all these chemicals. That's another form of bad armor. Here we have God within us as Christians, a resource and because we use these substances, we get cut off internally from this important resource within us.

It can overemphasize the need for physical force in order to protect himself and others instead of helping him to learn his power through the u se of non-violent love. One of the negative processes that occurs with an individual as he lets bad armor come his way is seen in many males. They are so sensitive and no matter what happens, it feels like I've got to go to some kind of fighting stance because they fail to be able to process what's life going on around them so they become these big bullies to everyone around because anger gives them a false sense of power because of how the bad armor is within them versus realizing that their real strength is to be able to love like God does.

It can cause the man to put more faith in his own thoughts and opinions than in the insights of others. Bad armor creates a process inside of us that pushes other people away as well within ourselves. One of the things it teaches us – bad armor- that is a lie, is that who we are is enough. The truth is God has given us all the strengths and skills but just as Jesus Christ has other people in his life as he walked on this earth to be a part of his life, you and I need to recognize that we need other people like those in our campfires to be able to relate to and process life with because God did not create us to do life alone.

KEITH: You know, it's interesting. We all have armor. Can't quite see it like we can see that, but we have it. In fact it's a God-given gift because of the fall and the danger of people wounding people, that He said I'm going to give you some time. As a man, I'm going to give you time to make good decisions, good choices and those good decisions and good choices are going to allow a degree of flexibility that will cause you to make the decision that needs to be made. Everything about your core is protected by armor and chain mail. And it's important that we understand how that works. It's on the back of your dog tags.

Now understand this. This is the last thing we want to look at. F says this. A knight consciously controls the use of his armor rather than allowing his armor to control him. He is then able to step confidently towards the duty he's been called to do. If we all have armor, know that it's flexible. Know that it can move, but know that we control its

movement. I think when we understand this, I think it will cause us to go, okay, wait a minute God. Thank you. You've given me moments to protect the things that are important, both within me and behind me and those moments allow me to say, okay, I'm going to start making choices and the right choices that bring glory to Him and impact the lives that we're supposed to protect. And interestingly enough leave us safe along the way. So that's the way we go. We look forward to getting together with you guys next week. Thanks so much for being with us. Looking at polishing the armor.