

ARMOR OF GOD

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Family Study Guides

Armor of God: The Breastplate of Righteousness

Family Study Guide

Objectives:

- Determine what the Breastplate of Righteousness does and how to use it to combat Satan's attacks.
- Define what the vital organs represent and why God's Righteousness protects us from spiritual death.

Materials:

- Armor of God: Breastplate Journal, page 10
- Coloring Page, page 11
- Maze, page 12
- Connect-the-Dots, page 13
- Count the Breastplates, page 14
- Choosing To Do Right activity sheet, page 15

Materials:

Ephesians 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place...

Say: The second piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:14 is “the breastplate of righteousness.”

Ask: Why is the breastplate important, for the ancient soldiers and for us? Why the need for a breastplate, and what does it do?

The breastplate was a central part of the Roman soldier's armor—it was protection for the torso, which contains vital organs like the heart, lungs, kidneys, intestines, etc. Without a breastplate any attack could mean instant death. But a sturdy breastplate will help the soldier survive the attack. Today, soldiers are equipped with “bullet-proof vests.”

What do the vital organs represent in the Bible?

The Bible metaphorically uses the heart, kidneys (“reins”) and bowels when speaking of emotions, feelings and affections. Because strong emotions produce sensations in the abdomen, the bowels and other organs were regarded as the site of the natural passions, both negative (such as anger and fear) and positive (such as love and compassion).

We actually do the same thing today. Parts of your body are affected in times of great emotion? We use phrases like, “I love you with all my heart” or “she/he broke my heart.” We might say something such as “I had a feeling in the pit of my stomach” in reaction to certain thoughts or events, get “butterflies,” in times of joy or get ulcers in times of stress.

Notice the various translations in Jeremiah 11:20 which show the metaphoric uses of the internal organs protected by the Breastplate of Righteousness.

Jeremiah 11:20 (KJV) But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins (kidneys) and the heart...

:20 (Good News Translation) ... you test people's thoughts and feelings.

:20 (International Standard Version) ...the one who tests feelings and the heart...

:20 (New Living Translation) ...you examine the deepest thoughts and secrets.

:20 (New International Version) ...you test the heart and mind...

How we act and how we respond to life's circumstances is very important to God. We are being tested to see what we do with our feelings and emotions.

Revelation 2:23 ... all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.



The **mind and the emotions** are the two areas where Satan most often attacks us. He tries to get us to act and react emotionally instead of thinking things through using the mind of Christ. Satan wants us to use our emotions and feelings to reject God's commandments.

Discuss: How does the enemy attack the mind and the emotions to get us to do something wrong? As a family, think of ways you may have acted or reacted emotionally and violated Godly principles.

Examples: Maybe we did not get our way, then said or did something rude. (Children sometimes respond negatively to not getting their way, and even say to parents, "I hate you.") You may have responded in anger and shouted or said something you shouldn't have.

Ask: How has the enemy attacked *your* mind and emotions recently?
There are right emotions and wrong emotions. **How do we know the difference?**

How does the Breastplate of Righteousness protect us from wrong emotional actions and reactions?

What Is Righteousness?

Did you know that the Bible talks about righteousness over 300 times?

Deuteronomy 6:25 And if we are careful to obey all this law, before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.

Psalms 119:172 My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.

Consider that all of God's commandments involve emotion in some way or the other:

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Why is righteousness like a breastplate? How do we use it?

Proverbs 11:4 says "righteousness delivers from death."

To be righteous is to do what is right in God's eyes and to be made righteous by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God's commandments are righteousness. In contrast, lawlessness is sin, and sin is the opposite of righteousness. So to be righteous involves obedience to God's laws of love.

Family Discussion Activity #1

Compare Psalm 24:5 to Proverbs 14:12—God's way versus man's way.

Psalm 24:5 He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

True righteousness comes from God. It is **God's righteousness**, and not our own, which must serve as our breastplate and defense against Satan. With righteousness—just as with a breastplate—we are protected from the deadly attacks of our enemy. When we make **right choices** by keeping the commandments, it keeps us from the harmful things that happen when people make wrong decisions.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 encourages us to choose life by keeping God's commandments.

Ask: What does God promise if we seek **His** righteousness?

Discuss what problems we will have if our breastplate isn't on.

Ask: How do right choices protect us?

Family Discussion Activity #2

Perhaps the following two scriptures best summarize the principle of the Breastplate of Righteousness as a piece of the Armor of God. As a family, read these scriptures and discuss how you can apply them to circumstances and events in your own lives.

Ephesians 4:26-27 (The Passion Translation) But don't let the passion of your emotions lead you to sin! Don't let anger control you or be fuel for revenge, not for even a day, Don't give the slanderous accuser, the Devil, an opportunity to manipulate you!

Psalm 4:4-5 (The Voice Bible) Think long; think hard. When you are angry, don't let it carry you into sin. When night comes, in calm be silent. From this day forward, offer to God the **right** sacrifice from a **heart made right** by God.

With this understanding, let's take a look at how the Devil can tempt us to use our emotions to act or respond contrary to God's righteousness.

Biblical examples of right and wrong use of emotions or feelings:

As we consider the good and bad examples from the Bible, think of ways that we have been tempted by our emotions and feelings. Did we act righteously, or contrary to God's way? Did we sin?

Discuss: Which use of emotion is sin and which use of emotion is righteous?

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

Discuss: What is the result of Godly love in a marriage?

For older students:

2 Samuel 13:15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. [Read the context of the story!]

Discuss: What was the result of Amnon's emotionally fueled actions?



Breastplate photo: Shutterstock; Design: Sonny Wiseman

Examples of People from the Bible

King David:

2 Samuel 11:2-3 (NIV) While (David) was on the roof, he saw a woman bathing. She was very beautiful. So David sent his servants to find out who she was.

Ask: Which commandments did David violate? He had removed the Breastplate of Righteousness.

Ask: Are there times when you put aside God's righteousness—and responded to carnal emotions and feelings?

Apostle Peter:

List several instances where Peter used his emotions to react instead of using the mind of Christ and His righteousness. (Consider **John 13:5-10; Matthew 14:28-31; 16:21-23; 26:31-35**)

Say: While Peter did make mistakes, he learned lessons from them. As a result, God was able to use him as one of His Apostles to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. We all stumble in our attempts to please God, but He forgives us when we are willing to look to His righteousness and repent of breaking His commandments.

Cain:

Genesis 4:5 ...but (God) did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Genesis 4:8 ...Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Ask: Have you ever been offended when something did not go your way? Did you get angry? Did you do or say something you should not have?

Now, contrast Jesus' righteous reactions:

Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 2:19 (NCV) A person might have to suffer even when it is unfair, but if he thinks of God and stands the pain, God is pleased.

1 Peter 2:21 This is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and gave you an example to follow. So you should do as he did.

1 Peter 2:23 People insulted Christ, but he did not insult them in return. Christ suffered, but he did not threaten.

1 Peter 2:23b-24 (NKJV) He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.

Matthew 4:1-10 In past family study guides we have examined the temptations that Satan put before Christ. Satan tried to get Jesus to respond emotionally and to sin. Instead of just following His emotions—“... Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

Matthew 26:39 My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. Emotionally, Jesus would rather not go through the suffering, however, He judged what He should do by the Father’s righteousness.

Discuss: Think of a time that you really felt like doing something, but did not do it because doing it would have been wrong. Here are some examples:

Example: (*Younger students*) Maybe you really wanted a cookie, but your parents told you not to take one. You thought about what God says about honoring your parents, and about not stealing—so you did not take it.

(*Older students*) Thought it would be fun and feel good to have that new car—but thought about coveting, and that it cost more than you could afford—so didn’t buy it. Or, maybe you were tempted to have sex outside of marriage—but responded by the Bible’s direction to “flee fornication.”

Joseph:

- Have the teens/children summarize some of the things they know about Joseph; OR
- Summarize with this version: <http://www.dltk-bible.com/genesis/storyofjoseph-cv.htm>
- Review the key events in Joseph’s life and his actions. How did he use God’s Breastplate of Righteousness?

Joseph was a very special person—one of God’s people—and Satan was behind the evil acts against him. But God gave Joseph what he needed to stand and win each of the battles.

Family Discussion Activity

Ask: Are there some ways that you relate to Joseph? What kind of decisions do you make that are like his?

Ask: Can you think of a time when righteousness (doing the right thing) protected you or someone you know?

Discuss: Oftentimes, kids and adults decide what is right for themselves. What happens when people decide for themselves what is right instead of doing what God says is right? (Remember Adam and Eve?)

- What should you do if you learn you've been doing something the wrong way or thinking the wrong way? Can you still use the Breastplate of Righteousness?
- Thinking about the story of Joseph—does doing the right thing always mean that nothing bad can happen to you?

Genesis 50:19-20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Conclusion

We have learned that God gives us the armor we need to defeat our enemies. The breastplate of righteousness protects our heart. The Bible talks about God actually writing His law on our hearts. When we wear the Breastplate of Righteousness, we protect ourselves from the dangers of making wrong decisions based on what we think might be a good idea at the time. If we follow God's commandments—true righteousness—He will give us the reward of life.

In order to make God's armor a practical reality, we must practice putting it on each day.

Remember This Scripture:

Psalm 4:4-5 (The Voice Bible) Think long; think hard. When you are angry, don't let it carry you into sin. When night comes, in calm be silent. From this day forward, offer to God the right sacrifice from a heart made right by God.

Discussion Scenarios

1. You want to play a video game but your parents said no. Your brother decides to go play the game anyway while they are out running errands.

How do you use the Armor of God here? What does **Satan** want you to do?

(Example: break the commandments by asking your brother if you can have a turn).

What does **God** want you to do? *(Example: use the Breastplate of Righteousness to talk your brother into doing what's right—honor your father and mother).*

2. A family member does something very mean and hurtful to you. It makes you feel really bad. Later that day they apologize. You still feel very hurt. What should you do?

How do you use the Armor of God here? What does **Satan** want you to do? *(Example: tell the person you don't want to talk to them anymore)*

What does **God** want you to do? *(Example: use the Breastplate of Righteousness—think of the Golden Rule and how you should treat them)*

Activities

1. Read *Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)* “Above everything else, guard your heart. Everything you do comes from it.”
2. Make a “do’s and don’ts” list. Look at the rest of *Proverbs 4*. What does it say to “do” to help us guard our heart? How about the “don’ts”? Put a star next to the things mentioned that are part of God’s Ten Commandments. Challenge: Find other proverbs that also show us how to guard our hearts.
3. Families or students can get an 11x17 paper. Turn it landscape, then fold the ends toward the center to make flaps. On the inside in the center, write or draw what we are trying to protect or keep pure (heart, emotions). Write what God wants our hearts and emotions to look like. On the outside flaps, create the look of a breastplate. Write or draw images/scriptures of what guards our hearts or what to guard our hearts from. Perhaps use *Colossians 3:5-15* to help.

Younger Students:

- Brainstorm practical applications of the principles associated with the Breastplate of Righteousness.
- On the breastplate activity on page 11, have each child draw himself doing something “right” with God.
- Complete 1-2 of the breastplate activities from the attached activities at the end of this Guide.

Older Students:

Take time to complete the Journal page.

- Discuss other Bible examples of people who did or didn’t wear the breastplate of righteousness. What happened?
- Discuss and write down at least two real life situations in which they can use/apply the Breastplate of Righteousness in their own lives.
- Develop a chart based on the key concepts identified on the chart below.

Roman Soldier	God’s Armor	Key Scriptures	Spiritual Lesson	My Armor
<p>The typical Roman soldier wore a protective covering over his vital organs.</p> <p>If these were injured his life would be in jeopardy.</p>	Breastplate of Righteousness	<p><i>Psalm 119:172</i> All your commandments are righteousness.</p> <p><i>Proverbs 11:4</i> Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.</p> <p><i>Jeremiah 23:6 ...</i> this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.</p>	<p>The Breastplate of Righteousness protects our hearts.</p> <p>Righteousness is the state of being “right with God” through obedience—and by His forgiveness of our sins.</p> <p>God’s commandments define righteousness (<i>Psalm 119:179</i>).</p>	

Additional Ideas

• Focus on the Family, Kids of Integrity website has several good activities that families can reproduce. Some of the activities may be useful for handling emotions and putting on righteousness. Check out the Thermometer, Dirty Laundry, and Learn Like a Dog activities, but others may have value. Activities can be found at: www.kidsofintegrity.com/lessons/righteousness/hands-options

Here is the link to this site's terms of use: www.kidsofintegrity.com/privacy-policy-terms-use

Suggested Instructors Notes

Three ways to guard our hearts:

1. Protect what comes in. Consider how media, music, conversations or activities with friends, and even the physical activities we do (like what we eat or our extracurricular activities) have an influence on our emotions and lives. Think about what influences produce positive emotions versus negative emotions. Who are the people that have a positive or negative influence? Ask God at the beginning of the day to protect you from the things you may not even notice that can affect your emotions. Don't let your heart be a welcome mat for those things that can injure you.

2. Persevere—don't compromise. Letting a negative thought or emotion in once means it's easier to do it the next time. That is when "sin lies at your door." It can be tempting to remove the breastplate when this happens. Instead, put the extra layer on like the Roman soldier did. Pray to God immediately and ask for His help to remove that negative emotion through the power of His Holy Spirit. Picture that negative thought or emotion running away from you. Memorize James 4:7 to help you.

3. Give your heart some rest by remembering God's Sabbath. We can grow physically and spiritually tired when we're constantly in battle. Remember God's Sabbath. He gives us rest every week. Use that time to physically rest but also make your breastplate stronger by practicing making right choices, spending time praying to God, singing songs about Him, worshiping Him and reading what He has to say in the Bible. Spend time with your community of believers—family or friends—that also observe God's Sabbath rest. (Matthew 11:28)

What if I let my guard down? Now what?

Psalm 51:10 shows that God can create a clean heart in us again through Jesus Christ. God can help us to kick sin out of our lives and put His righteousness back on.

The Breastplate

The Roman Soldier

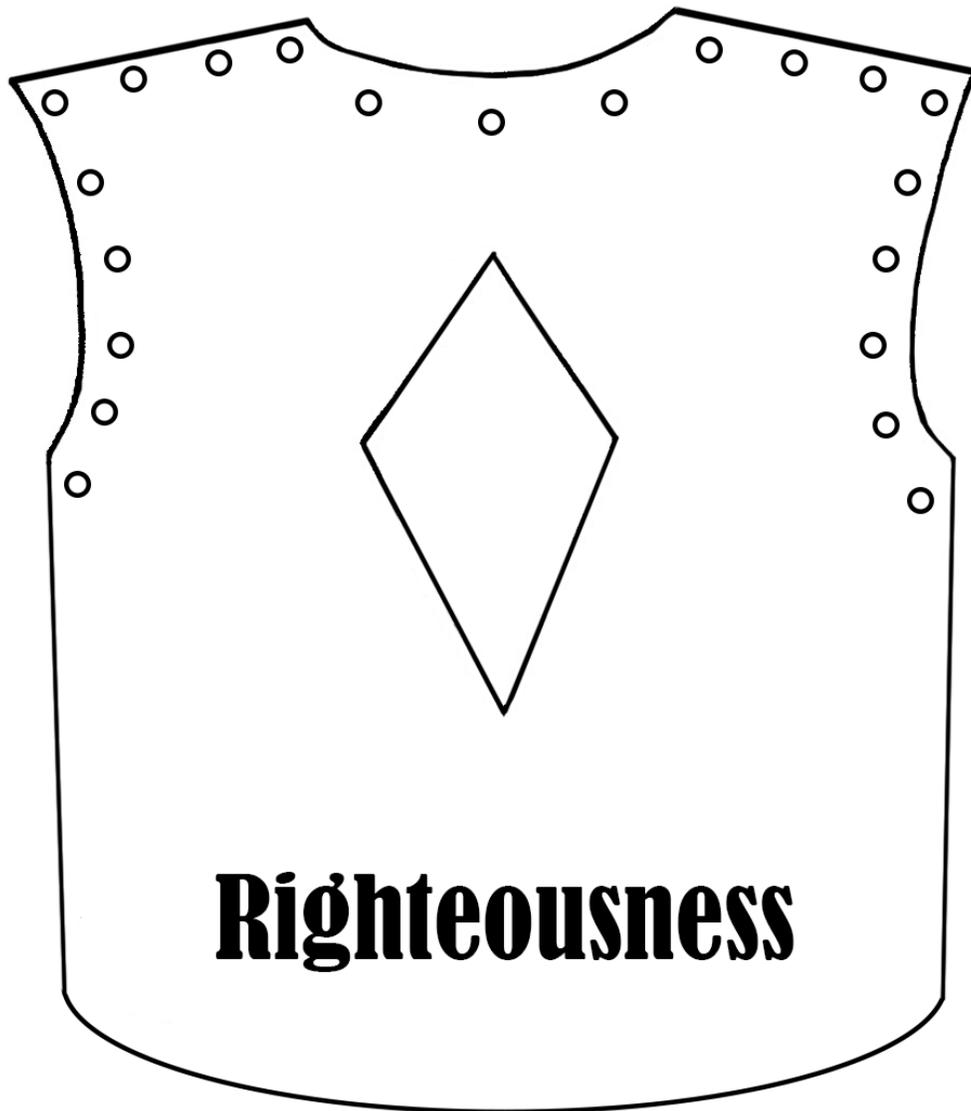
God's Armor

Key Scriptures

Spiritual Lessons

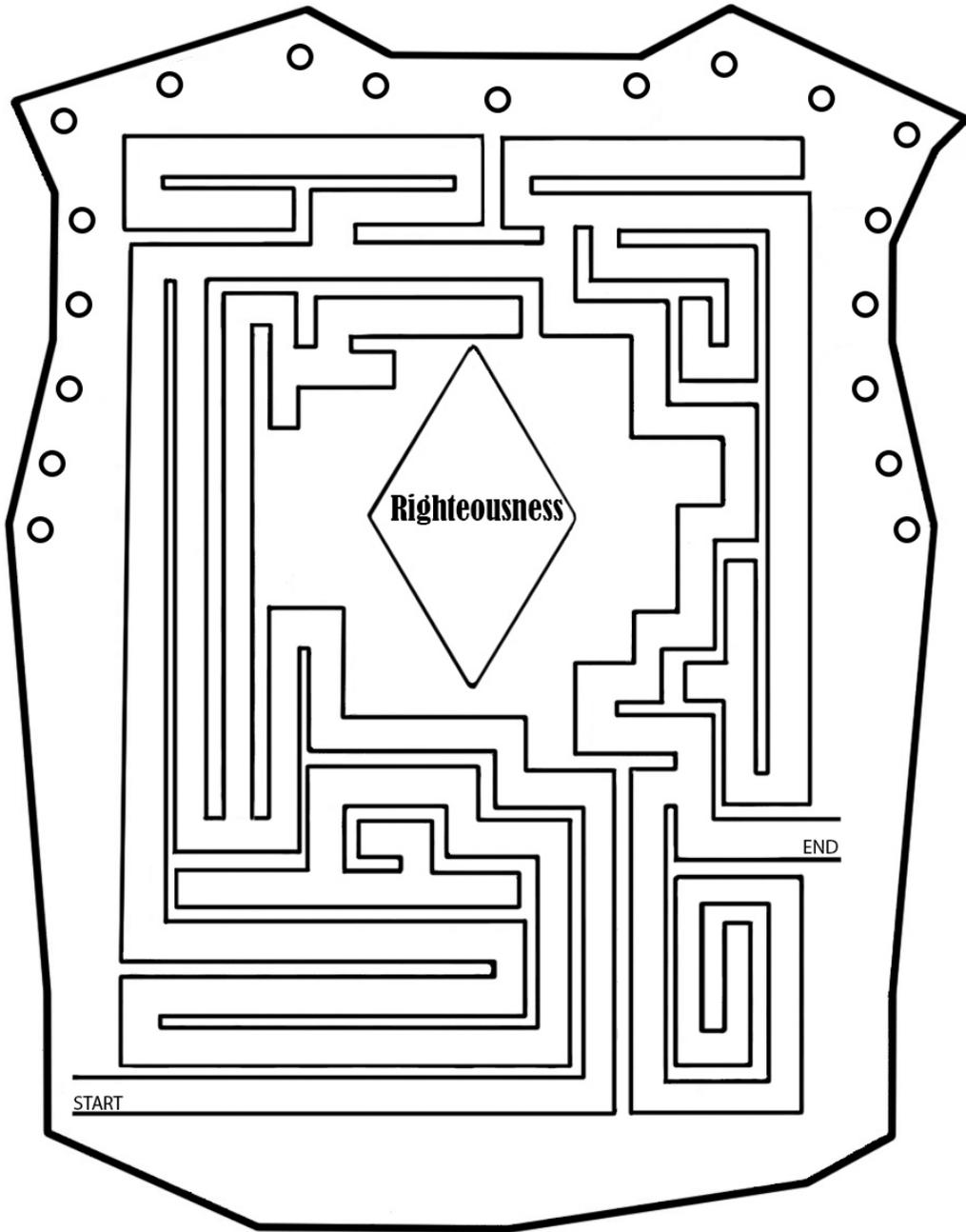
My Armor

The Breastplate of Righteousness



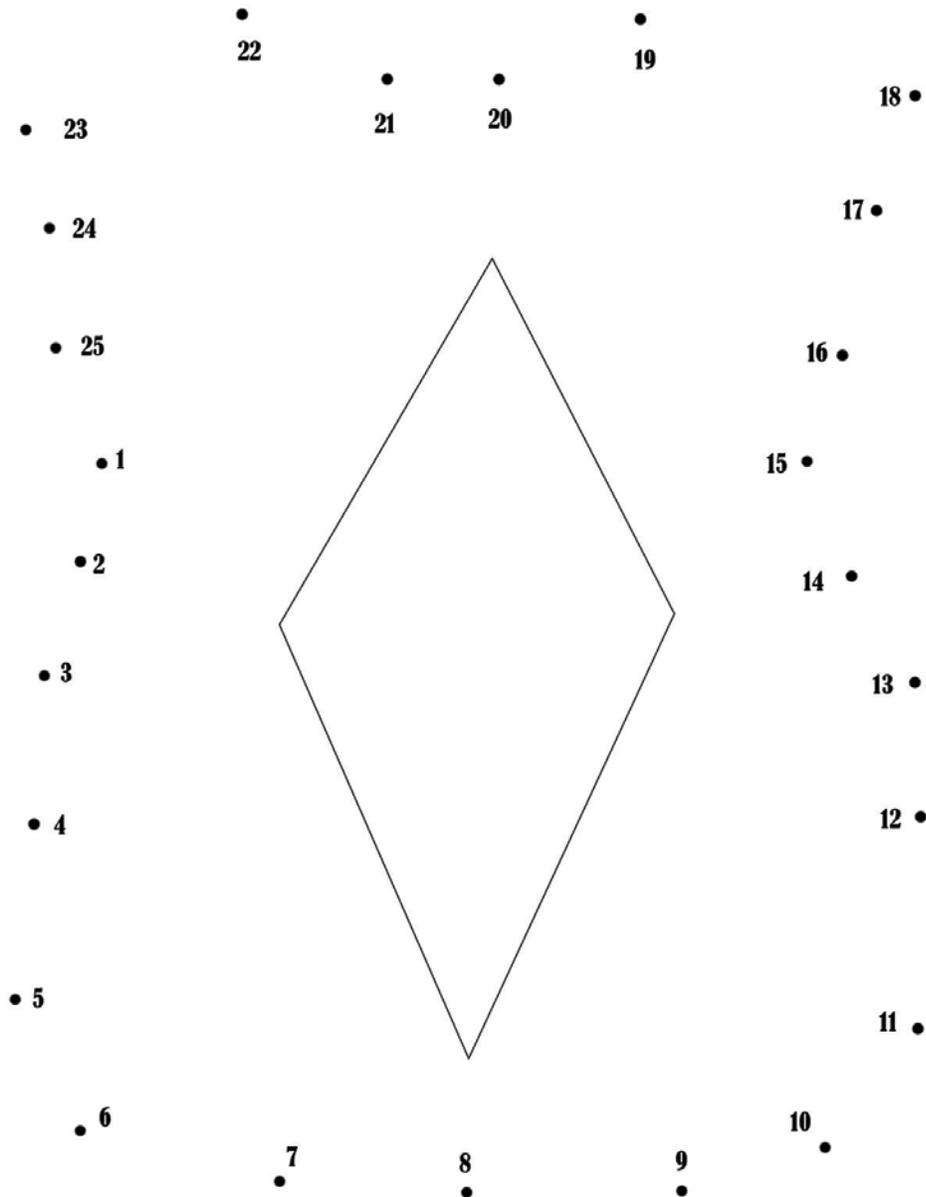
Color and design the Breastplate any way you like.

The Breastplate of Righteousness



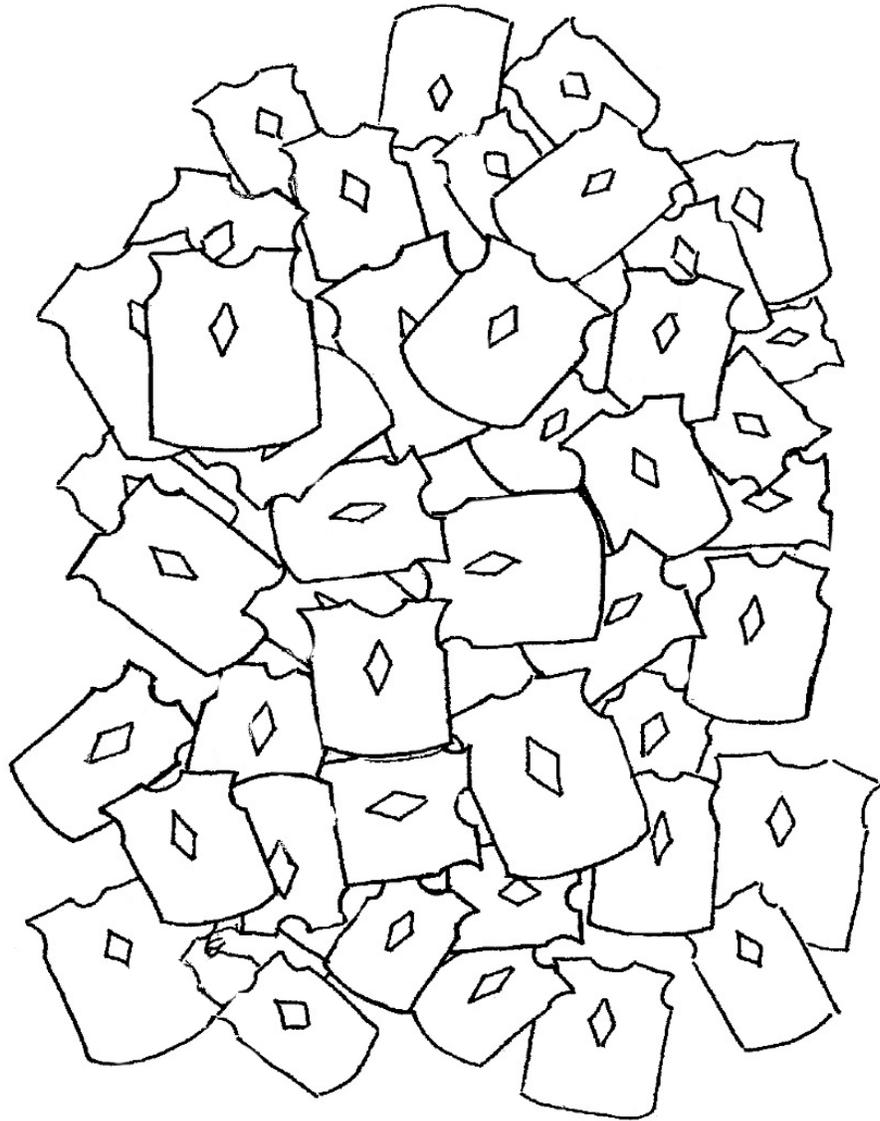
Start inside the Breastplate at the bottom left and go through the maze to the end at the right.

Dot To Dot



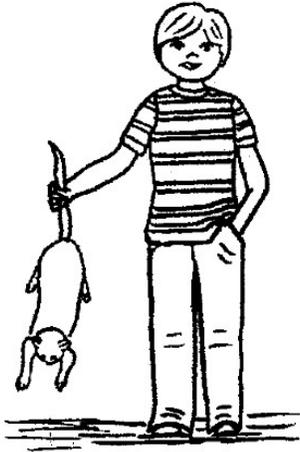
Connect the dots 1-25, then decorate the breastplate anyway you like.

The Breastplate of Righteousness



*How many breastplates can you count? Can you
count 45 of them?*

Choosing To Do Right



Put a circle around the children that have chosen to do the right thing, and put an X on the children that have chosen to do the wrong thing. Put on the Breastplate of Righteousness and choose to do the right thing!