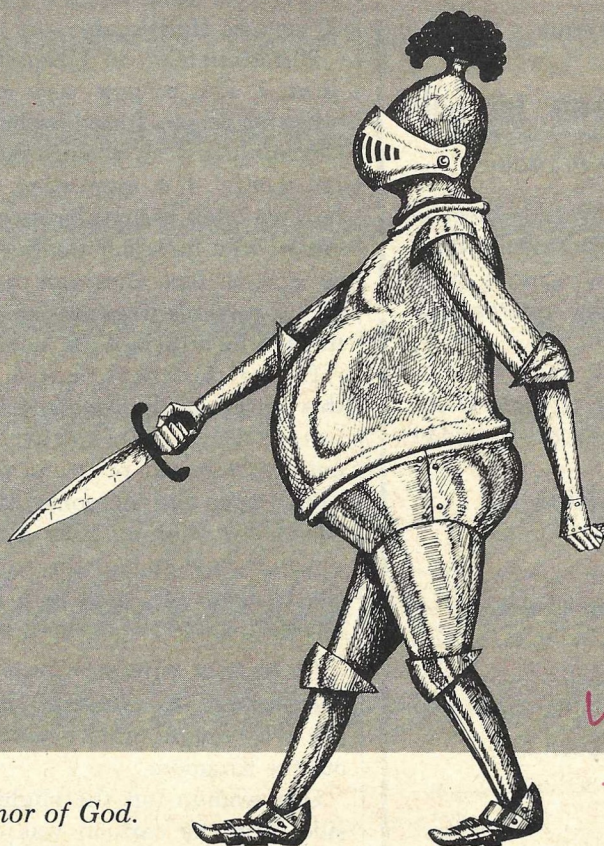


The Last Word

Jamie Buckingham



Put on the whole armor of God.

L. This was used in LW, but I want to use it again J.

FOR YEARS I WAS A SLAVE to strawberry shortcake. While some people were alcoholics and drug addicts, I was a glutton. I was also fat. Not “stocky”, but blubbery fat. I went on one of those grapefruit diets. I lost 20 pounds the first two weeks, but my blood pressure went up 40 notches and I shouted at my wife and kicked the dog. On top of that, every night I prowled the house looking for cookies and cheese like a drunk looks for a can of Sterno.

One day I opened a drawer and right before my eyes was a Hershey bar. I glanced around, saw that nobody had seen me, and quickly closed the drawer, my mouth watering wildly. I returned later. The candy was gone! I woke the entire family when I slammed the drawer shut at 100 miles an hour, catching the tip of my left finger in the crack.

The outcome of that particular diet was a gain of eight pounds, backing up the statement of my physician brother: “A diet is a torturous period that precedes a weight increase.”

I took up jogging. If you jog in the afternoon you’re subject to neighborhood ridicule, so I tried jogging in the early morning. The first morning out I was chased by a huge, brown dog of some kind that had bloodshot eyes and

toenails that went “clickety-click” on the concrete behind me. I sprinted two miles through the subdivision, losing four pounds. But it was a week before I could regain my breath to begin jogging again.

This time it was under cover of night. Jogging down a back alley I paused to gulp some air and heard a shrill scream from a house. “There he is, Howard. I told you somebody was out there.” I heard a back door slam and it was windsprints home again, accompanied by a twisted ankle when I vaulted a chain-link fence. I gave up jogging.

“Your brother, who is five years older than you, does 100 pushups each morning,” my mother bragged. Well, I’ve had to fight that spectre all my life, so I got the Royal Canadian Air Force list of calisthenics and got to work.

The first morning, grunting and sweating in my pajamas, I started jumping and bouncing between the bed and the chest of drawers. I heard a squeal behind me and turned to see my teen-age daughters. “It bounces like jelly, Daddy,” Bonnie giggled. That sent me into the bathroom to finish my exercises behind closed doors. I’d rather hit my elbow on the john during my bend-and-touch-your-toes exercise than be ridiculed in my own home.

It looked like I was doomed to being fat. I knew the issue was critical when the clothing store clerk laughed in my face when I said I wore a size 39 skivvy. One clerk even had the audacity to say, “Sir, if you’ll stop holding your breath I can get a correct measurement.”

I had always had a sneaking suspicion that there was something spiritually haywire with a fat Christian. So, two years ago I committed my overweight body to the Lord and following a water baptism service up at Cape Cod, things began to happen.

The first thing was a 28 day fast.

Please Turn Page

The second thing was a weight loss of 30 pounds. Hallelujah!

Unfortunately, as I began to slim down I also became very critical of other fat people. I used terms like “fat Christians are an abomination before the Lord.” It’s interesting, isn’t it, how we often become hyper-critical of others who have our weaknesses. It’s so true, in fact, that you can almost spot a person’s weakness by listening to what he criticizes the loudest.

During this time someone sent me this picture of the fat guy dressed out in the “whole armor of God.” I really got a charge out of it and thought I would poke fun at some of my fat friends by running it in our church bulletin. Boy! It had the same effect on the Body of Christ as a little boy poking a stick in a hornet’s nest.

Comments ranging from “That’s sacriligious” to “tch-tch” and roaring belly laughs were heard throughout the Kingdom.

One woman (on the slightly stout side) said the cartoon was offensive to all fat people. Someone else said it was offensive to all pregnant women. Strange, how a simple cartoon can bring the real us to the surface.

However, all the comments that

came pouring through the mail concerning old Fatso decked out in the armor of God were not critical. There was one that really hit the bull’s eye. The anonymous writer said:

“To me it was the most delightful example of God’s infinite love I’ve ever seen. How wonderful that he can allow us to wear his armor, give us his protection, when it is obvious we are not worthy of it. This unsightly knight certainly isn’t worthy to be fitted for protection. His body is out of shape and obviously not suited to enter into battle — either physical or spiritual.

“Yet, how great it is that God loves him, regardless of his condition, and cares enough to protect him with the safety of his armor.”

The needle pricked my heart and I’ve eased off on my attack against fat people. Negative criticism, I now understand, even when it is given under the guise of humor, never has any redeeming qualities. As for me, I know God wants me lean and hard, not soft and blubbery. However, thanks to my anonymous letter-writing friend, I now realize that God’s love is not conditioned by the size of my waist.

Praise God, he also loves fat people.