

FREEDOM FROM STRONGHOLDS

Icebreakers

- Are you a fan of dynasties or underdogs? Why?
- What was your biggest “win” growing up?

What is a Stronghold?

The Oxford Dictionary defines a stronghold as “a place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack.” Strongholds are supposed to be a place of refuge and protection. However, in spiritual terms, a stronghold can be an area in our lives where the devil and our flesh collaborate to create destructive patterns that are the opposite of God’s desire for us. Often, strongholds are areas of sin in our lives that we become blind to and eventually bring destruction. Many people have no idea they have strongholds. Being able to identify their strongholds is a major step toward freedom. Others know their strongholds but lack the courage to deal with them. For them, being able to act on their strongholds is another major step into liberation.

When someone surrenders their life to God by faith in Jesus Christ, they become a “child of God.” Then, God becomes our stronghold; “a place of fortified protection.” He is our safe space and our place of refuge. When we walk in His word and press into Him, He is faithful to replace the bondage of sin with the freedom of His covering.

Galatians 2:20 New King James Version (NKJV)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Romans 8:1-2 Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹ Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, ² because the Spirit’s law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Discussion Questions

- **When / Where / How did you become a Christian?**
- **Is it possible for someone who is a Christian to have a stronghold in their life?**

Spiritual Conflict can occur outwardly and/or inwardly

Ephesians 6:10-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Galatians 2:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Discussion Questions

- **What is the difference between outward and inward spiritual conflict?**
- **How does the Holy Spirit work together with us to gain freedom from strongholds?**

Three common Strongholds and how to combat them

1. **UNCONFESED SIN IN YOUR LIFE:**

There is no sin in your life that can't be forgiven. Jesus' death and resurrection has broken the power of sin and death. Corrie Ten Boom said it this way, "*There is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still.*" However, what we keep hidden will remain hidden until we bring it to light or God shines His light on it. The spiritual enemy of your soul thrives on secrecy and will establish a stronghold in unexposed sin in your life. We cannot come under God's covering if we cover up sin.

WHAT TO DO: CONFESS any and all known active sin in your life and REPENT of it. Be specific with God in your prayers and lay out in raw detail all that you thought and said that led to your sinful action. Then confess your sin to a trusted Christian brother or sister. As you do, take comfort in this promise from your Father in heaven - Repentance means that you intentionally live a life that is different from the sinful pattern you used to engage in.

1 John 1:9 English Standard Version (ESV)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

James 5:16 (NIV)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

2. **LIES YOU HAVE BELIEVED:**

These include lies about God, about yourself, and lies about how God sees you. The enemy can use these lies; playing over and over in your mind (sometimes for years). At some point in time (and usually in pain) you've bought into the lie(s) and accepted them as true. What lies have you believed?

WHAT TO DO: REJECT those lies the devil tries to whisper in your mind about your self-worth, and about God's great love for you. The Holy Spirit of God may bring conviction or heaviness over a sin in your life, but the purpose is to lead you back into a right relationship with God. Satan wants to condemn you in order to cause you to hide from God. In Philippians 4:8, we're told what to focus on instead of lies, "*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable; if anything is excellent or praiseworthy; think about such things.*"

3. **UNFORGIVENESS:**

If you are still nursing bitterness against someone/people, the enemy will take advantage of that to keep you in bondage. Humanly, it may not be easy to forgive the people who wounded you, but we forgive because Jesus Christ forgave us for our sin against God. When we forgive others, God sets us free from bondage produced by bitterness.

WHAT TO DO: FORGIVE and KEEP ON FORGIVING! Consider the following question that Peter asked Jesus and the LORD's reply: "Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22 NIV)

Consider also that when you forgive someone, it's not that you're allowing them to "get away scott-free", but rather, it's you trusting that God is wise enough to handle justice on your behalf.

Discussion Questions

- **Are you aware of any of these kinds of strongholds in your life?**
- **Take time to pray for one another.**

Prayers to take down strongholds in your life

Freedom in Christ Prayer

Heavenly Father, I praise your name. I thank you for your faithfulness, your kindness, and your love. I praise you Father, for the sacrifice of your son, Jesus Christ, for my life. You knew that I would never be able to reconcile with you without a perfect sacrifice, so you set into motion, from the beginning of time, the ultimate redemption that culminated with the death and resurrection of Jesus as Lord of all. With faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord, there is freedom. I am no longer a slave to the sin of the world but have freedom in Christ! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Freedom From Addiction

Heavenly Father, I am struggling. I am battling with the addiction of (insert your addiction). Father, I know that there is freedom in you. Your word says; "So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free." (John 8:36 Amplified)

Your word says that you are a lamp to my path. I need your help. Show me the path to health father. Give me the strength to take the next step towards sobriety. I pray that you would give me the courage to share these things with a trusted friend or counselor. Lord, I pray that you would give me freedom from this stronghold of addiction, in the name of Jesus. Your word says that you are "able to do, by means of your power working in us, so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of." (Ephesians 3:20 GNT) I know that you are able to do exceedingly abundantly, and I am trusting your guidance. I will walk this out with you one step at a time, following your lead. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Daily Prayer for Freedom and Peace

Lord in heaven, I pray that as I begin this day you would be with me. I open my day to your leading. I thank you in advance for the freedom that is found in your presence. Lord I ask that your peace would be mine as I come and go throughout my day. I pray that you would show me the places where I can share your peace with others. I pray that you would guide me away from temptation and keep my mind free from the corruption of this world. I long to walk in the freedom that you give! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Freedom Prayer for Deliverance From Fear and Anxiety

Father, when I am afraid! I know that I can come to you! I thank you for your presence and your spirit. Your word says "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV) I believe your word and will live in this truth! Lord I bind the spirit of fear and anxiety in my life. Please give me your spirit of love and peace. Help me to walk confidently in the truth that I am your child and I am able walk in freedom because of You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

So What Now? We suggest the following 5-step strategy

1. **If you will Name It, God can Tame It!** Identify the stronghold by name ... call it for what it is. Be specific in your confessions and repentance of sin.
2. **Don't Walk Alone!** Trust yourself to an accountability partner(s) Don't be a lone ranger.
3. **Eat Spiritual Food!** Read the Bible daily.
4. **We Really Do Need One Another!** Find a Bible-teaching Church to attend regularly.
5. **Seek Wise Counsel!** If you are continuing to experience on-going spiritual warfare and defeat, seek counsel from a Pastor and a counselor.

Deeper study and more resources

The following are resources to help you take your next right step in tearing down any strongholds in your life.

- **How to Change** – Timothy Keller: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwxfC3VyBAY>
- **Break the Strongholds!** – Beth Moore: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKeOs8DeSIY>

Questions for the Pastors and Staff?

If you would like contact from one of our pastors or staff, we invite you to reach out to any or all of us.

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