

Demolishing strongholds

Proposition: 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (CEV)

⁴or fight our battles with the weapons of this world. Instead, we use God's power that can destroy fortresses. We destroy arguments ⁵and every bit of pride that keeps anyone from knowing God. We capture people's thoughts and make them obey Christ.

Sometimes a little thought is planted in our minds by something that happened to us or something someone said and it begins to cloud our perception of ourselves.

Maybe we were bullied (first puff into balloon), maybe someone said (you are ugly), maybe said "you will never amount to anything" or "you are a failure" or you are a waste of space." You hear these things or experience trauma and how we see the world is not the same. We don't see ourselves or the world clearly or accurately.

These things can become such a part of our way of looking at ourselves or the world we can't imagine ever getting over them.

The Bible says ***the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword it penetrates even to dividing the soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Heb 4:12***

We need the Word of God to come and judge the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts and 'pop' those that are not true.

If you are believing anything other than God is loving, that you are His child, that no matter what you have been through, you can become all that Christ intended you to be: If your thinking does not line up with those statements, then you probably have a stronghold that needs to be popped.

WHAT IS A STRONG HOLD?

"A mindset impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable situations that we know are contrary to the will of God"

- Ed Silvano

"Strongholds are mental habit patterns of thought that are not consistent with God's Word."

- Neil Anderson

A common way to tell if you have a stronghold is that you might feel that you should be doing something in particular but you just don't seem able to do it, or you are doing things that you know you shouldn't do but you don't feel able to stop.

Sometimes strongholds are linked with a deliverance need but I have found that unless you deal with the stronghold in the mind first you will cast the demon out Ok but it will very often return. When you deal with the stronghold they often go without even being told.

Many in this church have big dream and visions given to you by God and yet it seems like what God is asking you to do is impossible. He says jump over this wall for me and the wall is only this big and very achievable but it feels this big and impossible. God however would never tell you to do things that you cannot do. That is not in His character.

In my second year of banking I worked for a lady who had a stronghold. She was the branch manager and mean. Often when we were serving a bank full of customers and the queue was longest she would come out and audibly run us down in front of the customers. Most of the time I kept away from her but one day when no one else was around I asked her why she had to be so rude to us in public. She said, it's just the way I am I can't change it. That is a sure sign of a stronghold there and for the Christian what she said to me that day, "It's just the way I am, I can't change it" is absolutely not true.

THREE COMMON WAYS STRONGHOLDS ENTER OUR WAY OF THINKING

1. OUR ENVIRONMENT

When you are a child your mind is like a little sponge for information. The things your friends say, your parents say, your school teacher says, your siblings say about you stick in your mind and shape your view of yourself.

How you learn to cope with stress and danger when you are young also shapes you. Imagine a family of three boys where dad was an alcoholic. When dad came home from the pub angry and aggressive, big brother learnt to get in his face and say "hit me and I will smash you", the middle one learnt to calm dad down by saying "what can I get you dad? Or What can I do for you?" The smallest son learnt to cope by hiding in his wardrobe in his room.

Now 30 years later, Dad is dead and gone. When faced with conflict, the older son still confronts aggressively, the second son still tries to placate humbly and the third son tends to just want to get out of the room.

Same family but they learnt three different responses when they were young from their environment that has shaped their lives.

A second way a stronghold can enter our thinking is through

2. TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

Often the way a child interprets a death in the family or a divorce or a rape will set up unhealthy strongholds in their minds.

For example; often abused kids come to see themselves as helpless or victims in life which was true when they were 8 or 9 when they got abused but it's certainly not true now they are 28 or 29.

Mental strongholds are lies, misinterpretations of an event. You can go back to those events and process them again from the position of who you are now as a child of God. Several of us love praying for people with strongholds and we have discovered that when a lie in a person's belief system has been exposed, Trish, Glenda or Bev or I will simply say; Jesus that is what Satan told this person all those years ago, would you please tell them the truth now and God will speak and when they get a revelation of truth from God it demolishes that previous stronghold.

John 8:32 (CEV)

³² You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

God does not change our past, he does not remove our memories from our brains but he changes the way we interpret those words and events and He sets us free.

A third doorway through which strongholds can enter our thinking often happens when we repeatedly give into temptation.

3. TEMPTATION

Satan and his helpers know where you are weak, they know which buttons to push and what to put in front of you to try to tempt you to sin. Now if you have given into the same sin so often you don't think you can help yourself, you have a stronghold.

Satan will always try to tempt you to live independently of God. To look for comfort, strength, security or acceptance in something else. The point is when you are tempted, are you going to look to God to have those needs met or are you going to gambling or eating or gossip?

Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

I believe all scripture is true and I absolutely believe 1 Corinthians 10:13

1 Corinthians 10:13 (CEV)

¹³ You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and he will show you how to escape from your temptations.

So when you and I are tempted, we can choose to go to God to get those needs met and we don't have to sin, there will always be a way out. The thing to remember about God providing a way out, that escape usually comes shortly after the sinful thought has dropped into your head. It usually doesn't come after you have been mulling it over and salivating about it for five or ten minutes. Look for the escape as soon as you are tempted.

Your mind is like an airport and you are the air traffic controller.

A lot of thoughts ask you for permission to land. But you have complete control over which thoughts you allow to land and which ones will be turned away. But you must decide as soon as the thought tries to land.

⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV

Taking every thought captive requires a constant commitment to truth!

If tempting thoughts are not dealt with straight away they lead to actions, repeated actions will lead to a habit. Repeated habits will lead to a stronghold.

WE DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH STRONGHOLDS!

- 1. DAILY MAKE A CHOICE TO TEST EVERY THOUGHT AND ONLY ACT ONLY ON THOSE THAT LINE UP WITH GOD'S WORD.**

Don't lean on your own understanding. Don't trust your feelings as I have been saying. Choose to believe what God says about you and what is true.

- 2. CONSTANTLY CHECK FOR VIRUS'**

Most of you have computer security systems that scan your computer daily for virus'. Do the same with your life. If you overreact, if you have negative messages running through your head, don't put up with it. Ask God to trace where the original lie started, ask him to expose it to you and then ask Him for the truth that will set you free. I.e. "what do You want to tell me about that Jesus?" If your reaction is inappropriate or not in line with who you are in Christ, do a virus scan and get it fixed. If you need help doing that Trish is probably our best at it but many of us can help you get used to doing this daily.

- 3. RETRAIN YOUR MIND TO THINK AS GOD WOULD HAVE YOU THINK**

Now for me that has meant writing down revelations that God has given me to demolish the lie, sometimes they are from Scripture, sometimes it's just a rhema word that He has given when I have asked Him for help. The point is to write them down and meditate on them daily for a while until the unhealthy thought pattern has been unlearned and your thoughts line up with God's.

In PNG at the start of the rainy season the jeeps wheels would cut deep tracks in the mud. Once you had driven over the same tracks a few times the jeep could pretty much drive itself. Its wheels would naturally follow the ruts. To steer the jeep on a new path would take some physical strength and determination for a while before another way became natural.

In the foundations course I wrote years ago, one section I copied and pasted from Neil Anderson because it was just so good. I simplified the words but that was about it. Neil Anderson says when you have a stronghold, retrain your mind with scripture, renounce the stronghold and announce the truth that you are now agreeing with and keep doing that for 40 days.

Here's a common one of his I can give you as an example.

STRONGHOLD BUSTER – WHEN FEELING IRRESISTIBLY DRAWN TO INTERNET PORN

What is Satan's lie? That I cannot resist the temptation.

What are the effects of this sin on my life? Deep sense of shame. Warped sexual feelings; unable to relate to other people as God intended, harmful to my marriage.

GOD'S TRUTH'S

1 Corinthians 6:9-19(CEV)

⁹ Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual ¹⁰ will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others.....¹⁹ You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own.

Romans 6:11-14 (CEV)

¹¹ In the same way, you must think of yourselves as dead to the power of sin. But Christ Jesus has given life to you, and you live for God.

¹² Don't let sin rule your body. After all, your body is bound to die, so don't obey its desires ¹³ or let any part of it become a slave of evil. Give yourselves to God, as people who have been raised from death to life. Make every part of your body a slave that pleases God. ¹⁴ Don't let sin keep ruling your lives. You are ruled by God's kindness and not by the Law.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (CEV)

¹³ You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and he will show you how to escape from your temptations.

Galatians 5:16 (CEV)

¹⁶ If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires.

Galatians 5:22-23 (CEV)

²² God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, ²³ gentle, and self-controlled.

Neil Anderson's declaration which must be spoken out loud (gives you authority of the demonic realm)

"I renounce the lie that I cannot resist the temptation to look at internet por. I declare the truth that God will always provide a way out when I am tempted and I will choose to take it. I announce that if I live by the Spirit – and I choose to do that – I will not gratify the desires of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit including self-control will grow in me. I count myself dead to sin and refuse to let sin reign in my body or be my master. Today and every day I give my body to God as a temple of the Holy Spirit to be used only for what is right. I declare that the power of sin is broken in me. I choose to submit completely to God and resist the devil who must flee from me now."

Repeat the readings and the declaration for 40 days and mark off on your calendar.

As I say, in our foundations course at the back there is a section on this that most of our new believers go through with another Christian alongside.

If you have recognised this morning that there is a stronghold at work in your life, you know how to deal with it.

Take control of it urgently and be the person that Jesus says that you are.

You were born for a life of freedom and power.