

Strongholds

Memorize 2 Corinthians 10:4,

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,
but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.*

1. Note that in 2 Corinthians 10:4 Paul says that our warfare is not carnal. Look up the word **carnal** in a dictionary and write a definition.

What would be the the opposite of carnal? _____

There are two realities here: flesh and spirit. The one you choose to be in control will in fact be in control and you will live accordingly.

The author Ray Stedman says, *The 'flesh' is inherited selfishness, that self-centeredness of life which all of us have without exception, impelling us to pursue our own interests at the expense of everybody else's.*

When you choose to follow the flesh death results. Whereas, when you choose to obey the Spirit, life comes. Read Galatians 6:7-8.

What are we commanded? *Do not be* _____

Who is not to be mocked? _____

What is the result of sowing to the flesh? _____

How do we reap eternal life? _____

2. This battle goes on constantly in your mind. **The two combatants** in this war are the devil and the Lord.

Let's consider the character of each.

3. **The devil.**

Read 1 Peter 5:8.

What is his goal for you? _____

- He is a fallen angel who wants to be God
- His desire is to devour us - keep us from victory
- His sole purpose is to undermine anything and everything that God does or intends to do in us and through us.
- **The devil's character.** Read the following verses and write down a descriptive word for the devil's character.

• **John 8:42-47. He is a** _____ **and a** _____

He is the motivating force behind all deceit. When we slander someone we play his game.

- **John 10:1-18. He is a** (see verse 8) _____

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, while the devil is a robber. He robs us of our joy, peace, love. There will be times when you will experience great victory and the devil will be right there to steal it away. Be on the lookout!

- **John 8:44. He is a** _____

The devil assassinates people's character through accusations, innuendos, and rumors. He also leads people to physically kill someone else, or even themselves!

- **Revelation 12:10. He is an** _____

The devil is an accuser. Many times self-accusations are from the devil. Too often we convince ourselves that we are just being honest, when in fact we have succumbed to the devil's lies and accusations.

- **2 Corinthians 11:3. He is a** _____

He is a deceiver. The devil leads us away from purity of devotion to Christ. To be deceived is to have our focus diverted to something false. Our energies and strength is redirected to secondary things such as:

- church rather than God
- religious activities rather than God
- sacrifice rather than obedience
- programs rather than people
- activities rather than spirit-filled living
- strange doctrines rather than biblical truth
- self pity rather than who we really are in Christ
- failure rather than victory

Mark it down, if you believe anything contrary to the Word of God, you are in deception pure and simple. For instance, suppose someone says that God has told them that the leadership of the church is in error, but no sin is identified—there is simply a difference of opinion. The Scripture is clear in Hebrews 13:17 that the members are to obey and submit to the leaders. Anything else would be sin. It is the trick of the devil to get us to focus on ourselves and off of the Lord and His revealed will found in the Bible. Deception is a powerful tool of the devil.

The devil is a liar, a thief, a murderer, and accuser of the brethren, and a deceiver.

4. The Lord

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9

What does God want to do for you? _____

Consider the character of God in contrast to the devil:

- **John 3:16. God is L** _____

God's love is an **unmerited** love (*not when we act a certain way*).

God's love is an **unconditional** love (*not love because we are...*)

God's love is an **unending** love (*Romans 8:35 says nothing can separate us from His love*)

God's love is an **unfathomable** love (*can never be tapped completely*)

7. The symptomatic evidence of a stronghold is compulsive behavior. *Note that by compulsive I mean behavior in which you just cannot get victory. It seems that you do it without even choosing. Even your will has been bypassed in the matter. When a stronghold is broken the first thing you will notice is the ability to choose not to follow the old habitual line. It is the freedom to choose not to sin that God has given every believer. That is the definition of freedom!*

Read the following Scriptures write down the stronghold:

2 Peter 2:14a ('a' means first part of verse) _____

James 1:6b ('b' means last part of verse) _____

James 3:16 _____

Titus 3:3 _____

Romans 8:15a _____

Acts 8:23 _____

Galatians 5:19-21 _____

Luke 13:12, 16 _____

Proverbs 25:28 _____

This is not an exhaustive list, just exemplary. Anything that is a **habit** that is not consistent with the nature of God is the result of a stronghold. You have believed a lie, given a place to the devil, and **he, rather than the Holy Spirit, is controlling you.**

8. Ask the Lord to show you any strongholds that might be in your life and write them down:

9. Results of strongholds: *(read the Scriptures)*

• **Strongholds destroy spirituality.**

1 Peter 2:11b. You will be unable to grow as the Lord wants. Something will always be holding you back. The stronghold wages war against the Spirit in you.

• **Strongholds create social dysfunction.**

Luke 8:27. It is difficult to establish healthy relationships when we have strongholds. A stronghold will consume our attention resulting in its control over even our relationships. We will damage others for the sake of our stronghold.

• **Strongholds produce mental aberrations.**

Matthew 17:15. Some people just don't think right. Their stronghold has distorted their thinking in certain areas. They seem completely deceived and cannot even be reasoned with. They are unable to think correctly about their own lives.

- **Strongholds handicap the body.**

Matthew 9:23-33. Sickness is very often the result of a stronghold. People consumed by fear have ulcers, headaches, etc. A person overwhelmed by anger and bitterness can even be attacked by arthritis or stomach problems.

10. **Tearing down a stronghold**

Step 1: There must be thorough repentance. Romans 2:4

Process of repentance:

Repentance is an attitude of the heart. It is a desire to change and follow God. The following five prayers make up a prayer of repentance.

- **God, I am wrong...**

Isaiah 53:6

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

When you are repentant you recognize that what you have done is sin. You must admit that the action is sin.

- **God, I am sorry...**

2 Corinthians 7:11

For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Godly sorrow is not about feeling 'caught'. You must communicate to God that you are sorry for the sin. You hate what you did and want to be free of it.

- **God, forgive me...**

Psalm 85:2

You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin.

Ask the Lord to forgive you. In asking this you are submitting the sin and your heart to Him. You are throwing yourself onto His grace.

- **God, cleanse me...**

Psalm 51:1-2

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.

You cannot make up for sin. God does not balance your good and your evil. He forgives and then cleanses. He removes it from your record.

- **God, change me...**

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

John 8:11 *Go now and leave your life of sin.*

This is your heart's cry: change me, oh God!

Step 2: There must be a clear request for freedom.

It is important that you **speak** the words of freedom.

- ***Claim Jesus*** as your Lord and Savior and thereby identify to the devil to whom you belong.
- ***Renounce the habit*** and the belief system that produced it.
- ***Ask the Lord*** to tear down the stronghold and replace it with His power.
- ***Command the devil to leave you.***

James 4:7 says, *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

- ***Thank the Lord for your freedom.***

Step 3: Reinforce your life with scriptural disciplines.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-8.

You have everything you need to remain free.

Study the Bible.

Pray every day.

Listen to Christian music.

Spend time with other believers.

Spend time alone with God.

Serve others.

Memorize Scripture.

Be in a LifeGroup to become accountable.

Practise loving others.

Step 4: Transform your thinking by filling your mind with the truth.

Build a tower of truth by daily reading the Word and making it a part of your every day life.

Step 5: Repeat steps 1 through 3 daily until victory is consistent.

TEAR DOWN YOUR STRONGHOLDS NOW!!