

Demolishing Strongholds

God's Way to Spiritual Freedom

Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz

Revised
&
Expanded

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"



Freedom In Jesus Series
(Part 2)

Use with Demolishing Strongholds Video

INTRODUCTION TO



Restoration Ministries International

Have you noticed that our Father is restoring the relational intimacy and spiritual power that the earliest followers of Jesus once experienced?

Why Now? Because God is Keeping His Promises!

During the last century God has been fulfilling His promises to the Jewish people as He restores them to Israel. *“Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again’”* (Ezekiel 11:17).

As He fulfills His promise to the Jews to restore them to the land of Israel one last time, our faithful Father is revealing to a Gentile world the *Hebraic foundations* which enabled the earliest followers of Jesus to be so relationally intimate and spiritually powerful. Christianity didn’t spring up in a vacuum. In fact, all of the faith practices we see in the Newer Testament were already being practiced by the “Hebraic Stream” of Judaism before the coming of Christ. These were the faithful remnant who were awaiting fulfillment of Hebrew Scripture prophecy: the atonement of Jesus the Messiah, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. [You can explore this in our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, a free download on our website: Restorationministries.org]

The Purpose of Restoration Ministries

1. Awareness

Proclaiming through written word and media presentation the Hebraic foundations of understanding and practice upon which the early Church was founded.

2. Equipping

Providing practical resources for God's people to live out His restorative truths and fulfill His purposes.

Each of the books, videos, Hebraic articles, and other training materials produced by Restoration Ministries International is one segment of a *family of information* related to that which our Father told us to call **The Hebraic Restoration**. Through these truths our Father is revealing the trust-based obedient lifestyle of our father Abraham. *“Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to **all Abraham’s offspring**—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the **faith of Abraham**. He is the **father of us all**. As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ **He is our father in the sight of God**, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were”* (Romans 4:16,17, emphasis added).

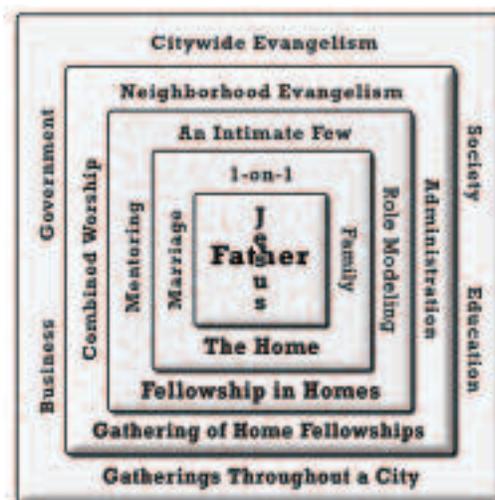
As we seek to understand that which our Father is restoring today, we need to see ourselves from His perspective — as children of Abraham. Abraham trusted God in love-grounded obedience, willing even to sacrifice his son at God’s command. Therefore, God called him out in covenant union with Himself, and through him poured out precious promises for all his children to come.

When most people hear the world “church”, they think of a building. Yet, our Father sees His Church, the *ekklesia* or “called-out ones”, as the sons and daughters He has called out of the world system. Like the first Hebrew, Abraham, whose life pattern of love-grounded obedient trust is “Hebraic”, followers of Jesus are called out of the world to live in covenant union with our Father.

Each of the Restoration Ministries materials is designed to stand alone to equip followers of Jesus to apply these foundational truths and principles to their lives. Yet, the real strength of each portion is found in both its content and its interrelationship to the other facets of the Hebraic Restoration.

The Hebraic Relational Priorities of the Early Church

The Restoration Diagram



The diagram on the previous page represents the Hebraic relational priorities that were embraced by the earliest followers of Jesus. First and foremost is your relationship with our Father and His Son, Jesus, the greatest priority in your life. All other relationships flow outward, with those closer to the center having greater priority.

PRIORITY #1 — OUR FATHER AND JESUS

A biblically Hebraic understanding of your relationship with your Father and His Son, Jesus, can best be understood as a *pilgrimage to salvation*. Your spiritual journey culminates when you stand before Him and your name is proclaimed to the hosts of heaven. Your pilgrimage begins when you accept the stipulations that our Father offers in the New Covenant that's made possible through the shed blood of Jesus, our atoning sacrifice.

Jesus makes clear how you can enter into this Covenant: “*Whoever trusts in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who trusted in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:38,39, emphasis added CJB). The only Scripture in existence when Jesus revealed this truth was the Older Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. The foundation for our salvation is found in the Older Testament, and made clear in the Newer Testament as a continuum. [Please see our free Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, as well as our video training series, *Jesus In Your Home*, at our website, Restorationministries.org]

These training materials are worthless to you if you haven't embraced the Covenant our Father offers in His Word. It is only through this Covenant that you receive the Holy Spirit, Who enables you to live as a stream of living water — a life that's pleasing to our Father. **We strongly encourage you to thoughtfully read this Hebraic Article or watch the video!** It's vital that you embrace the Covenant relationship which Jesus has made possible. There are so many false, man-centered gospels being peddled today that lead to eternal destruction. You can recognize the counterfeits because they omit the covenant stipulations Jesus speaks of in John 7:38,39 — God's requirements for your salvation that are found in the Older Testament.

PRIORITY #2 — YOUR HOME

The earliest Hebraic followers of Jesus understood clearly that God ordained the *home* to be the basic building block for spiritual development. So much of Christianity today “outsources” wives and children for others to teach. But in the earliest Church the husband/father was the primary influence in the spiritual development of his family. All other relationships supported him in this role, and nothing competed with his responsibility nor compensated for his irresponsibility.

A. Marriage — Our Father designed the marriage covenant to be the physical representation of our spiritual covenant with Him. In this light, marriage is the second most important covenant God established because it mirrors the intimacy and union He wants with His beloved. A Hebraic-Christian marriage of the early Church reflected the couple's relationship with God. This could be summarized, “*If you want to know the extent of my relationship with Jesus Christ, see it in the love He has given me for my spouse.*” A man is called to love his wife just as Jesus would love her. No less is demanded of him in union with Jesus: “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*” (Ephesians 5:25, emphasis added). And a woman is called to lovingly respect her husband as she would her Lord (Ephesians 5:22-24,32). No less is demanded of her in union with Jesus.

The relational intimacy shared by a married couple represents both their individual and collective relationship with their Lord. So vital an illustration of intimacy is marriage that God refers to Himself as the husband of His wife Israel. And, Jesus is called the Bridegroom of His Bride, the Church. Marital love is an enduring commitment that's meant to deepen and grow throughout the years of marriage. Similarly, your union with the Holy Spirit purposes to increasingly draw you (whether single or married) into deeper loving trust in God. God has designed a husband to draw strength from his wife, his nurturing companion. She is the suitable life partner given him by God to complement him, just as a husband is the provider, protector and life companion God has given her so that they together will fulfill His plans and purposes.

B. Family — Your *home* is the *primary building block* for Christian growth. All your other relationships should supplement your home in this purpose, not displace it or compensate for your shortcomings. The Hebraic followers of the earliest Church recognized that their relationship with their Lord and the relationships in their homes were inseparably linked: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up*” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Children are a heritage and blessing from the Lord. Fathers are commanded to “*bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). A father is the key influence in the sex-role identification of his children. He is God's primary influence in whether his children enjoy healthy marriages that glorify our Father, or end up promiscuous in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. Also, no one has the motivational influence on a child like a mother has. A mother imparts nurture and motivation to her children in a way that no outside caregiver can (Proverbs 1:8; 31:26).

God's life purpose for a child is best guided by parents who intimately know their children's unique personalities and inclinations. Those insights sharpen only as purposeful time and loving effort are spent with their children. Then they can shepherd their children into the life decisions and vocation that are best suited for each child. [See our website Hebraic Article, ***He Has Showed You.***]

PRIORITY #3 — YOUR FELLOWSHIP IN HOMES

God is reestablishing a key element of the early Church: fellowship in homes as an *extension of your home* for spiritual growth and supportive relationships. The earliest followers of Jesus met in homes with glad and sincere hearts to break bread and to “*spur one another on toward love and good deeds*” (Hebrews 10:24). The home fellowship relationship of the early Church is a seven-day-a-week family-style commitment to one another. Before the coming of Jesus, the Hebraic followers of Jesus fellowshiped in homes to support and uphold *communal righteousness*. As spiritual extended families, their physical and spiritual lives were interconnected. They knew from the Older Testament (see Psalms 14:5, Psalms 32, Proverbs 15:29, Malachi 3:18, and affirmed again in the Newer Testament, 1 Peter 3:12) that God refuses to hear the prayers of the unrepentant and unrighteous. But those who confess their sins and turn from them are made righteous through God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Then He readily answers their prayers (James 5:16-18).

Early followers of Jesus also knew from examples like David numbering his troops (1 Chronicles 21), Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16), and Achan hiding the devoted items (Joshua 7), that God held His people communally responsible for each other. One person's sin and unrepentance hindered all their prayers from being answered. Unlike the relatively impersonal nature of the Temple, fellowship in

homes as extended spiritual family provided relational intimacy and accurate perception of each other. Upholding **communal righteousness** in home fellowships is the focus of our Lord's words about His Church in Matthew 18:15-20. It's not *sin per se*, but the *failure to repent* that causes a person to be removed from fellowship. Repentance renews the righteous responsiveness to God that brings about answered prayer. And isn't answered prayer that which got the earliest "called-out ones" noticed?

The second purpose for fellowship in homes parallels the purpose of the clan in the Hebrew society. An individual belonged to a family, a family to a clan, the clan to a tribe, and the twelve tribes made up the nation of Israel. Home fellowships functioned like clans to provide personal care for the individual and family, and linked them to the larger and less personal relationships. As you can see from **The Restoration Diagram**, this is what fellowship as extended spiritual family in homes accomplishes.

Fellowship in homes deepens supportive relationships to point one another toward greater dependency on God. And in their relationship as extended spiritual family they are able to fulfill the 54 **one-anothering** passages found in the Newer Testament. Marriages and families that have been torn apart by death or divorce can be nurtured in the extended family of the home fellowship. Within this safe environment, mentoring by sages and role modeling by those who have lived their lives for Christ can guide those younger in their walk with their Lord. Through the family and through home fellowships, God is restoring sacrificial load-bearing love to relationships.

Remember, the nation of Israel's ability to respond to God's purposes was based on their relational progression from individual, to family, to clan, to the twelve tribes that comprised the nation. Following this pattern, the Church is built on the individual, family, home fellowship, congregation, and congregations throughout a city. The ultimate outpouring of this relational model into their city will enable congregations to impact their society, educational system, business spheres, government and ultimately, their nation and the world.

The goal of Restoration Ministries International is to equip God's children to live out the relational intimacy and spiritual power of the inner three rings of the Restoration Diagram. From these three flow the outworking that impacts greater spheres of influence.

“I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword.” (Zechariah 9:13)

The prophetic fulfillment of Zechariah's words is being carried out today in the Hebraic Restoration. Throughout the world our Father is sending forth a Hebraic understanding of the Scriptures to undo in the Church the heathen influence of the converted Greek philosophers of the second and third centuries. Hellenistic distortions of God's Word have held the Church captive for centuries. Through a philosophical approach to truth, many of the men referred to as "Church Fathers" reconciled Plato and Christianity, introducing a myriad of pagan practices which are now embraced as "Christian."

Paul had warned the Church against this: "*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ*" (Colossians 2:8). Many of the creeds that now divide God's children into over 22,000 competing denominations are a result of the infiltration of Greek philosophy. The early Church would have understood "doctrine" to be the message of Scriptural truth for which one would be willing to die. Our Father is now restoring the "sons and daughters of Zion" who trust in Him the way He has

Living Out God's Word: A Hebraic — Greek Comparison

Hebraic

Active—appeals to the heart

Motive

- Love of God and others
- Life viewed as a pilgrimage leading to ultimate culmination
- Suffering seen as necessary for development of Christ-like character

Process Oriented

- Stresses direct participation
- Emphasizes age and wisdom
- Role modeling, mentoring, and discipleship indispensable
- Leadership by personal example
- Character of leader essential
- Personal relationships imperative

Biblical Application

- Doers of the Word
- Bible—reality that must be confronted
- Goal—to develop Christ-likeness

Ministry Activity

- Small intimate groups
- Leader as facilitator
- Cooperative, participatory planning
- Spiritual gifts shared
- Frequent scheduled and unscheduled gatherings

Fruit

- Love, acceptance, forgiveness
- Transparency encouraged
- Active participation
- “How you serve” vital
- Each believer trained to serve
- Produces mature believers who fully relate to God and serve His purposes

Greek

Cognitive—appeals to the intellect

Motive

- Pursuit of self-interest and knowledge
- Life viewed in circular terms, to some day achieve a higher state of existence
- Suffering to be avoided; people and activities weighed for self-gratification: “How does this person/event benefit me?”

Program Oriented

- Heavy program prominence
- Emphasizes education
- Relies on speaking skills, oratory, programmed materials, information conveyance
- Leader’s personal life immaterial
- Personal relationships optional

Biblical Application

- Belief without personal cost
- Bible—data that must be taught
- Focus on rules—do’s and don’ts
- Emphasizes distinct denominations

Ministry Activity

- Large impersonal groups
- Leader-directed and controlled
- Organizational roles important
- Acquisition of knowledge emphasized
- Reliance on scheduled gatherings

Fruit

- Mutual toleration
- Transparency discouraged
- Passivity and lethargy
- “What you know” vital
- Trained professionals utilized
- Produces pew-bound spectators who seek religious self-interest programs and practices

A Word of Encouragement

Jesus encouraged all who would follow Him, *“I will build My church.”* No true faith practice can be established unless Jesus is the Cornerstone. As followers of Jesus, our lives and faith practices must once again encompass the foundational Hebraic understanding upon which the apostles and the writers of the Newer Testament built. The influence of Greek theory and philosophy, and the impact of centuries of anti-Semitism in the church, have hindered our return to our Hebraic roots. The Body of Jesus Christ was never meant to be divided by human commands, traditions, and knowledge. As the Hebraic Restoration continues, the Church, that is, God’s called-out ones, will be built upon the character of Jesus, becoming like Him in this world and living by the power of His Spirit.

May God bless you as you incorporate into your life the truths of the Hebraic Restoration that were so foundational to the earliest followers of Jesus through the power of His Spirit, for the glory of our Father, Who alone is worthy.

About the Authors



Mike Dowgiewicz, president of *Restoration Ministries International*, and his wife, Sue, administrated a church retreat center where for ten years they taught over 5,000 people from a variety of congregations and denominations. While at the center, Mike was a counselor to church leaders throughout southern New England. Their ministry was recognized by the Associated Press in an article that was published nationally. Mike also was featured in an article in *New England Church Life*, "Who Pastors the Pastor?"

Before their retreat center ministry, Mike was a career officer in the Navy, having served on three ship-board deployments to Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. While he was in the Navy he gave his life to Jesus. Sue made that same commitment a few months later. They have a son, Sean Michael, and a granddaughter. *Restoration Ministries International* has its basis in research they did while living in Israel. They are now sharing God’s re-establishment of the Hebraic foundations and relational priorities that strengthened the early Christians.

Mike holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Connecticut, an MBA from California Lutheran College, and a Master of Religious Education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Sue holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Connecticut.

Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the help of Mark Santostefano, who first introduced us to the biblical understanding of spiritual strongholds. Above all, we thank our Lord Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who has joined us together with all other believers in His Body to work in unity for His glory.

We dedicate this book to all who respond in loving obedient trust in Jesus to walk free to serve our Lord’s purposes.

Free Materials Available At Our Website: Restorationministries.org



Jesus In Your Home Video Series

A series of video segments on the Hebraic foundations that you can download and watch on your computer or TV. Each segment is discussion-friendly to help your home be set apart for God's purposes.



Restoring the Early Church

A comprehensive book highlighting the Hebraic foundations of the early Church that magnified its intimacy and power. Fully half of this material is devoted to instilling these foundations in your everyday life!

Prodigal Church

A 36-page narrative condensation highlighting the important points of *Restoring the Early Church*.



Pastoring By Elders

A 160-page preparation guide to help mature men biblically shepherd and serve God's people. Emphasizes the essentials of wisdom and experience gained on life's journey, and how to pass these along.



God's Instruments for War

This booklet acquaints you with the *interrelational* element of the Spirit's power so that followers of Jesus together can effectively wage the war Satan has declared against them. A spiritual gifts survey enables you to ascertain your gift(s) and use them powerfully in cooperation with others in your faith community.



Demolishing Strongholds

A personalized workbook to help you identify your seven basic God-given needs. This newly revised and expanded version helps you recognize and combat the destructive forces of demonic strongholds that keep you from fulfilling these needs His way.



Growing Relationships Through Confrontation

An equipping workbook for individuals, families, and small groups to incorporate the Hebraic method of role modeling and direct experience in defusing relational tension. Its practical format will help you live out the power and intimacy of the early Church by addressing differences *His* way.



Christian Halakhahs

This booklet develops the Hebraic process of establishing *halakhahs* to help you walk in obedient trust in Jesus. A *halakhah* is the way you prayerfully apply the Bible to different areas of your life, such as enacting authority in your home, educating your children, budgeting your finances, and a host of other areas.



Lifebytes

These articles provide practical insights and suggestions to help you live out the Hebraic foundations. Living for Jesus to glorify our Father is a 24/7 way of life. *Lifebytes* succeed our *Mishpachah Yeshua* Newsletters which you will also find on the website.



Going To The High Places

This teaching series is based on Hannah Hurnard's timeless classic, *Hinds' Feet On High Places*. The true Gospel embraced by the early Church was understood to be *pilgrimage to salvation*. This study guide can help you wisely confront life's decisions on your own journey to the High Places.



The Gospel Of The Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation

This 33-page article explores the Gospel which the earliest followers of Jesus embraced, a Gospel that changed lives and equipped them to live powerfully in the Holy Spirit. Counterfeit gospels abound today! Be sure you embrace the one our Father offers, the only one that's true to His Word.

Visit our website for other materials and articles to deepen your spiritual growth.

Demolishing Strongholds

God's Way to Spiritual Freedom

by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz



Freedom In Jesus
(Part 2)

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 1-890592-09-9
(Previously ISBN 1-890592-03-X)

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Published by

Restoration Ministries International



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PREFACE

This ***Demolishing Strongholds*** workbook is the second segment of our three-part series, ***Freedom In Jesus***. In Part 1 we discuss the unseen spiritual reality all around us. The Bible tells us that our world is filled with angels and demons. It's this unseen world that exerts such powerful influence on our ability to experience the freedom and victory that our Lord Jesus promises. It can also be the arena of spiritual defeat. Ignorance of the invisible realm only compounds our misery.

That which is our strength in the physical world is also our hindrance in the unseen reality. Our five senses, that is, our sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing, enable us to perceive and interact with our environment. In the physical world, 89% of all we know has come through our sight. The remaining 11% is acquired through our other four senses.

But as necessary as the five senses are to our lives in the physical dimension, they are detrimental to our understanding of the unseen world around us. This is the world of the spirit, and it requires *faith* to believe in its existence. We're told, "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*" (Hebrews 11:1). In Part 1 of ***Freedom in Jesus***, we fully explore the topic of the invisible world. Please review that if you're unfamiliar with the concept of the unseen reality. [See ***Freedom In Jesus, Part 1*** on our website at Restorationministries.org: available 1/06.]

Our Lord perceives both dimensions at once, both the physical and the spirit realm around us. He sees the angels and demons, and the warfare being fought for the souls of mankind, including yours. If you've embraced the true Gospel, His very Spirit indwells you and is fully aware of the unseen battle. Keep in mind this image of God's awareness of you as you proceed through this workbook.

This book deals with the demonic side of the invisible realm. Demonic influence and control in people is often accomplished through what the Bible calls "strongholds." "*The weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, they have God's power for demolishing strongholds*" (2 Corinthians 10:4, CJB). Through our training ministry, my wife Sue and I have helped several thousand people demolish the **spiritual strongholds*** that have hindered and afflicted them for so long. We've seen the fruit of lives changed, relationships healed, and in some cases, medical symptoms eradicated when the influence of various demonic strongholds has been eliminated.

As you go through this workbook, keep in mind that we aren't espousing a prayer technique. We are **appropriating the victory promised through the authority represented in the precious Name of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Behind His Name is the summation of all authority in the universe:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'"
(Matthew 28:18).

*Strongholds:
internal fortresses of influence from which demonic spirits agitate, oppress and afflict the soul.
These spirits arouse and incline your mind, will, and emotions toward attitudes and actions that are contrary to the will of God.
(See Chapter 2 for further explanation.)

“Therefore God exalted [Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15).

The spiritual forces of evil -- demons -- are fallen angels whom God cast down to the earth from heaven (see Revelation 12:9). **Never lose sight of this truth: Demons are subject to Jesus Christ, Who has given us authority in His Name to demolish their influence in our lives.** As evangelist Ed Siloso says, “You can serve them eviction notices.”

References that pertain to **specific types of spirits** -- or to the capability of demonic spirits to influence individuals in specific ways -- abound in Scripture.

Examine this sampling of verses.

*“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving spirits** and things taught by demons” (1Timothy 4:1, emphasis added).*

*“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion...the garment of praise for the **spirit of heaviness**” (Isaiah 61:3, KJV, emphasis added).*

*“For ye have not received the **spirit of bondage again to fear**, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (Romans 8:15, KJV, emphasis added).*

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the **spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**” (Ephesians 2:1,2, emphasis added).*

*“And the **spirit of jealousy** come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled” (Numbers 5:14, KJV, emphasis added).*

*“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come...They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us...but **every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus** is not from God. This is the **spirit of the antichrist**” (1 John 2:18,19; 4:3, emphasis added).*

*“As it is written: ‘God gave them a **spirit of stupor**, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day’” (Romans 11:8, emphasis added).*

*“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against **unclean [foul, lewd] spirits**” (Matthew 10:1, KJV, emphasis added).*

*“The Lord has mingled within her a **spirit of confusion**; and they have made Egypt stagger in all her doings as a drunken man staggers in his vomit” (Isaiah 19:14, RSV, emphasis added).*

I [Mike] first became acquainted with strongholds and their influence in people’s lives while we were administrating a church retreat center in Connecticut from 1983 to 1993. During a conference held on Long Island in the summer of 1989, a prophecy was given to the denominationally diverse participants concerning southern New England. The prophecy stated, “*God is looking for a faceless people who are hum-*

ble, with only the face of Jesus shining through. On November 30, 1989, the Lord is going to use these people in something special He is about to do.” Throughout the fall of 1989 I was haunted by the question, “Was I humble and faceless? Would I be one of those the Lord was going to use?”

As I read my Bible on the morning of November 29, 1989, one day before the prophesied date, I pondered Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians (3:16-19): “*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp **how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge** — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*” (emphasis added).

As I sat there quietly in my recliner, I was convicted that the amount of the love of Jesus that I’d ever felt, even after many years in ministry, was about the size of a decimal point. The love I’d perceived had no depth, breadth, or width to it, and it certainly didn’t surpass my knowledge. Later that day I was playing golf with my close friend, Casey. As we walked along the course I shared with him my deep conviction from my reading in Ephesians that morning. With dogged determination I told him, “I’m not going on in ministry until I grasp this height, depth, and breadth of the love of Jesus.” He joined with me in prayer right where we stood.

The next morning at 8:00 on November 30, 1989, I received a phone call from a pastor who lived about an hour away from us. Sounding irritated he asked, “Mike, what’s your problem? God woke me up at 4:00 this morning and told me to call you at 8:00 AM to tell you that He heard your prayer.” When I explained to him my prayer on the golf course the day before, we both sensed that this was the reason the Lord had awakened him earlier. I continued in my ministry, waiting for God to show me the next step.

I expected Him to act quickly. However, a few months went by and, in February, 1990, I received a letter from my friend Karl in Washington State. He wrote that God had shown him in prayer that our ministry was being hindered by a spirit of deceit. Sue and I prayed, but had no discernment that he was right. Several more months went by. Another friend, Mark, recommended a book entitled *The Three Battlegrounds* by Francis Frangipane. I purchased the book and as I reclined with it in the solitude of my study, my eyes fell upon these words: “Once a person is deceived, **he does not recognize** that he is deceived, **because he has been deceived!**”

As I pondered those words I could hear the Holy Spirit say, “Mike, you do have a spirit of deceit. Now renounce it in the name of Jesus.” As I began to pray, a vision appeared right in front of me. Visions aren’t an everyday occurrence with me. I believe God permitted me to have this vision because of the importance of the matter, not only in my own life but in the lives of others I would help through this new awareness. When God wanted Peter to minister to Cornelius, a Gentile, He gave Peter a vision to undergird the importance of the change he must undergo as a devout Jew to be willing to minister to a Gentile: “*He [Peter] saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat!’*” (Acts 10:11-13).

The vision appeared as an object that looked like a big black rock about five feet high and five feet wide. On it was written the word “**DECEIT.**” As I prayed, renouncing the spirit of deceit, a veneer like



an onion skin fell off the object. Underneath this veneer was the word “**REJECTION.**” As I stared at it, God began to show me painful memories of my childhood — many of which I had forgotten. As I watched the scenes unfold, a growing sense of humiliation welled up inside me. Then the Holy Spirit revealed, “Those feelings of humiliation laid the foundation for the stronghold of rejection to be built in



you. Now renounce that spirit's influence in your life." As I renounced the spirit of rejection in the name of Jesus, the black object disappeared. I was changed, but I was uncertain in what way.

The day after my vision and subsequent deliverance from the spirits of deceit and rejection, I participated in a difficult meeting with a group of church leaders. Their denomination was in the process of introducing some very unbiblical teachings, and the men were yielding to the pressure. I encouraged them to not give in but to uphold God's Word at all cost. They became extremely antagonistic toward me. At that moment **I realized that I loved them *despite* their reaction to me. I realized that without the spirit of rejection influencing me, I was able to love them rather than respond negatively to them.**

As time went on, I was able to see how **the spirit of deceit had kept me from perceiving people and situations clearly.** Karl's words about deceit now made sense. Up until my deliverance from these spirits, I'd always painted a rosy picture of my upbringing. I had believed and convinced many others that my home was wonderful. In order to hide my humiliation, a spirit of deceit had taken over and inclined me to deny the painful reality of my past. (Just a note: Before the removal of the spirit of rejection, my lifetime blood pressure had been 120/90. It immediately dropped to 106/72. The tension that had been caused by the symptoms of rejection was gone!)

Months later I showed my mom the list of spiritual strongholds found on pages 36 and 37. She immediately pointed to the stronghold of rejection and said, "This is the one I have. As a matter of fact our whole family has it." Her words began the process of breaking the influence of the spirit that has burdened our family for generations.

Over the years we've found that people tend to marry others with the same demonic influences. The familiarity bred by the common spirits brings about a deceptive sense of acceptance and compatibility. We've done Demolishing Strongholds Workshops in congregations throughout the country. The majority of those in each congregation are influenced by the same demonic spirits. In one congregation it may be bitterness, in another, pride, and still another, fear and insecurity. It appears that the demonic spirits bring them together because the people feel accepted and comfortable in their shared bondage!

Through what we have learned and experienced, we've been able to help many break the demonic enslavement of strongholds. This book is written to help you demolish the demonic strongholds in your life, family, faith community, and workplace. Our Father's goal for His children is to walk free in Jesus and to serve His purposes in the power of His Spirit — the only one you want to be hearing!

We welcome testimonies, input, corrections, and correspondence as you work through this material. We want to be better equipped to serve others through it. May you rejoice and give glory to God as you are set free!

Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Authors' Recommendation

- You may find it helpful to begin your study of this book at page 36, "Steps To Identify and Demolish Strongholds." By first ridding yourself of your strongholds, you may find the preliminary information easier to grasp and apply.
- We strongly encourage you to use our Demolishing Strongholds video that is designed to accompany this book. You may download it for free from our website or purchase it on DVD.

Creation: God Created Us With Seven Needs

(Genesis 1 and 2)

Before we deal with strongholds, we need to have a clear understanding of how God made us, and what really motivates us. A study of the first two chapters of Genesis reveals that from the beginning God created in all human beings **seven distinct needs**. These innate needs are what motivate and drive us. As we seek to meet these needs **within the framework** of God's Word, we provide the spiritual environment for an ever-increasing conformity to the image of Christ. As we yield our **self-sufficiency** to Him and focus instead on a **God-dependency** for all our needs, we will develop spiritual eyes to see His provisions and spiritual ears to hear Him say, ***"This is the way. Walk in it"*** (Isaiah 30:21).

On the other hand, when we strive to meet these needs in a way that **seems** right to our mind, will, and emotions but is not God's way, we will suffer consequences. And, as we shall see shortly, one of these consequences is the formation of demonic strongholds in our soul.

God created us with seven needs:

Dignity
Authority
Blessing & Provision
Security
Purpose & Meaning
Freedom & Boundary
Intimate Love &
Companionship

A major source of strongholds in our lives is a result of seeking to meet one or more of these needs apart from God's will for us.

As you read through the seven needs below and their biblical foundation, consider which ones strike you the most in wanting to have them met in your own life. This will be important later, after you have seen the strongholds demolished in your own life. Again, it is vital to your own life in Christ that you have these needs met, but only in the way our Lord prescribes.

Dignity

1. God Created Us with a Need for Dignity

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,' ...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26,27).

The dignity of being made in the image of God elevates us above all other forms of life in creation. Human dignity encompasses our sense of honor, self-respect, and our personal distinctiveness. Because we are made in God's image, Satan assaults our dignity. This is even more the case for followers of Jesus because we are **temples of the Holy Spirit** (see 1 Corinthians 3:16) and **members of Christ** (see 1 Corinthians 6:15).

Also, we've been given the responsibility in the Name of Jesus to destroy the works of Satan: *"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name **they will drive out demons**; they will speak in new tongues"* (Mark 16:17, emphasis added).

Dignity is a critical need to be met because you *are* made in the image of God. Sadly, dignity is often eroded in families who use **guilt as a motivator** to control behavior. Phrases such as, "You didn't come to see me yesterday because I'm not important to you" or, "If you loved me you would...(fill in the blank)..." are manipulative and controlling. These words don't appeal to your dignity or to your free will to act, but seek to **dominate by externally inflicted guilt**. The loss of personal dignity prevents you from understanding who you really are as God's handiwork. You fail to develop your own unique identity. Instead, many of your actions are controlled by **what you perceive other people think of you or want from you**. Self worth and respect are difficult to maintain in this type of captivity.

- As you examine your inner person, can you discern any ongoing area in which your sense of dignity is being (or has been) violated, thus discoloring your sense of acceptance by your heavenly Father? Are you in the habit of violating the dignity of others?

*If your sense of dignity has been violated, you may respond to those around you through **strongholds of rejection or insecurity and fear**. Feelings of unworthiness and inferiority may cause you to develop relationships that could lead you into activities outside the will of God because you want so desperately to be accepted. The lack of dignity often leads many into sexual immorality, trying to be accepted at all cost.*

Authority

2. God Created Us with a Need for Authority

"And let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

Understanding the role and purpose of authority can have dramatic effects in your life. Authority is the **power of position**. It is the **biblical responsibility to include or exclude, to commend or correct**. God tells us through His servant Paul in Romans 13:1,2 that it is He Who places all people in authority: *"The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, **he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted**, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves"* (emphasis added).

Satan uses a misunderstanding of the biblical importance of authority to bring trouble on people. He knows that **if you have trouble with authority, you have trouble with God**. It's important that you separate a person's authority **position** (i.e., father, mother, boss) from his or her **personality and actions** in that position. You're called to give deference, that is, respectfully yield to the position of your authority person. That means you should intentionally limit your choices of action or decisions so that you don't provoke that person. Remember, David showed deference to

King Saul even though Saul tried repeatedly to kill him (see 1 Samuel 24:1-7). Jesus recognized in the centurion such deference to authority that He could say about him, “*I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith*” (see Matthew 8:5-13).

During retreats at the center where we taught, fathers would occasionally bring up difficulties they were having with “rebellious” children. When we asked these fathers if they themselves had slandered or gossiped about their bosses at work, many confessed they had. We explained to them that bad-mouthing was rebellious and insubordinate against those God had placed over them. As a result these men were reaping the consequences of the **spirit of rebellion** in their own homes. When the slanderers later asked forgiveness from their superiors for their attitudes and actions, much of the rebellion on the homefront often ceased as well.

- What response comes to mind when you think about the word “authority”? Is there a particular person your mind connects to that word? Can you think of anyone God has placed in authority over you against whom you consciously rebel?

- Are you equally as comfortable with “having authority” as with “being under authority”? Do you have a preference?

*If you find that a stubborn self-will or a certain unteachability characterizes your response to the authority figures in your life, you may have built a **stronghold of rebellion** housing a spirit that is **influencing you to defy that individual**. To your own detriment you are unable to see God’s good purposes intended for you by using these authorities to mold your character into Christ-likeness.*

Blessing and Provision

3. God Created Us with a Need for Blessing and Provision

“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food’” (Genesis 1:28,29).

God’s character is behind blessing and provision. His name, *Jehovah Jireh* — **God the Provider** — is key for you to understand the importance of trusting Him in this area. The God Who created the whole universe has the right to be trusted by His creation. In fact, He commands this!

During your upbringing, if your real or perceived needs were unmet, then your view of God as the Provider may have been hindered. For instance, while at the retreat center we'd often ask people who were worrying about money, "Did it ever occur to you that if you're prone to worry about finances, God may bring you reason to worry? That way you'll learn to repent of it and trust Him. **Your worry insults His character** as "God the Provider." The Bible reveals again and again that when our Lord's character is challenged, He acts severely to uphold it.

Proverbs 10:3 assures, "*The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.*" If you live with unconfessed sin, a **stronghold of doubt and unbelief** may characterize this sphere of your relationship with God. As you'll see, renewal of trust and belief comes as you confess and repent of these breaches of intimacy with Him, and demolish the agitating strongholds.

Paul writes, "*I have learned to be content **whatever the circumstances***" (Philippians 4:11, emphasis added). He counsels his spiritual son Timothy, "*Godliness **with contentment** is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will **be content with that**. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs*" (1 Timothy 6:6-10, emphasis added).

The apostle then concludes his discussion on money and the importance of entrusting to God all our needs: "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to **put their hope in God**, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to **do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share**. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life*" (1 Timothy 6:17-19, emphasis added).

Give yourself a "contentment check": Have the besetting anxieties that plague you been due to your own foolish attempts to please yourself and your family **outside of God's will for you**? Have the pressures of peer comparison, pride of life, and lust of the eyes blinded you to the **peace and acceptance with joy** that contentment with God's provision brings?

- On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate yourself in agreement with Paul's words: "*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want*" (Philippians 4:12, emphasis added).

*If you have difficulty finding contentment within the circumstances God has placed you or are fearful of a new direction to which He may be calling you (because you aren't sure the finances will be there), consider that a **stronghold of fear and insecurity** may be blocking this area of your life.*

Security

4. God Created Us with a Need for Security

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:8,9).

Security may be defined as the condition in which you have confidence that you will experience **protection and relational warmth**. Relational security represents those people with whom you feel at peace, those whose affirmation helps you feel good about yourself. Thinking about them brings you joy.

Spirits of **fear and insecurity** and **rejection** oppress those who have grown up in homes with addictive or compulsive behavior, or where some unexpected catastrophe occurred, such as the premature loss of a loved one or the sudden loss of financial security. Studies show that children of divorce have extreme difficulty experiencing relational security for the remainder of their lives.

The absence of security leaves people in a prison, an emotional concentration camp if you will, for years. They never seem to be able to draw close to other people in such a way that they feel they “belong.” As a result, in their relationship with God they never believe He can accept them unless they are “doing something for Him.” These people often hide behind conscientious behavior. They’re the “reliable” ones because they are always “doing” something.

What most people are unaware of is that task-focused folks are often driven by the **need for recognition or success** to fill in for their lack of security. These motives imprison them. An ever-present fear of failure keeps them pushing ahead, often wounding others in their path.

- Can you name three people to whom you would turn in a time of desperate need? Please list them. Have you actually turned to them? When was the last time you did?

*Part of the dimension of belonging to the “body” of Christ includes **intimate interaction and relationship with other body members**. God has not called us to be “Lone Ranger” Christians!*

- List all of the activities, committees, organizations in which you are involved. Circle the ones you **know** God has called you to. Underline the ones in which you are involved for **other motives**. Are you feeling time-pressured?

Once you see on paper the number of activities in which you're involved, you can begin to understand why time seems so elusive and fleeting. If you dig deeper into your soul, you might find that there is a deeper need you have been trying to fill by so much involvement. **It's really a need for belonging, not for recognition!**

Purpose and Meaning

5. God Created Us with a Need for Purpose and Meaning

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ...Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name” (Genesis 2:15,19).

God gave Adam work to do before the fall (yes, **before** the fall!) to endue him with purpose and meaning. The Hebrew word for work and worship is the same: *avodah*. Your true worship of God begins in experiencing joy in the work you do. Your joy reveals your gratefulness to God for the purpose and meaning you experience in your workplace and home.

The culture of the United States has been heavily influenced by the philosophy of the ancient Greeks who considered pleasure and self-achievement to be mankind's highest goal. Hellenism has produced the man-centered humanism which has invaded much of western Christianity.

The Bible, however, represents the **God-centered** view of man's highest goal. This is captured in Deuteronomy 6:5 and repeated by our Lord Jesus Christ: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”** (Mark 12:30, emphasis added).

Paul repeats the essence of the greatest of commandments so that your purpose and meaning in life might serve our Father's will: **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving”** (Colossians 3:23,24, emphasis added).

Many today have lost the joy of God's purpose and meaning for their lives. Shopping malls are filled with people purchasing aimlessly and often on credit they can never repay, believing the lie that acquisitions will bring them joy. Many labor at jobs only for material gain. They **fail to discern God's deeper purpose and meaning** for giving them that particular job. In all our actions, we should agree with Paul's exhortation: **“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”** (Colossians 3:17, emphasis added). If you can't agree with this, you are lacking God's purpose and meaning for your life.

- Can you put into words from your heart what you truly believe is the purpose and meaning for your life at this point in time?

*Don't despair if you can't. Recognize that God does have a significant purpose for you in His Kingdom. His desire and will for you are that you **bear much fruit** and show yourself to **be His disciple**, to His Father's glory. (See John 15:8.) Some spiritual stronghold may be preventing you from discerning your purpose.*

- What level of satisfaction are you finding in what you are doing at home? At work? In your faith community? In your world at large?

*Consider the fruit of the Holy Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control — as **evidence** that you have indeed discovered God's purpose and meaning for you at this time in your life!*

Freedom and Boundary

6. God Created Us with a Need for Freedom and Boundary

“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’” (Genesis 2:16,17).

Years ago while Mike was still in the Navy, we directed a chapel youth group at the base where we were stationed. At the end of the Wednesday night meetings that met in our home, some of the kids would go straight home as their parents had requested. Others would go down to the base canteen for ice cream or soda. After a few months one of the young men whose parents insisted he come home immediately after the meeting said to those who were heading off to the canteen, “I envy you guys. You get to go have fun and I have to go home. I wish my parents weren't so strict.” One of those heading off to the canteen responded, “Don't envy us. **Your parents love you. That's why they have you go home.** Our parents don't care about us. I wish I had your Mom and Dad.”

A holy God loved Adam and Eve. He gave them freedom and boundary **because He loved them.** We are told, “*My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in*” (Proverbs 3:11,12; see also Hebrews 12:7-11).

We in North America, including many Christians, have come to perceive any restraint on our personal freedom as something negative. Many who consider themselves “Christian” consider people to be basically good, and capable of making good choices according to the situation they encounter. But this view negates God's purpose for giving us boundaries in His holy laws.

The Bible presents the truth concerning the basic nature of man: “*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil all the time***” (Genesis 6:5, emphasis added). The Lord Jesus confirmed the nature of the inner man: “*But the things that come out of the mouth **come from the heart**, and these make man ‘unclean’. For **out of the heart** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’*” (Matthew 15:18-20, emphasis added).

Because the basic nature of man is to do evil, the Bible offers parents careful instruction in child-raising: **“Impress them** [the commands of God] **on your children. Talk about them** when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7, emphasis added). **“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him”** (Proverbs 13:24, emphasis added). **“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him”** (Proverbs 22:15, emphasis added). You have been created with a need for the **boundaries that God has established in His Word**. Failure to be diligent in having His commandments instilled in your children may cause them to probe the arena of sin to seek fulfillment.

- Against what boundaries — restraints on your personal freedom — do you find yourself tempted to push a little too hard?

*Ask yourself why you may be testing your limits. **Spirits of bitterness, control, rebellion, idolatry** could be influencing your desire to stray from God’s will for you.*

Intimate Love and Companionship

7. God Created Us to Experience Intimate Love and Companionship

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Genesis 2:18). “For Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman”, for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:20-25).

It’s amazing just how many of the people we’ve ministered to over the years yearn in vain for intimate love and companionship! Satan has gleefully triumphed over our society by robbing us of our ability to experience loving and intimate relationships **God’s way**.

Many marriages are hollow, with husbands and wives like parallel railroad tracks going in the same general direction but experiencing little overlap or intimacy. The sexual aspect of their relationship (if they’re not too exhausted by busyness and responsibilities) is based on media fantasies and pornography rather than the loving beauty that Adam and Eve experienced. Studies show that within the Christian community the divorce rate is higher than among unbelievers (50% higher in the “Bible Belt”). How many times is 1 Corinthians 13 read at weddings, yet the fruit of love diminishes rather than grows over the years of the marriage?

Consider this:

Over 70 percent of all weddings in the U. S. are performed in church buildings — and nearly 50 percent of these end in divorce.

Demonic strongholds have a great deal to do with this statistic.

“Intimate love and companionship” implies the need to be **loved, understood, and accepted**. And, loving companionship isn’t confined to marriage. It’s a need that everyone has.

The **strongholds of rejection and fear and insecurity** and the accompanying symptoms that these spirits induce may restrict your ability to love and to receive the love of others, including the love of God. As strongholds are demolished and the **presence of Jesus** is allowed to fill those areas of your soul, **love triumphs**. *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:16-18).

As we shall see shortly, **spiritual strongholds are relationship destroyers!** When you seek love “in all the wrong places,” Satan’s servants deceive you into rationalizing that you **have a right** to loving companionship **outside of God’s will**. Each failed relationship further diminishes your trust level, encompassing you with cynicism and hopelessness in other relationships. Failed relationships of all kinds result in calloused emotions. Your capacity to love becomes scabbed over with fear and rejection.

- How would you describe your relationship with your spouse or most intimate friend(s)? Deepening steadily? Staying pretty much the same? Heading downhill?

*As we grow in the **sacrificial love** that exemplifies a Christ-like character, our relationships also deepen and strengthen.*

- Describe a point in your life when you experienced a relationship that you wished would never change. What happened to change it?

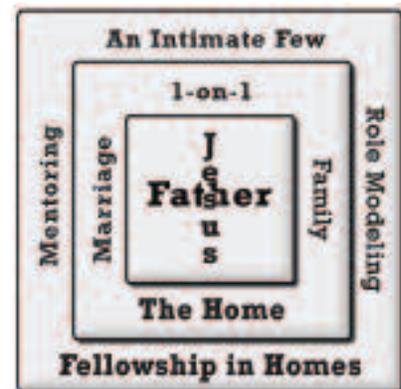
Our lives are not static. The dynamics of daily life cause circumstances and relationships to change for either better or worse. We must discern through the Holy Spirit how to respond to these changes.

When the Strongholds Are Demolished, Return to the Seven Needs

Later in this workbook you'll have the opportunity to demolish in the authority of Jesus any demonic strongholds that may be hindering your life and relationships. It's crucial that afterward you have any or all of these seven needs met in the manner our Lord has prescribed in His Word. This is where others close to you can be of special help as you fill in the old ruts of unrighteous attitudes and actions with responses that are biblical and Christ-like.

After the strongholds of deceit and rejection were demolished, I [Mike] realized I had a strong need for dignity, security, and intimate love and companionship. With Sue's help and the loving input of those in our home fellowship, I experienced the joy of having these needs met. I was 47 years old at the time, and I can't you tell how wonderful it's been to experience the dignity my Father always wanted for me! Now that I'm walking in this dignity, my relationship with our Lord, with Sue and with others is entirely different. With the strongholds gone I'm not only experiencing my own dignity, but I'm able to lovingly uphold the dignity of others as well.

At this point we want to stress how important the relational priorities of the earliest church are to help you meet these seven needs. It will take people who truly care for you as extended spiritual family. You won't have these needs met sitting in a pew or Sunday school class. We encourage you to explore the Hebraic foundations that enabled the earliest followers of Jesus to be so relationally intimate. The three inner relational priorities are critical in order for you to experience dignity and the loving intimacy you long for. Your family and your extended spiritual family that meets in each other's homes are God's means of meeting your needs, especially as you walk together in the 54 "one-anothers" verses of the Newer Testament. This interconnectedness is crucial as well as scriptural!



Explore our website (Restorationministries.org) for more on living out your victory in Jesus.

A Word of Caution: Once you're free from the influence of strongholds, you'll be susceptible to their redeveloping if you *don't* have your seven needs met in the way God ordained for you. Fill that void as the Holy Spirit directs you! We'll show you how in Chapter 5.

Our life as followers of Jesus is a pilgrimage to salvation—
a journey during which changing circumstances force us to apply His Word.
Our intense desire to become more Christ-like in the power of the Holy Spirit will determine the level of joy and peace we find in our relationship with our Father and with His children.
Our spiritual edification on earth and our victory at the Judgment Throne when we hear our names proclaimed to the hosts of heaven is manifested as the seven needs God has created in us are met in the manner He prescribes.

Chapter 2

The Demonic Forces In Strongholds

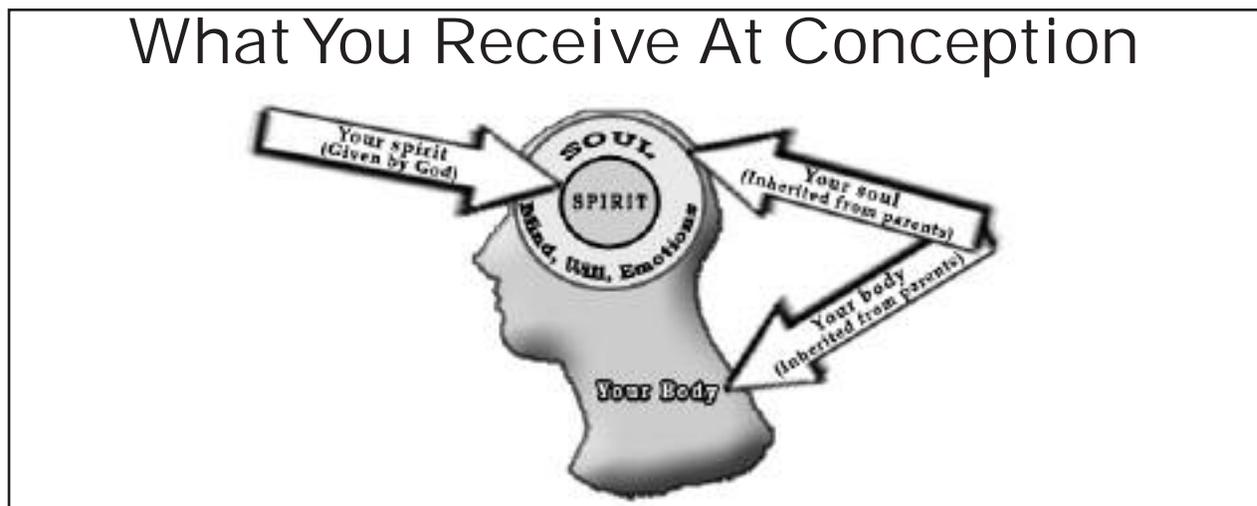
The Sinfulness of Man

Before we get into the havoc demons create in our lives, we want to re-affirm what we discussed in Part 1 of our series ***Freedom In Jesus***:

1. Man is first and foremost a sinner at heart.
2. Each generation is born with the propensity to sin going all the way back to Adam.

Not many of us like to think of ourselves as depraved sinners. But that's how the Bible portrays us. The more we appreciate how sinful we really are, the greater our appreciation will be for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf on the cross. And, we'll cling more closely to Him on our pilgrimage to salvation.

The Bible reveals that man's motives are *not* basically good, but evil. Once again, God's evaluation of man is, "*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*" (Genesis 6:5, emphasis added). Mankind hadn't changed by the time the Newer Testament was written. Paul confirms that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Our propensity to sin is why our Father had to choose His own method of redeeming us from our sins — His Son, Jesus.



In your mother's womb you received your spirit from God. Your spirit is eternal; it doesn't cease at death. From your parents you inherit your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, and your body's physical features. Along with your soul you inherit the sins and iniquities of your forefathers. That's right! Most of us would like to think we only have to concern ourselves with our own sins.

But God holds us accountable, to a certain extent, for the sins of our forefathers. So you are born not only with a desire to sin, but also with the inherited responsibility for the sins of your forefathers. God affirms this through His prophet: “*See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps — both your sins and the sins of your fathers,*’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 65:6,7a, emphasis added). We’ll cover this issue again later when we discuss generational strongholds.

The more we appreciate how sinful we really are, the greater our appreciation will be for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf on the cross. And, we’ll cling more closely to Him on our pilgrimage to salvation.

Scripture substantiates that we are comprised of body, soul, and spirit: “*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, emphasis added). The **body** is the part that is subject to the physical frailties of injury, disease, and ultimately death. The **soul** consists of our mind, will, and emotions — the arenas of thought, determination, and feelings. The **spirit** represents the eternal part of our being owned either by Satan as the ruler of this world’s system, or by God, Who has redeemed us from slavery to sin.

As you deal with demolishing your own strongholds later in this book, it’s important that you understand that your sin lineage goes all the way back to Adam: “*Here is how it works: it was through one individual [Adam] that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned*” (Romans 5:12). So, through your soul you have received your predisposition to sin. And as you’ll see, a spiritual battle is being fought over who will rule your soul: the Holy Spirit or demonic strongholds.

Don’t get discouraged! It’s because of His loving desire for reconciliation that our Father sent Jesus on our behalf, “*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*”; “*So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit*” (1 Corinthians 15:22,45).

Before you go on, begin to perceive yourself as *spirit, soul, and body*. Why? Because before any of us put our trust in Jesus and became children of our Father’s, our relationships were based upon our soul and body. After the strongholds are gone you’re in tune with the Spirit. So you will need to revamp ALL your relationships: your marriage, your parents, your children, and all others close to you.

Relationships With Strongholds

- First: Soul**
- Second: Body
- Third: Spirit

Relationships Without Strongholds

- First: Spirit**
- Second: Soul
- Third: Body

Re-aligning how you relate to others is a critical feature of your life after you’ve demolished the strongholds that influence your current relationships. Believe this: If strongholds are influencing you, none of your relationships, including that with God, are the way He wants them. We’ll help you re-align them in Chapter 5, ***After You’ve Demolished The Strongholds***.

The Demonic Forces Arrayed Against You

In the Newer Testament, people who are afflicted by evil spirits are often said to be “demon-possessed.” The Greek word translated in these instances, *daimonizomenoi*, is more literally rendered “**demonized**,” that is, **afflicted or influenced in some degree by demons**. The emphasis is more on **degrees of influence or control** than on total possession. The manifestation and intensity of demonization varies: the young man thrown into convulsions by *the spirit* tormenting him (see Luke 9:38-43); the *demonized* man who cried out in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching, “*What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?*” (see Luke 4:33-36); the slave girl who had a *spirit* by which she predicted the future (see Acts 16:16); the deranged man from the region of the Gerasenes who was inhabited by a *legion of evil spirits* but was still able to run to Jesus (see Mark 5:1-20). “Influence” or “control” is a more accurate description for these cases than “possession”.

Remember, as followers of Christ we’ve been sealed with the Holy Spirit, “*a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession*” (Ephesians 1:14). Yet to the extent in which we have **fellowship with demons** (Greek *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 10:20) we open ourselves to demonic influence and affliction in our soul. Eventually this influence will lead to ever deeper oppression and desire to sin.

The battlefield between the Spirit of God and the demonic spirits is being fought in the area of your **soul**, that is, your **mind, will, and emotions**. It is here that you face your daily decisions of Spirit-controlled living or sin-influenced living: “*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their **minds set on what that nature desires**; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their **minds set on what the Spirit desires**. The **mind of sinful man is death**, but the **mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace**; the **sinful mind is hostile to God**. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so*” (Romans 8:5-7, emphasis added).

Note the following warnings given to FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. Because you ARE susceptible to demonic attack, these admonitions are essential for you to be aware of:

- “*Put on the full armor of God so that you can **take your stand against the devil’s schemes***” (Ephesians 6:11, emphasis added).
- “*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***” (Ephesians 6:12, emphasis added).
- “*Be self-controlled and alert. **Your enemy the devil** prowls around like a roaring lion **looking for someone to devour***” (1 Peter 5:8, emphasis added).
- “*He [Satan] was given power to **make war against the saints** and to conquer them*” (Revelation 13:7, emphasis added).
- “*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and **follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons***” (1 Timothy 4:1, emphasis added).

- “Those who oppose him [the Lord’s servant] he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and **escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will**” (2 Timothy 2:25-26, emphasis added).
- “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, **your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ**” (2 Corinthians 11:3, emphasis added).

We can clearly see by these verses that Christians today are indeed engaged in the **same manner of spiritual warfare** that Jesus and His disciples confronted. Both the Older and Newer Testaments are replete with references to **evil and unclean spirits**. When you choose to give in to temptation rather than resist, you open up a **foothold for demonic influence**. We’re warned, “**He who keeps on sinning is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work**” (1 John 3:8, emphasis added).

The Bible reveals that one-third of the angels sided with Satan in their rebellion against God and were cast down to the earth. While we don’t know their exact number, we can surmise that there are significant quantities of demons to wage war against the followers of Jesus. But, as we’ll explore in the following chapters, our **weapons of warfare** in this daily struggle to choose righteousness rather than succumb to temptation are indeed “*mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds*” (2 Corinthians 10:4, KJV).

The spiritual world is hidden from our vision, but nonetheless is **very real**. As those who trust Jesus, we are encouraged by the assurance that our “*spirits are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms*” (Ephesians 2:6). We’re sealed with the indwelling Holy Spirit during our earthly pilgrimage (see Ephesians 1:13). Yet, in spite of everything God accomplishes on our behalf, we are capable of being defeated. “[Satan] was given **power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation**” (Revelation 13:7, emphasis added).

Anchor this reality for yourself: In the spiritual realm a vicious battle is being waged for the souls of men. In effect, it’s a battle between God and Satan. Its outcome will determine whether the truth of Jesus and His Lordship will reign in your life, or the deception of Satan triumph.

The overwhelming evidence in the Bible shows that our Father desires all His children to grow in **character and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ**. Because of their potential to grow more like Jesus and to extend the KINGDOM of God, those who follow Jesus are under greater demonic scrutiny than unbelievers. According to pollster George Barna, almost half of today’s Christians **discredit the reality of “the devil”** in the person of Satan. **These writers don’t! We must constantly be alert!**

What can you know about Satan from the following verses?

- He Is the Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air, Now at Work in Those Who Disobey God
 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:1,2).

- He Masquerades As an Angel of Light
“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14,15).
- He Takes People Captive To Do His Will
“That they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26).

What can you know from the following verses about the battle going on over the souls of men?

- We Are Not Fighting a Habit, a Character Weakness, Or Even Other People
“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” (Ephesians 6:12).
- Satan Is Committed to Our Destruction
“Then the dragon [earlier described as Satan in Rev. 12:9] was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).
- Jesus Came To Destroy the Work of Satan in Every Believer’s Life
“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8).
- Satan Is Always at Work Sowing Destruction
“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan’s influence in your life is often hidden, controlled through **strongholds** in your soul — your mind, will, and emotions. (NOTE: In the Older Testament, the Hebrew word for “**stronghold**” is often used in a positive way to denote a fortification or defense for protection, as in 2 Samuel 22:3, “*He is my **stronghold**, my refuge and my savior*”, and Psalm 144:2, “*He is my loving God and my fortress, my **stronghold** and my deliverer.*” In the Newer Testament, however, a very different negative con-

Key to the operation and destruction of strongholds is
2 Corinthians 10:3-6:

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.”

notation of the “fortress” idea appears. The enemy is not kept out. The spirits of darkness have been given permission **by your sinful decisions and those of your forefathers** to take up residence within those areas of your soul that are **not yielded fully to Christ**. The freedom available to you in Christ is thwarted, and you are kept imprisoned by the influence of those demonic strongholds.

The Definition of Strongholds

A stronghold is a demonic fortress of thoughts housing evil spirits that:

(1) control, dictate, and influence your attitudes and behavior;

(2) oppress and discourage you;

(3) filter and color how you view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

As you entertain thoughts and participate in activities that are **contrary to the will of God**, you open yourself up to demonic inhabitation **in those areas**. When these thoughts and activities become **habitual**, you allow a **spiritual fortification** to be built around that demonic spirit and its influence. You become so accustomed to responding to the influence and control of the “voice” of that spirit that you believe it’s the voice of your own mind.

Keep in mind that demons monitor your activities and set up circumstances to tempt you. They agitate your thoughts and emotions until you’re too confused to remember to pray. They cause you to **misperceive situations** in order to damage your relationships with others. Through demonic agitation you **develop wrong conclusions** about other people’s actions toward you. Have no doubt about this: Demonic spirits are always ready to disrupt relationships!

Many of your incorrect beliefs and attitudes have been learned through your environment, i.e., family circumstances, life and relational experiences, and educational influences. Knowledge acquired from secular sources that disagree with biblical truth lodges doubt and unbelief into your spiritual perspective. All your thoughts can be traced back to beliefs based either on the **truth of Scripture or on Satan’s lies**. Through your misinterpretation of life situations, you establish a dwelling place for satanic activity in your soul.

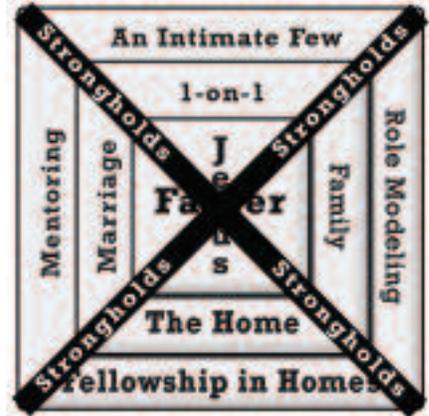
A demonic stronghold is anything compelling enough to hold you in its power to **keep you from receiving God’s love and truth**. Within a stronghold that’s been erected in your soul, that spirit arouses a defensive posture that causes you to “**rationalize**” your current situation. The existence of a stronghold can be recognized because it will be that area of your life in which you **consistently have problems and cannot live in victory**. You can tell a spiritual stronghold is established because a **habitual pattern** of failure or hopelessness exists. This isn’t a one-time event or response, but a consistent ungodly thought pattern or action that is your *first inclination*.

Your world view, your personal perspective of reality, colors all your decision making. This perspective has developed over a long period, including the time before you became a Christian. Many of your innate responses to situations are rooted in the character of Satan, the father of lies. He stirs up wrong emotional responses to the circumstances you face. The circumstance itself doesn’t cause the emotion, but **what you believe** about the circumstance does.

For example, you may have believed a demonically-induced lie that your older brother always treated you cruelly while you were growing up. In truth, however, you were an obstinate, rebellious child, and when your parents put your brother in charge when they were away, you caused a lot of trouble! Your brother’s reports resulted in parental discipline, yet you blamed your brother for your

own rebellion. The spirit hiding behind the stronghold seized the opportunity to turn your anger into a lie of cruel abuse, which you believed. Whenever you think about your brother, anger and bitterness flame — over a twisted “reality” that never happened!

Understand this: A chief demonic goal is to destroy your intimate relationships. Your relationship with your Father and His Son, Jesus, with those in your household, and with those with whom you share close fellowship are targets the demonic forces seek to destroy. Why? Because emotionally isolated people are easier for them to influence, control, and oppress than people who have loving, supportive relationships.



Tempting Thoughts Lead You to Sinful Actions

Scripture reveals that you are able to suppress God’s truth in your mind. As Paul warns the Roman believers, those who have known the will of God can turn away to futile thinking. When they refuse to respond to the Spirit of Truth to reject those sinful thoughts, their hearts are deceived in that area. (See Romans 1:18-22.) Yet such people believe that they really are right! Their own darkened concept of wisdom becomes more important to them than the truth of God. And those sinful thoughts lodged within their hearts then lead to sinful actions. Remember from the Preface of this book, “Once a person is deceived, **he does not recognize** that he is deceived, **because he has been deceived!**”

The apostle James describes a similar pattern: the mind’s response to tempting thoughts brings about a sinful response. “No one being tempted should say, ‘I am being tempted by God.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, and God himself tempts no one. Rather, each person is being tempted whenever he is being dragged off and enticed by the **bait of his own desire**. Then, having conceived, the **desire gives birth to sin; and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death**” (James 1:13-15; emphasis added). The father of temptation, Satan, uses spiritual strongholds in your soul to tempt you with a sinful thought. How you respond to that thought determines if that area of your mind is taken captive and drawn to sin, or whether you take the thought captive and do what Jesus would do.

The Process of Stronghold Development

Strongholds are developed through **demonic agitation**. For example, reflect on some **thought** that you realize in your spirit is contrary to the mind of Christ, such as a sexual fantasy. At this point you have two options:

1) You can rebuke the unclean spirit that put the tempting thought there and fight back by bringing your thoughts into obedience to Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). Or,

2) You can entertain that thought a little longer. At this point you begin to **develop an emotion** about that thought — lust, arousal, fantasy. As that emotion continues, you’re moved to **take some action**, if not now, then at some ripe moment in the future. The seed of fantasy will eventually grow into an opportunity to fulfill that emotional longing, and a sexual enactment may follow. If you choose to ignore the warning conviction of the Holy Spirit, you’ll continue in these actions until they become **habitual**. At that point, without God’s power released in you by your repentance,

you are then held prisoner to this habit by an unclean spirit. A **spiritual stronghold** has been built in your soul. The “voice” of that spirit sounds just like your own inner thought voice, and you’re completely unaware of its presence.

In Summary:

- 
- 1) *Satanic-inspired **THOUGHTS** are introduced into your mind.*
 - 2) *Entertaining these thoughts brings on **EMOTIONS**.*
 - 3) *Giving in to emotions eventually leads to taking some sort of **ACTION**.*
 - 4) *Continual participation in this behavior causes you to develop a **HABIT**.*
 - 5) *Once a habit is developed, a **STRONGHOLD** is built by that spirit.*

How Does God Get Shut Out By A Stronghold?

Since the “*Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you*” (Romans 8:11), you have the power to **conform your mind** to that of Jesus. You are able to **make decisions** that are pleasing to God according to the truth of His Word. The weapons you use to wage war against the forces of darkness “*have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God*” (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). You can elect to put your feelings under the **control of the Holy Spirit**. NOTE: The “knowledge” of God referred to here is your *experiential insight and awareness* of your heavenly Father, not just a volume of facts about Him. Tragically, many know a lot *about* God but are not indwelt by His Spirit in relationship with Him. Therefore, they have no “divine power” with which to wage spiritual warfare.

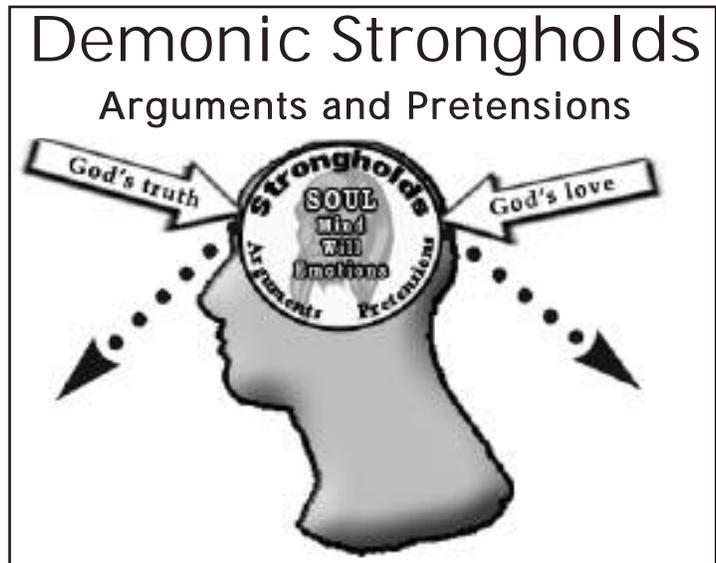
Once your soul has been infiltrated by a stronghold, your mind, will, and emotions filter all your perceptions through that demonic stronghold. This does *not* mean you’re “demon-possessed”; you are “demonized” in those areas you have habitually given over to sin. As a follower of Christ, you are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. However, those areas of your soul that you have **willingly yielded to sin** are fair game to become **footholds for satanic involvement**. Heed the warning in Luke 11:35,36: “**See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you**” (emphasis added).

Note the differences between arguments and pretensions.

ARGUMENTS: “**Reasoning, rationalizations, intentions hostile to God’s truth.**” This part of a stronghold concerns the **thought processes** and patterns you use to **deny that there is a problem**. When you raise these arguments like walls, as in the diagram that follows, **God’s Love and His Truths** are prevented from entering your thoughts. Your **rationalizations and justifications** for your attitudes and behaviors keep the humility that precedes repentance from seizing your heart and convicting you of sin.

PRETENSIONS: “**Pride, self-exaltation, self-preservation.**” This part of the stronghold reveals the **pride and rebellion** that you erect like another wall. They **prevent you from seeking the power of the Holy Spirit** in personal prayer or through ministry to release you from captivity. You falter in the will or desire to break free from the spirit’s influence. Again, the **Love and Truths of God are blocked** from penetrating your decision-making processes.

Some particular area of your mind, will, and emotions as shown in the diagram below has continued in **sinful defiance of God's will** through the influence of a demonic spirit or spirits. All other activities and relationships are filtered through the thoughts, decisions, and feelings aroused and agitated by the spirit that is protected by the stronghold "fortress." You're probably unaware that these thoughts and feelings are being whispered to you because the "voice" sounds **just like your own internal voice**. When confronted with opposition to your decisions or actions, you **deny** that you have a problem (**argument**) or rationalize that you **have a right** to the emotion or activity that you're pursuing (**pretension**). The convicting work of the Holy Spirit that would otherwise cause you to repent and confess your rebellion to God's ways and truth **is blocked out**. He is faithfully presenting the truth to you out of His great love, but you have chosen by habitual pattern to heed the familiar voice of the demonic spirit protected in its stronghold.



Another way of understanding the effects of strongholds is illustrated on the opposite page. Key to grasping this concept is 1 Corinthians 2:13,14: *"This is what we speak, **not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are **spiritually discerned****"* (emphasis added).

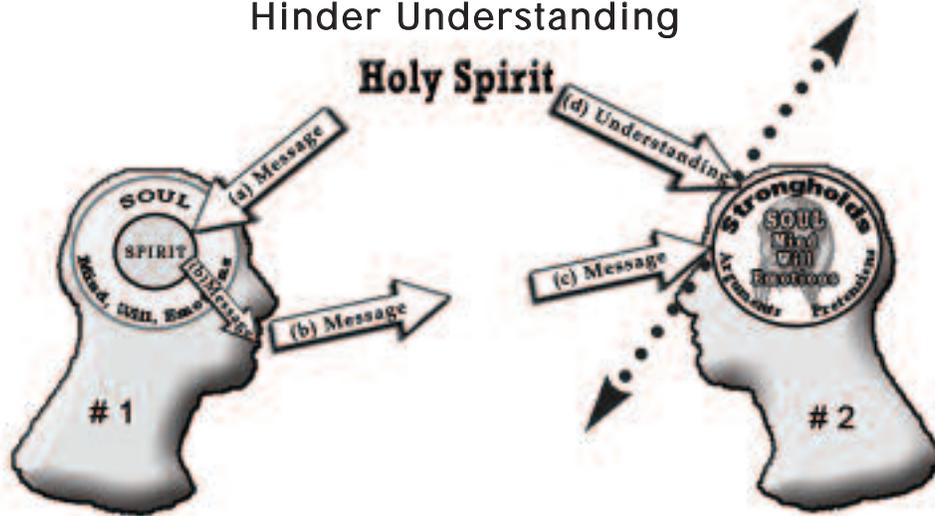
Here is an example of how stronghold influence plays itself out.

In the diagram on the next page, Person #1 is a pastor or elder seeking a message for his congregation. (a) The Holy Spirit gives him a message to share that **passes into his spirit**. (b) As he shares his message, the words pass through his soul and out of his body through his mouth. (c) His words enter the body of Person #2 through his ears and thus **into his mind, will, and emotions**. He may hear the words but **fail to understand the spiritual truths** and the application of those truths. (We see this so often when we ask people, "What was the sermon about this past Sunday?" They can't even remember the main point of the message.) Because spiritual truths are from the Holy Spirit and are "**spiritually discerned,**" (d) the understanding which the Holy Spirit would have given to Person #2 would have affirmed, strengthened, and brought into application the truth that was spoken and heard. But, **the arguments and pretensions of the strongholds have blocked both the understanding and the empowerment of the Spirit to do this.**

Many of God's children crave to hear His voice and feel His love but they are hindered because of the interference of strongholds. (The spirits of deceit and rejection kept Mike from experiencing God's love for over 45 years.) Even as the Holy Spirit seeks to bring a certain area of our lives into submission to God's will, the arguments and pretensions associated with the strongholds **ward off**

Demonic Strongholds

Hinder Understanding



the truth of God's love; there is now a breach in our fellowship with God. We can't clearly hear His will for our lives without a pure heart. A sinful blockage deafens our will to obey and impairs our intimacy with our Father.

Yes, Christians Can Be Demonized

Such a huge percentage of Americans claim to be Christians. Yet our nation leads the world in sinful lifestyle choices, divorce, and export of pornography. How can this be? Perhaps because so many who are churched have misperceived God's grace, excusing it as a license to sin. Others have totally discarded His commands and laws, disdainfully rejecting such restraints on their self-gratification. Can there be any doubt that such lies and deceptions have developed and been perpetuated in the body of Christ aside from demonic intervention?

This is the same nature of deception Paul sharply confronted among the Roman believers:

*Therefore, **do not let sin rule in your mortal bodies, so that it makes you obey its desires; and do not offer any part of yourselves to sin as an instrument for wickedness. On the contrary, offer yourselves to God as people alive from the dead, and your various parts to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace. Therefore, what conclusion should we reach? "Let's go on sinning, because we're not under legalism but under grace"? Heaven forbid! Don't you know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, then, of the one whom you are obeying, you are slaves — whether of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to being made righteous?*** (Romans 6:12-16, CJB).

Many today might deny that followers of Jesus can be demonized in a particular area of their lives yet be obedient to Him in the rest. Sue: "I'd always feared rejection by others for as long as I can remember. When I turned from my sins and gratefully received the forgiveness of

my heavenly Father in Jesus, I was still plagued by fear that I'd be rejected — especially when it came to sharing with anyone about Jesus! I loved being in His Word and singing praise to Him around the house. But when it came to talking about Him with others, I felt bound up in frustrated silence. This came to a head when our son and I joined Mike for R & R in Japan. I found myself growing increasingly agitated as I watched Mike so freely share testimonies of Jesus with strangers and friends alike while I couldn't seem to get anything out.

One afternoon we were aboard his ship and decided to make a tape to send home. As Mike turned on the cassette player, I was struggling to relate our wonderful deliverance from a typhoon we'd just endured traveling to Korea. But all that came out of me were gurgling noises. Wide-eyed at my contorted expression, Mike ordered the demon, "In the name of Jesus, you come out of my wife!" A dark hazy shape emerged from me and hovered between us, then floated out through the wall. Immediately I felt the freedom to recount excitedly on the tape numerous instances of our Lord's intervention during our trip. And that evening I shared the Gospel for three hours with a woman back at our hotel!

The spirit of rejection had convinced me that I was shy and unworthy, and that I'd be rejected if I spoke of Jesus. I was being held captive by a lie in that area of my life. With that spirit renounced and cast down, the Holy Spirit filled me with power, joy, and peace to speak about Jesus!"

So, can those who have the Spirit of Jesus also be influenced by a demonic spirit in an area they've given over to it? Absolutely! Look again at pages 20-22 for further confirmation.

Generational Strongholds

A major source of strongholds in people's lives comes from past generations in their families. In other words, strongholds that aren't dealt with in one generation are passed along to the succeeding ones. You get an insight into this from the Ten Commandments. Our Lord, jealous for His love, promises "*to show love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments*" (Exodus 20:6; see also 34:6,7), but to "*[punish] the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me*" (Exodus 20:5). God desires that each generation love Him. The Hebrew word for love here is *ahav*, a devoted passion for the One you love, a yearning to be in His presence. (See Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37.)

When a generation fails to love Him or to repent of their sins, God chastises them and their successors to the third and fourth generation through demonic strongholds that they give way to. Yes, God uses Satan and his demons at times to serve His purposes. For instance, when God wanted to test Peter's faith we're told, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:31,32).

When a generation fails to love Him and repent, God uses demonic forces to drive people back to Him. When any generation receives light concerning their oppressed condition that's been handed down from their forefathers and turns from their sins, He mercifully forgives them for the sins of all generations.

Our Hebrew spiritual forefathers, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, understood the importance of asking forgiveness for the sins of prior generations: "*Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the peo-*

ple of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, **including myself and my father's house**, have committed against you” (Nehemiah 1:6; see also Jeremiah 3:25, Daniel 9:8). These prophets had not themselves walked in sin, but they bore spiritual responsibility anyway for not only their own burden but also that of their ancestors.

You may come from a family that has been under the influence of strongholds for several generations. For whatever reason, our Father may be showing you the light in this book so that you can repent on behalf of your family. You can end the oppression of the strongholds that have plagued generations of your family by first demolishing your own strongholds; second, walking in the freedom Jesus promises so you can help the rest of your family and relatives become free.

An Example of How the Stronghold of Rejection Might Form

- Think of a situation in which you totally misperceived the motive or intent of someone close to you. How did that misperception affect your relationship with that person?

*If you have never felt accepted or valued as a worthwhile individual, you might suspect that your friend was only trying to benefit himself or herself. The **stronghold of rejection** may become manifested as that spirit arouses unwarranted suspicion or even withdrawal from your friend.*

- How did you feel when you realized that you had wrongly interpreted that person’s intent or actions?

*You may have felt tremendous guilt or a sense of unworthiness. The **stronghold of rejection** will try to cause you to believe that you don’t deserve friends because you are such a poor one yourself.*

- How did you handle the relational breach? Did you find it difficult to humbly confess and ask forgiveness? Did you prefer to sweep it under the carpet as though nothing had happened? Did you feel pressure to rationalize and blame the other person?

*The spirit in a **stronghold of rejection** will escalate your embarrassment and guilt to such an extent that it will prevent you from seeking forgiveness for your unkind response.*

How Adam’s Fall into Sin Has Harmed Us

(Genesis 3:1-4:7)

A further study of Genesis provides a parallel of how Satan (the serpent) deceived Adam and Eve and, through demonic strongholds, **continues to deceive us today.**

A Spiritual Stronghold:

1. Harms Our Hearing from God

*“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘**Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?**’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and **you must not touch it, or you will die**”’” (Genesis 3:1-3, emphasis added).*

If you allow your sinful thoughts to lead to habitual sinful actions that lay the foundation for strongholds in your soul, you lose connection with the Source of truth. In the Greek language, **truth** and **reality** are the same word. The Lord affirmed the understanding that He was the only reality when He said: *“I am the way and the truth [reality] and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). Anything that is **not** truth — **not of Jesus, therefore** — alters your reality into some sort of lie.

- Do you find yourself thinking that the Bible is “culturally entrapped” — that the timeless truths of God somehow don’t apply to your current situation? What answer would you give to someone who presented that argument to you?

*Any time we try to **rationalize** an attitude or behavior that deviates from God’s commands as expressed in the Bible, we are **opening a foothold** for the enemy to plant seeds of distrust in the Author of the Word. We need to become faithful students of the Word so that we might discern the life choices that will bring glory to God through us.*

- How might a stronghold of insecurity affect your trust in the heavenly Father Who has promised to meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus? (See Philippians 4:19.)

*God is infinitely creative in the means by which He keeps His promises. If we pray for specific answers to our problems, rather than presenting to God our petitions and requests with thanksgiving, we may not even recognize the provision from His hand when it appears. We may doubt He even heard us. In this way, **a stronghold will hinder our hearing from God.***

2. Harms Our Belief in God

*“**You will not surely die,**” the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil**’” (Genesis 3:4,5, emphasis added).*

The framework of our faith requires us to “*trust in the Lord with all [our] heart and lean not on [our] own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5). We can’t perceive God as merely a repository of holy righteousness, independent of our earthly struggles. Our deceitful hearts are prone to make **Him** into **our image of Who we think He should be**. Sin causes us to doubt, or at least to hedge on, the reality of His character as revealed in His Word. Strongholds of **deceit** or **doubt and unbelief** replace the truth with a rationalized slant that seems logical but leads to death. (See Proverbs 14:12.)

- What areas of doubt or unbelief do you want to take up with God: Why do the innocent suffer? Why haven’t my unsaved relatives yielded to You? Why is it taking so long for my prayers to be answered? Something else?

*God is not obligated to explain Himself to His creation. Perhaps too our finite understanding could not even grasp the purposes of Him Whose ways are not our ways and Whose thoughts far surpass our thoughts (see Isaiah 55:8,9). **A stronghold, therefore, taints what we believe about God.***

3. Harms Our Desires

*“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also **desirable for gaining wisdom**” (Genesis 3:6, emphasis added).*

Have you learned to be content in whatever your circumstances? Dissatisfaction, comparison, and competition are all “horizontally focused”; that is, what your eyes see in other people your mind then wants, if you haven’t learned to desire **only what God desires for you**. This “vertical

parameter” — **limiting your desires to God’s will and means of provision** — is His protection for you in that area of your heart. When strongholds of **jealousy, insecurity, and idolatry** hold you, you become distrusting of God’s plans. You take matters into your own hands, agitated by the demonic spirits. You search for something you think is in your best interest but is not in God’s plan for your life. Your old nature, corrupted by its deceitful desires, again directs your will.

- How might you rationalize an action or acquisition because it “seemed right” at the time? What instance can you recall in which you just went ahead and did something because you wanted to, without seeking God’s plan first?

*There is much to be said for the counsel of your spouse or of a mentor whose life evidences faithfulness to God. Frequently those closest to you can see through your outward responses and explanations and probe your true motivations. These then can be held up to the Light of Christ for examination. **Unfortunately, strongholds distort your desires in opposition to God’s will for you.***

4. Harms Our Actions

“She took some and ate it” (Genesis 3:6, emphasis added).

If you decide to dally with sinful thoughts, then sinful actions will result. If you refuse to submit to God and resist the devil, then he will be your companion in sin. A stronghold of **pride, idolatry, or sexual impurity** can influence you to pursue your own goal so wholeheartedly that any potentially negative outcomes are minimized in your mind. There are, however, **always painful consequences** to sin. The pleasure of the moment is fleeting, and the subsequent guilt and regret further remove you from the intimate companionship you once enjoyed with God. *“For I know my crimes, my sin confronts me all the time. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil from your perspective; so that you are right in accusing me and justified in passing sentence”* (Psalm 51:3,4).

- What counsel would you give to a close friend who is contemplating an action that you know violates God’s will? How would you counsel that person if he or she were right in the middle of that sinful circumstance? After he or she has decided to try to stop the sinful behavior or attitude? Have you ever been involved in a circumstance like this when you knew you should speak up but hesitated?

*Part of being your “brother’s keeper” involves **risking the friendship for his good**, especially if he is heading away from God and toward the enemy’s territory. If you take a courageous yet loving stand for righteousness, your valor and words may help your friend **recognize and confront** the stronghold that has been tempting him to sin. If you ignore the situation, your inaction is disobedient to righteous fellowship responsibility.*

5. Harms Our Relationships with Others

*“She also gave some to **her husband, who was with her, and he ate it**” (Genesis 3:6, emphasis added).*

There is good reason for the warning in Proverbs 1:10: *“My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.”* A person considering sin is more likely to succumb to it if someone else joins in. You may rationalize by saying, “What’s **wrong** with it?” (instead of, “What’s **right** with it!”). Then you try to justify the sin by thinking that if it were really so bad, others would not be doing it. Note that God is entirely out of the decision loop here. A **stronghold of deceit** influences you to believe that shared sinful actions may even strengthen your relationship as friends.

- Can you recall an instance when you were “sucked in” to a sinful activity at the request of someone you cared for? Did you realize at the time that you were violating God’s standards? Did that realization inhibit your participation in any way? How did you feel afterward? Did you sense any separation from God or loss of intimacy with Him?

*We know from 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Genuine confession of our sin will bring forgiveness and cleansing. However, we also have a **responsibility to those with whom we’ve sinned**. We need to humbly seek their forgiveness for joining in the sin, and make restitution wherever appropriate.*

Further Effects of Adam’s Fall

Verse after verse reiterates the reality of our sinfulness: *“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God”* (Romans 3:10,11); *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23); *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out”* (Romans 7:18). If we’re left alone in our sin nature, the **consequence will be death**.

As with our original parents in the Garden of Eden, we too have the opportunity to humble ourselves before God. Rather than make excuses as they did, we can confess with true repentance that through sin we have “missed the mark” of His holiness. Our Adversary, however, has a different plan. He activates his demonic forces to agitate us so that obedience to God’s plan of forgiveness and cleansing is hidden from our minds.

Instead of receiving the forgiveness and restoration provided by Jesus on the cross, we are tormented with the following:

1. Shame (Condemnation)

*“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and **they realized they were naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves”* (Genesis 3:7, emphasis added).

2. Rationalization (Hiding from God)

*“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **they hid from the Lord God** among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8,9, emphasis added).*

3. Fear

*“He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and **I was afraid** because I was naked; so I hid’” (Genesis 3:10, emphasis added).*

4. Blame (Inability To Take Responsibility for Your Actions)

*“And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man said, ‘**The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.**’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘**The serpent deceived me, and I ate**’ (Genesis 3:11-13, emphasis added).*

5. Curse Instead of Blessing

*“To the woman he said, ‘**I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.**’ To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat of it,” **cursed is the ground** because of you; **through painful toil** you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce **thorns and thistles** for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. **By the sweat of your brow** you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return’” (Genesis 3:16-19, emphasis added).*

6. Rejection

*“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ **So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden** to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:21-24, emphasis added).*

7. Vulnerability to Satanic Attack

*“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, **sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it**’” (Genesis 4:6,7, emphasis added).*

- Which of these **seven consequences of sin** most often plague you? Do you find yourself afflicted by one or more of these effects of the fall even **after** you have confessed your sin to God? Why do you suppose this happens?

If you do not deal with the underlying strongholds that distort your relationship with God, you will *continue* to expose yourself to the effects of the fall. Loving intimacy with the God of holiness will seem beyond reach.

When fortresses of demonic influence — strongholds — have been built in your mind, will, and emotions, your

HEARING from God
is altered;
BELIEF in God
is shaken;
DESIRES
are distorted;
ACTIONS
are disobedient;
RELATIONSHIPS
are debased.

Chapter 4

Steps To Identify And Demolish Strongholds

Recall that spiritual strongholds are:

- (1) **inherited** from past generations;
- (2) **established** when you try to meet any of the **seven basic needs** that God created in you through ways that are contrary to His will;
- (3) **maintained** when you live in a state of unrepentance. The end result is demonic influence in areas of your mind, will, and emotions.

This section will help you determine the nature of the particular stronghold(s) that may be affecting you. Then you'll be given the opportunity to **renounce that spirit's presence and influence** in your soul through the authority of Jesus Christ.

Before we go on, glance at the **Overview of Types of Strongholds** below and on the next page.

REMEMBER: Once a stronghold is established, you provide a **“foothold”** for the devil (see Ephesians 4:27), a base of operations for the **“strongman”** (see Matthew 12:29). You then become vulnerable to **demonic control, direction, influence and/or oppression** in that area of your life. Not dealing with this stronghold can engender further demonic activity and lead to the establishment of other strongholds with additional demonic harassment in other areas of your soul.

OVERVIEW OF TYPES OF STRONGHOLDS

This list of strongholds (**bold type**) and their related symptoms is for your information. You'll be using worksheets on the following pages to evaluate your symptoms.

DECEIT

Lying
Fantasies
Delusions
Rationalization
Wrong Doctrine/
Misuse of Scripture
Flattery
Syncretism

BITTERNESS

Resentment
Racism
Unforgiveness
Anger/Hatred
Begrudging
Violence
Revenge
Chronic Grumbling
Presumption

HEAVINESS

Depression
Despair
Self-pity
Loneliness
Unconfessed Sin
Suicidal Thoughts

JEALOUSY

Spiteful
Gossip/Slander
Betrayal
Critical Nature
Judgmental
Suspicious
UnChristlike Competition
Cruelty

**CONFUSION
(DOUBT & UNBELIEF)**

Suspicious
 Apprehensive
 Indecisive/Double-minded
 Skeptical
 Unsettled
 Easily Distracted
 Lack of Commitment
 No Love of Truth
 Distorted Judgment

REJECTION

Addictive Behavior
 Compulsions
 Seeks Acceptance
 Unworthiness
 Withdrawal
 Shallow Relationships
 Loneliness

PRIDE

Ungrateful
 Self-righteous
 Self-centered
 Insensitive
 Materialistic
 Seeks Positions
 Stubborn
 Mocking
 Vain
 Spiritual Adultery
 Impatient

**RELIGIOSITY/
SPIRITUAL LETHARGY**

Religious Busyness
 Knowledge Without Love
 No Spiritual Power
 Spiritual Blindness
 Hypocritical
 Legalistic Perversion
 Presumes on Grace

**INDEPENDENCE
& DIVORCE**

Insensitive
 Aloof
 Selfish Ambition
 Devil's advocate
 Withdrawn
 Makes Excuses
 Lack of Trust
 Willful

**STUPOR &
PRAYERLESSNESS**

Distanced From God
 "Cold" Love
 Hardened Heart
 Distracted
 Spiritual Blindness
 Laziness
 Deceived Self-appraisal
 Unresponsive

REBELLION

Self-willed
 Stubborn/Insolent
 Pouting
 Strife
 Factious
 Divisive
 Anger Leads to Argument
 Independent
 Unteachable
 Ungodly Influence
 Lawless

FEAR & INSECURITY

Inferiority
 Inadequacy
 Timidity
 Pleasing People, Not God
 Lack of Trust/Worry
 Phobias
 Anxiety Over Injury, Death
 Perfectionism
 Dread of Failure
 Inability to Set Goals
 "Motor-mouth"

CONTROL

Manipulative
 Striving
 Lack of Trust
 Devil's Advocate
 Insensitive
 Desiring Recognition
 Seductive Empowerment
 Cursing
 Emotional Outbursts
 Schemes, Intrigues

SEXUAL IMPURITY

Lust
 Sensual Enticement
 Denial/Rationalization
 Masturbation
 Fornication
 Adultery
 Frigidity
 Homosexuality
 Pornography/
 Fantasy

**IDOLATRY/
WORLDLINESS**

Worldly Values
 Frustrated
 Hopeless
 Greedy/Selfish
 Financial Problems
 Wrong Goals/Decisions
 Living a Lie
 Apathetic
 Pleasure in Wickedness
 Syncretistic

**FALSE PROPHECY/
ANTI-CHRIST**

Denies Jesus as God and Man
 Bondage to Man-made Teaching
 Manipulation
 Prophecy for Pay
 Prey to Cults, Heresies
 Encourages Lawlessness
 Counterfeit Miracles
 Contrives Dreams/Visions

**WITCHCRAFT/
FAMILIAR SPIRIT**

Blasphemy
 Preoccupied with Evil
 Psychic Experiences
 Rebellious
 Devalues Life
 Identifies with Sinful Nature
 Fixated on Future

**INFIRMITY/
DESTROYING**

Physical Manifestations
 Unconfessed Sin
 Abuses Body
 Devalues Life
 Chronic Grumbling
 Thoughts of Suicide
 Drawn to Danger

On pages 36 and 37 you found a comprehensive list of strongholds we have encountered. **This is not an exhaustive list.** God may reveal to you other strongholds and symptoms to which you have given ground. Beneath each stronghold are listed related **thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or actions** often produced by demonic agitation in order to sustain that stronghold. **When any or all of these symptoms of a particular stronghold are *habitually present* in your life, it's a strong indication that the stronghold is in operation in your soul.**

You'll notice that the related areas may be similar for certain strongholds, so carefully discern the identity of the spirit assailing you. For example, one of the symptoms of the stronghold of **Bitterness** is anger. The stronghold of **Rebellion** also has the symptom of anger, but the type of anger noted here normally leads to arguments.

TO RE-EMPHASIZE: Strongholds are demonic forces working to **influence and control your soul** (i.e., your mind, will, and emotions). The most common goal of all strongholds is to **destroy relationships**. Unclean spirits (as the Bible often calls them) not only block you from knowing and experiencing God's truth and love. They also prevent you from giving and receiving love, understanding and acceptance in other relationships. The more intimate the relationship you have (such as with God, your spouse, family, and those in your home fellowship), the more the demonic spiritual forces will attempt to destroy these relationships.

Step One

Solicit The Help Of Family Members And Intimate Friends

The following pages will take you through each of the strongholds listed on pages 36-37. As you go through each stronghold you'll be able to identify whether it's influencing your soul by the **intensity of symptoms** that the spirit produces. But first, some suggestions:

1. Through experience we've found it extremely valuable to **solicit the help of family members or intimate friends** to go through this strongholds material with you. If you're married, we strongly encourage you to ask your spouse to go through it with you. Even the participation of teenage children has proved to be very helpful in ridding your home of **family strongholds**. We can't emphasize enough: Please have your spouse and children go through this part together with you. Then you can all become free at the same time!
2. The participation of family members and others close to you is also advantageous even if they *don't* want to deal with their *own* strongholds at this time. They can help identify your strongholds with you. This calls for your humility and willingness to receive input from others, even if you don't agree with their insight.
3. If for some reason the above suggestions are impractical, continue yourself.

You're welcome to copy pages 36 to 65 so that each person can have his or her own pages to fill in.

First, identify the strongholds you believe are afflicting you by filling in the following pages. Then have your family members or intimate friend(s) check off the applicable symptoms under each stronghold that they think **pertain to you**. (They may identify strongholds that are hidden from you, or more importantly, may inadvertently reveal the strongholds influencing your family, home fellowship, congregation, or business.)

In the first space next to each symptom on the following pages, place a number **from 0 to 10** to indicate the **intensity** of demonic control, influence, or oppression in your life. Remember, you're trying to identify spirits that **habitually** influence your thoughts and actions, not occasional slips.

- 0 — no control, influence, or oppression;
- 5 — moderate control, influence, or oppression;
- 10 — very high control, influence, or oppression.

Placing a number next to each symptom helps you identify how intensely these feelings and behaviors operate in your life. You can picture them as "ruts in a dirt road." Over the time that these demonic influences have been in your soul, they have induced deeply entrenched attitude and behavior patterns — gullies from which you can't seem to escape.

As you'll see in Chapter 5, ***After You've Demolished the Strongholds***, these ruts will need to be filled in by living God's way and filling the needs He's created in you in ways that coincide with His Word. By recognizing the intensity of impact these strongholds have on you now, filling those needs His way will be that much easier.

When others participate:

1. If others are working through the strongholds worksheet with you to identify *their own* strongholds, they can fill in their own copies. Or, they can place a number for themselves on the second line next to each symptom in your copy. Then, as you're helping each other identify and confirm each other's strongholds, they can write their number for you above yours, and you can do the same above theirs.
2. If others are going through the pages only to help you identify *your* strongholds, they can use the second line to write the number they believe is appropriate for you.

By comparing and discussing the combined input, you'll discern a more reliable picture as to the type and intensity of each stronghold. You also can determine how pervasive the influence is in your family, home fellowship, congregation, or business.

If others don't participate:

If you don't have access to family members or someone else close to you, the steps we suggest may be done by yourself. It's the authority of the Name of Jesus that makes the difference, not the companionship.

An important reminder before you begin. We mentioned this in Chapter 2 when we discussed *Generational Strongholds*. Our experience has shown that many strongholds that plague people have been passed along for generations within families. The vast majority of troubled people and marriages we've encountered have acquired their strongholds and related symptoms from preceding generations. In helping married couples, we've discovered the same prevailing strongholds **in both spouses**. And, each spouse had received these from his or her respective parents.

When the *Overview Of Types Of Strongholds* list was given out to congregations, **most people in the faith community** had the same prevailing strongholds. When we've given out the list to Christian businesses, many of the **key employees** have identified the same predominant strongholds.

The overwhelming evidence has shown that it's *not* the people but the **spirits in the strongholds** that attract individuals to each other. There's an economy of operation for the demonic spirits to do this: Fewer are needed to control the goals, methods, and values of families, congregations, and Christian businesses. Again, the symptoms may seem different on the surface, but the stronghold behind the symptoms is often the same.

Before you continue, remind yourself that a stronghold is a "demonic fortress of influence" from which spirits function in your soul to:

- Control, dictate, and influence your attitudes and behavior.
- Oppress and discourage you.
- Filter and color how you view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

Step Two

Identify Strongholds Through Their Symptoms

Now it's time to get into what you've been waiting to accomplish! Refer to the following pages to determine which symptoms and strongholds apply to you.

1. Examine each specific stronghold. Consider if the verses listed after the stronghold might describe your situation or condition.
2. Go through each stronghold identifying any of the symptoms that are **habitually present** in your life. Ponder the definitions and verses listed. (The Holy Spirit may bring other meanings and verses to mind, too.)
3. Use a **scale of 0 to 10** beside each symptom to evaluate its intensity. A spiritual stronghold is present when one or more of the symptoms has **habitually influenced** your life. (Again, your spouse, family members, or close friends may be helpful as you embark on this.)

As **you** desire to draw close to God, **He** will draw close to you. The words of Jeremiah are particularly applicable here: “*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity*” (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

One last suggestion: Remember that many strongholds hide behind a **vener of deception**. We quoted Francis Frangipane earlier, “Once a person is **deceived**, he does not **recognize** that he is deceived, **because he has been deceived**.” Be careful! The spirit in the stronghold of Deceit will do all it can to hinder you from recognizing the varied strongholds that influence and oppress you. We recommend that you **examine the stronghold of deceit very closely**.

You can recognize the spirit of Deceit within you because it will be an inner voice sounding very much like your own mind’s voice. As you look at a particular stronghold or symptom, it will rationalize why this or that stronghold or symptom doesn’t apply to you. When that voice of rationalization speaks, you can count on one thing: You have that symptom and stronghold!

DECEIT

“The Spirit expressly states that in the last days some people will apostatize from the faith by paying attention to deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1, CJB). “Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, KJV). “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth....If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:6,8).

Deal with this stronghold first! Satan’s initial interaction with mankind involved deception. Since your soul (your mind, will, and emotions) is the battleground, you need to **see clearly** the nature of those areas you have yielded to the enemy. He’ll do anything to distract or discourage you, so be aware of his schemes and his goal — the destruction of your trust and loving obedience to Jesus. If your thoughts and actions don’t align with God’s Word and you still feel justified in pursuing them, you’ve given way to this spirit (see 1 John 1:6). Be especially alert to false belief systems that portray man as basically good and deny the reality of heaven and hell.

*For many years Kristen had been haunted by anger from childhood memories. Every time she thought about her father, she had difficulty remembering any happy times. One painful thought consumed her: “He was always spanking me!” That one painful perception filtered out any remembrance of joy. One afternoon Kristen decided to get to the bottom of this. She sat down with her parents and brought up her anger about all those spankings. Her parents were astonished! In fact, her father told her that only once did he ever spank her, and that one time so hurt **his** heart that he never spanked her again!*

*But Kristen had been so humiliated by that one episode that she allowed the **lie** of “frequent spanking” to replace the **truth** of “one spanking”. She confessed that she’d been held captive by a **bitter, angry spirit** that influenced her to keep an emotional distance from her dad. After she renounced that spirit, Kristen tearfully asked forgiveness for having hurt her father by giving way to that lie.*

Rejection had dominated Bob's life. Although popular and exuberant, his emotions were plagued by the memory of his mother's words: "When you were born, I cursed when I found out you weren't the girl baby I had so wanted." Subsequent illnesses and hospitalizations during his youth added to Bob's sense of being unwanted. He compensated through addictions to food and alcohol. He also sought acceptance through kind acts and abundant friendliness with everyone he encountered, hoping that they would genuinely like him. When Bob understood this rejection to be a stronghold, he renounced its effect on his life through the blood of Jesus, and sought the Spirit's infilling of assurance of God's love and acceptance. Overwhelming praise to God followed as he realized that the righteousness of Christ was his security and affirmation.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Lying	Falsifying information with a motive to deceive (1 Kings 22:23)
___ ___ Fantasies	Fanciful thoughts with little credibility (Jeremiah 14:14)
___ ___ Delusions	Believing lies; may cover painful past experiences (Jeremiah 23:32)
___ ___ Rationalization	Reasoning with desire to gloss over problems; attempting to deal with serious problems superficially; making excuses to justify sinful behavior (1 John 4:4-6)
___ ___ Wrong Doctrine/ Misuse of Scripture	Reasoning out faulty conclusion or position, then using the Bible to support your conclusion (2 Timothy 4:3,4)
___ ___ Flattery	Saying positive things to others to gain advantage in your relationship with them (Romans 16:17,18)
___ ___ Syncretism	Incorporating unbiblical beliefs or practices into your spiritual life and calling them "Christian" (Hebrews 3:12-14)

BITTERNESS

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Ephesians 4:29-31). "So repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord. Perhaps you will yet be forgiven for holding such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are extremely bitter and completely under the control of sin!" (Acts 8:22,23, CJB) "For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will not forgive yours" (Matthew 6:14,15).

The stronghold of bitterness may be present when you **habitually** feel one or more of the following symptoms when you think about a particular person, place, or event. Unforgiveness, in particular, leaves you unforgiven by

our Father (see Matthew 6:15); puts you in a **prison of torment** (see Matthew 18:34,35); and **brings pain** to the person you've refused to forgive.

Also, you may not outwardly reveal your bitterness but find yourself seething inside. According to Hebrews 12:15, a special problem with bitterness occurs: It **causes trouble** and **defiles the relationships** of others who are not even linked to the original painful event. For instance, unresolved bitterness toward your parents often can show up later in your marriage and hinder bonding with your spouse. You may frequently grumble or complain over seemingly trivial matters because the real source of this spirit's foothold has not been confronted.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Resentment	Continuous animosity or hard feelings against someone (Leviticus 19:17)
___ ___ Racism	Unjust narrow-mindedness; prejudice against whatever differs from your values or beliefs; aversion to another gender or ethnic group (Proverbs 18:3)
___ ___ Unforgiveness	Inability to emotionally release someone who has hurt you (Matthew 18:34,35)
___ ___ Anger/Hatred	Feelings of wrath or rage; intense animosity (Ecclesiastes 7:9)
___ ___ Begrudging	Seething hatred toward someone who is unaware of your bitterness; speaking badly about someone behind their back; withholding affection and warmth due someone (Ezekiel 35:11)
___ ___ Vengeful	Desire for retaliation (Acts 16:19-23)
___ ___ Chronic Grumbling	Ongoing complaint or murmuring that reveals deep discontent (James 5:9)
___ ___ Presumptuous	Precipitated by unfulfilled expectations; acting outside God's will and reaping painful consequences (Acts 19:13-16)

Kim discovered as she talked with her sister and her mother that rejection had been a characteristic of her family for four generations! In each generation, the women, controlled by the fear of rejection, gave themselves over to sexual promiscuity. This stronghold had manifested its presence in her by feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. She appeared pleasant enough on the outside, but no one felt they really knew the "real" Kim. Believing that if people ever got close to her they wouldn't like what they found, she withdrew from intimacy. This carried over into a deep hurt in the relationship with her husband and son, who always felt that they were the cause of the emotional distance. When Kim renounced the generational stronghold of rejection and confessed to God the sins she had committed through its influence, she found forgiveness, freedom, and cleansing. As she became secure in her acceptance through the finished work of the cross, she was able to pray with boldness for God to use her as a vessel of blessing to others whether they "liked" her or not!

Jerry had grown up with a father who was a successful workaholic. Although he lacked for nothing materially, he never sensed much warmth or compassion from his parents. Then, when Jerry was still in his early teens, his father died very suddenly. His large family was left with little support, and insecurity and fear became the dominating factors in the young man's life. Vowing to himself that he would never be poor again, Jerry worked hard at his business, making many enemies along the way because of his constant dissatisfaction with their performance as employees. A stronghold of idolatry brought reliance on the wealth he had accumulated rather than a prayerful dependency on God. Arguments over money dominated his marriage. Distrust and greed permeated his home and business relationships. No one could "stand in his face" and tell him what to do. Finally, as his marriage disintegrated and his business gave signs of going under, Jerry renounced the strongholds of insecurity and fear that had made money his idol and had shaped his unbelieving view of God's ability to meet his need. As the Holy Spirit brought conviction of the sins he had committed against so many people, he purposed to

HEAVINESS

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3, KJV). "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death" (Psalm 13:1-3, CJB).

We know from Scripture that God desires you to have a childlike faith in Him that trusts wholeheartedly and absolutely in His love and mercies. The spirit of heaviness convinces you that your condition is **hopeless**: that no one cares; that even if circumstances improve, it's only temporary and you'll be miserable again. Your life is a **cycle of sorrow** and you can't seem to get off the downward spiral. Consider this, however: Often this spirit's agitation is secondary to another spirit, such as bitterness or independence.

Symptom:

Definition:

— — Depression

Feelings of sorrow, despondence, dejection (Psalm 119:28)

— — Despair

Overwhelming lack of hope (Jeremiah 45:3)

— — Self-pity

Pattern of feeling sorry for yourself (Psalm 25:16-18)

— — Loneliness

A sense of detachment or separation from others (Psalm 42:9,10)

— — Unconfessed Sin

Avoiding admission to God of known iniquity (Psalm 32:3,4)

— — Suicidal Thoughts

A strong desire to end your life; consumed with death (Psalm 55:2-5)

JEALOUSY

"If a spirit of jealousy comes over him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she has become impure — or, for that matter, if the spirit of jealousy comes over him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she has not become impure — he is to bring his wife to the [priest], along with the offering for her... because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a grain offering for remembering, for recalling guilt to mind" (Numbers 5:14,15, CJB). "Then the Lord said to Cain,

‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it’” (Genesis 4:6-7). *“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?”* (1 Corinthians 3:3).

Like Cain, when you focus on the behavior and attitudes of others, you can develop a **judgmental posture** toward them. Rather than regarding them more highly than yourself as Scripture exhorts and respecting them for their godliness, you may begin to actively seek out their “warts”. You’re attuned to bad reports about that person. By comparison, you appear better in your own mind. And your tongue is your own worst enemy. Through insinuation or outright fault-finding you plant doubts about the integrity of the person of whom you’re jealous.

approach each one to seek forgiveness and make restitution wherever appropriate. His priorities shifted to God and family, then to close friends and business.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Spiteful	Malicious attitude intending evil toward others (Psalm 41:5,6)
___ ___ Gossip/Slander	Pattern of sharing detrimental information about someone with those not part of the problem or solution; telling part of the truth with a desire to hurt (2 Corinthians 12:20)
___ ___ Betrayal	Breaking faith and turning against others (Psalm 55:12-14)
___ ___ Critical Nature	Habitual pattern of fault-finding; never satisfied (Genesis 37:4,8,11)
___ ___ Judgmental	Feeling better about yourself by evaluating others, anticipating their failure of some prescribed standard or criterion (Matthew 7:1-5)
___ ___ Suspicious	Pattern of distrusting and doubting the motives of others (Galatians 5:15)
___ ___ UnChristlike Competition	Having to draw attention to yourself through doing better than others (Romans 12:3)
___ ___ Cruelty	Hurting others through word or deed, either physically or through damaging their reputation (1 Samuel 18:10,11; Genesis 37:18-20)

As the oldest in a large family, Kerry had keenly felt the weight of responsibility, particularly after her father left. As a teenager, she watched her mother struggle to raise the younger children. The devotion that her mother had once expressed toward God turned to bitterness. Kerry's outlook on life became imprisoned by **fear** — fear of abandonment, fear of poverty, fear that she was an inadequate wife and mother. Fear so consumed her that serious illnesses began to take their toll on her body. The myriad of prescription drugs she became dependent on after her many surgeries left her depressed. She felt encompassed by a spirit of **heaviness**. As she saw these same fears springing up in her children, Kerry despaired. Then a trusted friend shared her own story of freedom from strongholds, and Kerry began to hope. As they went over a list of possible strongholds, Kerry felt condemned because she saw herself in so many categories. Her friend reassured her that God loved her and had given her the power of the Name of Jesus and His work on the cross to vanquish these spiritual menaces. As she prayed to renounce the strongholds of fear and heaviness, Kerry sensed a lightness she had forgotten. Joy lit her face as

CONFUSION / DOUBT and UNBELIEF

“The LORD has mixed up their minds with a spirit that distorts judgment, so they make Egypt stagger in whatever she does, like a drunk staggering in his vomit” (Isaiah 19:14, CJB). “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does” (James 1:5-8). “Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:62).

If you've entered into your relationship with Jesus based on a faulty understanding of **Who He is**, you can't grasp how high and wide and deep is His love for you. He is LORD, and as such desires **Lordship in your life**. If you're focusing more on the adverse circumstances in your life than on the One Who can free you, you're listening to the spirit of confusion. When you truly comprehend just how great of a sinner you are and the vastness of Jesus' atonement on your behalf, you're better able to persevere in the “arena of suffering” that your earthly life calls for. When you're assured of His plan, you can be confident that His purpose and His presence will continue without fail.

Symptom:	Definition:
— — Suspicious	Doubt or disbelief in God's promises (Mark 16:14; John 20:25,27)
— — Apprehensive	Anxiously fearful that God will not fulfill His plans for your good or that He “has it in for you” (Luke 9:62)
— — Indecisive/ Double-minded	No intimate trust in Jesus; worried anguish over decisions (James 1:6,7)
— — Skeptical	Continuous pattern of questioning and hesitancy to trust God (1 Kings 18:21)
— — Unsettled	Unable to experience fruit of the Spirit in your life (2 Peter 1:8)
— — Easily Distracted	Unable to focus on God, His ways, and the needs of other people for any length of time (1 John 2:15-17)

___ ___	Lack of Commitment	Your words of assurance to others are not followed up by your own ongoing resolve (Romans 14:22,23)
___ ___	No Love of Truth	Susceptible to error; half-hearted about God's Word (2 Thessalonians 2:10,11)
___ ___	Distorted Judgment	Your decisions seem right to you but are, in fact, detrimental to others (Proverbs 16:25)

she praised God - her countenance glowed! As she sought God to fill her with the power of His Spirit, her tongue loosened and she boldly began sharing with her friends and family all that God had done for her.

REJECTION

“He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. My kinsmen have gone away, my friends have forgotten me” (Job 19:13-14). “Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20). “Don’t let anyone look down on you because of your youth; on the contrary, set the believers an example in your speech, behavior, love, trust and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

When you feel that you **really don't matter** to others, the inner pain can be crippling. To avoid having to face the pain, this spirit induces you to compensate by just **coping**. You might avoid those whom you feel might bring you distress, even withholding affection from your spouse or parents. You may try to escape through chemical means to ease the pain. You might act without care or concern about how your actions may affect others around you. You may do acts of kindness in a desperate attempt to “earn” love and acceptance. Or, you may strive with all your might to achieve material success to prove your worth with a big house, expensive car or fine clothes — all to compensate for the fear that you won't be found acceptable.

Symptom:	Definition:	
___ ___	Addictive Behavior	Fixated, intense preoccupation; detrimental habits such as gluttony, alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling (Proverbs 23:20,29,30)
___ ___	Compulsions	Irrational obsession to act without forethought or regard to outcome (Proverbs 19:2)
___ ___	Seeks Acceptance	Acting in kindness or friendliness with underlying motive to forestall rejection (Proverbs 11:3)

Irritability and anger over minor provocations marked Karen's daily life. She had grown up as a pastor's daughter in a large and active household. Then her mother came down with a debilitating disease. Unable to cope, her father ran off with the church secretary, leaving the family destitute and forsaken. The children, teens at this point, managed to balance studies with care for their mother, but bitterness became the lens through which Karen viewed the world. She still attended church services, but God seemed remote and uncaring. A stronghold of prayerlessness characterized her walk with God; she served Him out of a sense of obligation rather than from a love relationship. One day while visiting us, she became blinded by using the wrong contact lens solution. For three days she sat in her darkness, crying out to God. Through the Holy Spirit she recognized the prison her bitterness had kept her in: consumed by unforgiveness for her father, resentment toward her mother, and anger at God for allowing it all to happen. Karen renounced the spirit of bitterness and claimed the power of Christ's atonement

___ ___ Unworthiness	Feeling unacceptable or inferior; convinced you'll never "measure up" (Proverbs 18:14)
___ ___ Withdrawal	Removing yourself emotionally or physically from real or perceived hurtful and rejecting situations (Jeremiah 23:24)
___ ___ Shallow Relationships	Friends with whom you do activities, but have no relational intimacy (Job 6:14-18,21)
___ ___ Loneliness	Unable or unwilling to find deep companionship with God or with others (Psalm 25:16,17)

PRIDE

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). "By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud" (Ezekiel 28:5). "There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers; those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth; those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful" (Proverbs 30:11-13, CJB).

As a culture, Americans are obsessed with **image and appearance**. The focus on maintaining youthful health has surpassed stewardship of the body and has become an idol. We know more about fat grams than we do about the standards of holy living in Proverbs. The image we project through our homes, vehicles, attire, and activities reflects our **self-centered absorption**.

We have little appreciation for the sacrifices our parents have made for us (even in choosing life for us!), and often separate ourselves from them, either geographically or socially. Because God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud, the spirit of pride influences a person to arrogantly pursue **self-gratification and personal fulfillment**. In your desire to appear "Christian," you feel better about what you **don't do** that's "evil" than about the "good" that God wants to do in and through you.

Symptom:

Definition:

___ ___ Ungrateful	Belief that you're entitled to anything you're given; failure to appreciate others; take others for granted (2 Timothy 3:2)
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___ ___	Self-righteous	High opinion of your moral position compared to that of others (Luke 18:10-12)
___ ___	Self-centered	Obsessive egocentric pattern of thinking; “the world revolves around me” (Proverbs 21:4)
___ ___	Insensitive	Unaware of impact on others; a bull-in-a-china-shop (Proverbs 26:12)
___ ___	Materialistic	Obsessive desire to acquire and possess in order to gain recognition or prestige (1 John 2:15,16)
___ ___	Seeks Positions	Viewing people and resources as means of fulfilling ego needs; relationships have little worth except to advance self; presumptuous (Proverbs 25:6,7)
___ ___	Stubborn	Such high regard for your own views that you ignore or denigrate the input and counsel of others (Jeremiah 7:24)
___ ___	Mocking	Belittling others through words or mannerism, disparaging their dignity (Proverbs 18:3)
___ ___	Vain	Conceit about your own importance, abilities, appearance, possessions (Romans 12:16)
___ ___	Spiritual Adultery	Perverting God’s grace into permission to sin; serving “another spirit” apart from the God of the Bible (James 4:4-6)
___ ___	Impatient	Intolerant of delay or opposition; your time is more important than others (Ecclesiastes 7:8)

and acceptance of her as His own. She prayed for the work of God in her own heart to forgive and to believe in God’s power to bring good out of all this. That afternoon, her vision cleared. She sat down and wrote a letter to her father asking forgiveness for her bitterness against him all this time. He responded immediately, beseeching her to come see him. A great healing had begun.

RELIGIOSITY

“Look! You are relying on deceitful words that can’t do you any good. First you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, offer to Ba’al and go after other gods that you haven’t known. Then you come and stand before me in this house that bears my name and say, “We are saved” — so that you can go on doing these abominations!” (Jeremiah 7:8-10, CJB). “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have

Division was in the air at First Church. Behind the facade of full pews each Sunday morning was intense grumbling and murmuring among the parishioners. Rumors of sinful conduct by the pastor had surfaced. When the issues were brought before the pastor by several members of leadership, he admitted that some of the allegations might appear true but that he didn't regard them as serious. He felt that he was doing a good job as senior pastor and that the pressures and stresses he faced on behalf of the flock were causing these "problems." He never viewed them as sins requiring repentance. As word got out, a group of the congregation responded with outrage and self-righteous pride. Rather than fasting and praying for the pastor to repent or approaching the elders to take further steps, this disgruntled group left in protest. The ones that remained looked down on the departees and for awhile felt the body was better off without them. But as the sermons became more watered-down and the pastor's attitude grew increasingly standoffish, division brewed again. A second wave of murmuring people approached the leadership and felt compelled to leave the church. (Three waves of departees occurred in less

received and heard; obey it, and repent" (Revelation 3:1-3). "In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (Matthew 23:28).

Maybe you've been a churchgoer for many years, serving the needs of the kingdom even to the point of burnout. People you've ministered to have been strengthened and encouraged, yet your own walk with Jesus has become impersonal and shallow. You may be at the point of going through the motions with no sense of loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You've come to realize that you're no more than a warm body keeping a religious system running.

Because others have always seen you as a spiritual pillar of strength, you feel you must **maintain that facade**, even if your inward pain is unbearable. Perhaps you're caught up in **legalistic perversion**, scrambling to obey every command but neither experiencing nor extending His grace and love. On the other hand, you may be deceived that you don't have to repent or seek forgiveness because God's grace cuts you slack to sin — that God's laws were intended for the Jews, and that Jesus abolished the Law. (Not so! See Matthew 5:17, Romans 3:31.)

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Religious Busyness	Intimate relationship with Jesus is non-existent; underlying attitude that you must earn God's love by what you do (Luke 10:38-41)
___ ___ Knowledge Without Love	Extensive scriptural expertise but no heart for those with whom you share; "great zeal, no love" (Romans 10:2)
___ ___ No Spiritual Power	No presence of the nature, character, or power of Jesus even after many years of religious practice (Revelation 3:1)
___ ___ Spiritual Blindness	Unable to know the will of God or to receive guidance by His Spirit (Matthew 13:14,15)
___ ___ Hypocritical	Expressing truths that tell others how to live but not "walking the talk" yourself (Mark 7:6)
___ ___ Legalistic Perversion	Attempting to justify yourself before God by keeping His laws (Galatians 3:2,3)
___ ___ Presumes on Grace	Calling yourself "Christian" but living in lawlessness; no evidence of Holy Spirit in your life (1 John 3:8-10)

INDEPENDENCE and DIVORCE

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Corinthians 12:21). “Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel” (Malachi 2:15,16a). “But if you harbor in your hearts bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, don’t boast and attack the truth with lies! This wisdom is not the kind that comes down from above; on the contrary, it is worldly, unspiritual, demonic. For where there are jealousy and selfish ambition, there will be disharmony and every foul practice” (James 3:14-16, CJB).

When you feel disconnected from others (family members, neighbors, co-workers, fellow believers, schoolmates), you tend to rely on yourself to make decisions. **“He who relies on himself for advice has a fool for a counselor”** are words you really don’t want to hear. While you may desperately wish that someone would make the effort to reach in past your abrasive or withdrawn demeanor, you aren’t so sure that you want the responsibilities that come with people who would hold you accountable.

“Divorce” is not necessarily related to marriage. It can manifest itself in any interpersonal situation in which you walk away physically or emotionally due to real or perceived hurt. If you feel that **belonging to others is optional**, you can then justify separating yourself from them. You’re able to rationalize that it’s easier (or more beneficial) for others if you simply leave rather than confront issues or sins that need to be addressed. Ultimately, the spirit of divorce leads to unforgiveness, bitterness, and guilt.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Insensitive	Unaware of impact on others; a bull-in-a-china shop (1 Corinthians 12:25,26)
___ ___ Aloof	Sense of detachment; unresponsive to others’ needs (Ezekiel 34:2)
___ ___ Selfish Ambition	Relies solely on own analysis and appraisal for personal decisions; disregard for well-being of others, especially family (Proverbs 12:15)
___ ___ Devil’s Advocate	Takes contrary position in discussions; argues without considering others’ feelings or needs (2 Timothy 2:25,26)

than two years.) The elders refused to confront the pastor with his ongoing sin. No one in any of the three waves seemed able to go on in their Christian walk. After two years we met with all three waves over a period of several days. It was then that they saw the stronghold of pride that was controlling not only the church they had fled but also themselves personally. As they all prayed to renounce the influence of the stronghold, compassion and mercy began to surface in their hearts. (A thought to ponder: As we were finishing our last meeting with the people, we commented that the situation in their church was similar to that of another church we had worked with several years earlier. As we named the town and state of that church, they named the church where the pastor prior to this one had gone in that same town. It was the same church -- same pastor -- and same stronghold among that flock!)

“Ron, I’ve been praying for you, and I think you have a stronghold of rebellion,” I said. “I know that!” Ron shouted into the phone. “Why don’t you call your mom,” I suggested, “and ask her what symptoms of rebellion she sees in you.” Ron pondered that idea, then phoned his mother, who lived out-of-state. Although he had maintained regular telephone contact with her, he had always felt uneasiness in her presence. “Mom, Mike thinks I have a stronghold of rebellion. Do you see this in me?” “Of course I do,” she replied. “Our whole family has it!” As she scored Ron from 1 to 10 in intensity of symptoms, a picture emerged: strong will, stubbornness, independent spirit. Ron scored fairly low on strife and divisive and unteachable. He called his brother and received scores almost identical to his mother’s. Next came the real challenge: his ex-wife. She and Ron had maintained a friendly relationship during their years apart, and he knew he could trust her to be candid. Her first scores were similar to his family’s evaluations, but then she surprised him with high scores on strife and anger that leads to arguments. “Why?” he asked. “My family gave me low scores on those.” She chuck-

- ___ ___ Withdrawn Removing yourself emotionally or physically from real or perceived hurtful or rejecting situations; “martyr” feelings (Job 7:16)
- ___ ___ Makes Excuses Rationalizing your faults or errors and blaming others (Proverbs 28:13)
- ___ ___ Lack of Trust Unable to rely/depend on others; underlying attitude, “If you hurt me or let me down, I’m gone.” Places incredible pressure on relationship to never confront problems (1 John 2:19)
- ___ ___ Willful Clings to own decisions, even if impulsive or unwise (Jeremiah 18:12)

STUPOR / PRAYERLESSNESS

“If you make yourselves stupid, you will stay stupid! If you blind yourselves, you will stay blind! You are drunk, but not from wine; you are staggering, but not from strong liquor. For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of lethargy; he has closed your eyes (that is, the prophets) and covered your heads (that is, the seers)” (Isaiah 29:9,10, CJB). *“As it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day’”* (Romans 11:8). *“For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them”* (Isaiah 58:2).

Because you feel as though the Holy Spirit has not been revealing anything to your spirit, your expectations of Divine involvement and intervention are almost nil. You may have become so **wrapped up** in the cares and activities of life that you don’t spend much time earnestly seeking the Lord. In fact, seeking Him has become bothersome, an obligation, something that you often skip.

You **fail to appreciate** the “little” blessings and kindnesses that God has been pouring out. Perhaps you’re so desperate for one key answer to prayer that you’ve disregarded His other manifestations all around you. You fail to see that God might be allowing various trials in your life to conform your character to Christ’s. Or, you’d rather stay in your “comfort zone” as far as opportunities for deepening your faith are concerned.

Symptom:

- ___ ___ Distanced From God

Definition:

God seems “unconcerned”; a sense of hopelessness in prayer; you think, *“If I pray, He won’t answer anyway.”* (Job 30:20)

___ ___	“Cold” Love	Prayer is an obligation of religious practice rather than communication with Someone you love (Isaiah 29:13)
___ ___	Hardened Heart	Habitually disinclined to seek intimacy with God; casual attitude about obedient trust (Ephesians 5:14-17)
___ ___	Distracted	Unable to focus on communication with God; thoughts and worries invade prayer (Matthew 13:22)
___ ___	Spiritual Blindness	Unable to know God’s will or receive guidance by His Spirit (Isaiah 57:11,12)
___ ___	Laziness	Resistant to industrious pursuit of God’s plans for your life (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12)
___ ___	Deceived Self-appraisal	Unable to detect personal sin that may be hindering your prayers (Proverbs 28:26)
___ ___	Unresponsive	Unwilling to follow through with that which God is prompting you to do (James 1:22)

led wryly, “They weren’t married to you.” Then she asked if there was a category for pouting. During their marriage he had reacted to disagreements with silent frowns and distancing -- behaviors that had carried into other relationships as well. Ron set the phone down and prayed, renouncing in the strong name of Jesus the stronghold of rebellion that had plagued him since childhood. A new desire to fully yield to God and to serve others flooded him. He immediately made arrangements to move in with his widowed mother, and he was able over the course of two months to bring healing and freedom from her stronghold of rebellion through the power of the Holy Spirit.

REBELLION

“For rebellion is like the sin of sorcery, stubbornness like the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he too has rejected you as king” (1 Samuel 15:23, CJB). “There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good” (Psalms 36:1-3). “But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices” (Psalms 81:11,12).

Rebellion festers privately in the heart of the person who is open to it. Ultimately, however, it’s revealed in a public way. Some strongholds remain hidden, not interfering in the lives of others. But the spirit of rebellion **searches** for others with whom to stir up dissension. The weapon wielded by this spirit is **the tongue** — “a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body” (James 3:6). Rather than listening to others, a person influenced by a rebellious spirit pushes for his or her own way vocally and forcefully, unconcerned for the wounded relationships left in the wake.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Self-willed	Wanting your own way more than the will of God or of others in authority (Isaiah 30:9,10)
___ ___ Stubborn/ Insolent	Obstinate attitude toward others; reluctance to accept truth or help from others (Proverbs 29:1)
___ ___ Pouting	Visible sulking behavior, indicating rejection of a truth or situation (1 Kings 21:4)
___ ___ Strife	Clashing; creating unnecessary conflict in relationships (Proverbs 29:22)
___ ___ Factious	Joining together with other dissenting people to conspire or plot (Jeremiah 11:19)
___ ___ Divisive	Encouraging disagreement rather than seeking points of agreement; often playing the “devil’s advocate” (Proverbs 26:20,21)
___ ___ Anger Leads to Argument	Hostile feelings progress into arguments often disguised as desire to explain your position or build your case (Ezekiel 3:27)
___ ___ Independent	Maintaining a self-reliant and separate position from others; unable to belong to other people (1 Corinthians 12:21)
___ ___ Unteachable	Continuing to return to the same errant position; often mocking those trying to help (2 Peter 2:21,22)
___ ___ Ungodly Influence	Avoids all types of God-given correction; entices others to regard God-given boundaries as personal infringements (Proverbs 10:17, Psalm 50:16-18)
___ ___ Lawless	Justifying attitudes and actions contrary to God’s Word; deceiving others by your sinful example of excusing sin (2 Timothy 4:3,4)

FEAR and INSECURITY

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (Romans 8:15). “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil” (Job 3:25,26).

Do you wonder why you often think, “**If I don’t do it, it won’t get done right?**” Maybe you are wrestling with what one writer has termed *False Expectations Appearing Real: F.E.A.R.* Perhaps you’ve projected your expectations of outcome onto others, causing them to feel anxious and pressured. You may be struggling with the heavy burden of responsibility to meet your perception of what constitutes “acceptable.” The **task** seems much more important to you than the people you’re with. If probed, you’d be hard-pressed to come up with a reason why you’re compelled **to do** rather than **to be**.

There are times when anyone would much rather be somewhere else than in the middle of the situation that’s producing sweat and heart palpitations. However, the spirit of fear **consistently convinces you** that you have nothing worthwhile to contribute, that if you speak up no one will accept what you have to offer. You fear that people will just turn away from you, and you’ll be left alone.

In effect, the hunger to **please those around you** surpasses your desire to obey what you know God wants you to do or say.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Inferiority	Feeling subordinate or lower than others (Psalms 119:141)
___ ___ Inadequacy	Feeling incompetent or inept in accomplishing things (Exodus 4:1,10)
___ ___ Timidity	Feelings of shyness, bashfulness, or cowardice; often leads to withdrawal from others (Psalm 55:5-7)
___ ___ Pleasing People, Not God	Overly concerned about what others might think; limited fear/love of God (John 12:42,43)
___ ___ Lack of Trust/ Worry	Never feeling comfortable, lacking a sense of “belonging” to others; may <i>appear</i> friendly but have few or no deep friendships (Deuteronomy 20:8)
___ ___ Phobias	Obsessive fear; aversion to or dislike of a particular person or situation, often with no apparent foundation (Proverbs 28:1)
___ ___ Anxiety Over Injury, Death	Obsessive fear of illness or death supplants trust in the Lord Jesus; concerned more with loss of this world than eternity (Hebrews 2:14,15)
___ ___ Perfectionist	Obsessive desire for flawlessness; inability to find satisfaction with yourself or others (Romans 9:19-21)
___ ___ Dread of Failure	Shame-based motivation with abnormal pressure to always succeed; self-reliance in times of pressure; won’t turn to or trust others (Proverbs 10:24)

- | | | |
|---------|------------------------|---|
| ___ ___ | Inability to Set Goals | Prolonged pattern of indecisiveness; feel threatened by potential confrontation in decision making process (Ecclesiastes 5:7) |
| ___ ___ | “Motor-mouth” | Constant chatter that precludes input from others (Proverbs 10:19) |

CONTROL

“For he says, ‘By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding’” (Isaiah 10:13). “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you” (Romans 12:3). “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be” (James 3:6-10).

You feel that **your** input and decisions are key. In fact, you really don’t trust that anyone else can see the whole picture as clearly as you can. You need to be in charge! You enjoy leading, but only if others are willing to **follow your suggestions**. If others offer advice, you tend to doubt both their capability and their motives. Rather, you’re **driven even harder** to achieve your desired goal.

Symptom:

Definition:

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|--|
| ___ ___ | Manipulative | Desire to maneuver or orchestrate the lives of others for personal advantage (Proverbs 27:6) |
| ___ ___ | Striving | Endeavoring and struggling to accomplish; difficult for you to just “be” (Ecclesiastes 4:6) |
| ___ ___ | Lack of Trust | Inability to rely on others or to have confidence in God (Proverbs 1:29-32) |
| ___ ___ | Devil’s Advocate | Takes contrary position in discussions; argues without considering others’ feelings or needs (1 Timothy 6:3-5) |
| ___ ___ | Insensitive | Unaware of impact on others; a bull-in-a-china shop (Proverbs 12:23) |
| ___ ___ | Desiring Recognition | Seeking acclaim or notice for what you do (Proverbs 30:32) |
| ___ ___ | Seductive Empowerment | Using flattery and overt attention toward others in order to feel empowered by their attention (2 Peter 2:18,19) |

___ ___ Cursing	Emotional outrage enacted by foul language (Colossians 3:8)
___ ___ Emotional Outbursts	Controlling others through excessive use of emotional displays (Proverbs 29:11)
___ ___ Schemes, Intrigues	Plotting covertly to achieve a goal or outcome (2 Corinthians 4:2)

SEXUAL IMPURITY

“Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD” (Hosea 5:4). “[The Gentiles] are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Ephesians 4:18,19). “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Often sexual sin is done in the dark — figuratively and literally. A darkened understanding of God’s standards of purity greatly decreases your sensitivity to the ever-increasing violations of those standards all around you. The person influenced by this spirit **throws off restraints** — first in the mind and then in the flesh. **Gratification** becomes the issue; the relationship becomes secondary.

“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:16-20).

When people have sexual relations outside of marriage, a “soul tie” develops between them and their partner because the two have become one. Later in life, soul ties create a barrier to the fulfillment of God’s plan for love in marriage. The tie with each sexual partner must be confessed as deliberate sin and renounced in the name of Jesus.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Lust	Lecherous desire to sexually possess someone forbidden by God’s law (Ephesians 4:19)
___ ___ Sensual Enticement	Using sexual arousal to allure interest (Proverbs 6:24,25)
___ ___ Denial/Rationalization	Assuming God wants you to be gratified even if you defy His Word (Jeremiah 3:3-5)

___ ___ Masturbation	Seeking personal gratification rather than fulfilling responsibility to spouse (1 Corinthians 6:12,13)
___ ___ Fornication	Sexual relationships between unmarried people (1 Corinthians 4:3-5)
___ ___ Adultery	Sexual desire and/or relationships by married person outside of marriage (Matthew 5:27,28)
___ ___ Frigidity	Inhibited, indifferent, passionless sex (1 Corinthians 7:4,5)
___ ___ Homosexuality	Sexual relationship with member of same gender (Romans 1:26,27)
___ ___ Pornography/ Fantasy	Desire for vicarious sexual arousal (Colossians 3:5,6)

IDOLATRY / WORLDLINESS

“Now we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit of God, so that we might understand the things God has so freely given us. These are the things we are talking about when we avoid the manner of speaking that human wisdom would dictate and instead use a manner of speaking taught by the Spirit, by which we explain things of the Spirit to people who have the Spirit. Now the natural man does not receive the things from the Spirit of God — to him they are nonsense! Moreover, he is unable to grasp them, because they are evaluated through the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

A rich man was once asked, “How much money is enough?” He replied, “A little bit more.” To crave and yearn for more of earth’s treasures and pleasures defies God’s will to **“seek first the kingdom and His righteousness.”** You are **unable to be grateful** for what you have because you are disconnected from the Source of peace. “Happiness” seems to be just out of grasp. You long with all your heart for whatever in this world you think will bring contentment. That becomes your next idol. And idols don’t have to be tangible. An idol is **anything you seek more than your desire for God.** That can be recognition, praise, acceptance, pursuits, even relationships — anything that distracts you from loving and serving Him. You’re choosing to identify with the values and ways of those who are not followers of the Lord Jesus, mixing your concept of religion with self-gratification.

Symptom:

Definition:

___ ___ Worldly Values	Consumed with desire for the material realm; disregard for God’s will and His standards (1 John 2:15-17)
___ ___ Frustrated	Continuous feelings of perplexity; nothing seems to go right (Proverbs 23:4,5)

___ ___ Hopeless	Strong feelings of desperation and despondency (Job 16:22;17:1)
___ ___ Greedy/Selfish	Stinginess or excessive self-indulgence (Matthew 6:22-24)
___ ___ Financial Problems	Habitual pattern of bad financial decisions (Proverbs 28:19-22)
___ ___ Wrong Goals/ Decisions	Outcome focused on temporal pleasures and material possessions (James 4:1-3,13,14)
___ ___ Living a Lie	Fear that others will discover the hollowness and superficiality of your life (Revelation 3:17)
___ ___ Apathetic	Unconcerned for the feelings or welfare of others (Proverbs 3:27-29)
___ ___ Pleasure in Wickedness	Willing to forsake biblical truth and intimacy with Jesus in order to gratify sinful nature (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)
___ ___ Syncretistic	Incorporating worldly ways into religious practice to create your own version of following God (1 Corinthians 10:18-22, 2 Kings 17:15)

FALSE PROPHECY / ANTICHRIST

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world” (1 John 4:1-3). “This is what the LORD says: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim ‘peace’; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him. Therefore night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them. The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God” (Micah 3:5-7). “When that day comes,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will cut off the very names of the idols from the land, so that no one even remembers them any more. I will also expel the [false] prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land” (Zechariah 13:2, CJB).

You can hardly read through a Christian periodical without being bombarded with ads for prophetic conferences, “signs and wonders guaranteed” — and how you long for a word from God just for you! “Professional prophets” seem to hear from God all the time, so you anxiously await opportunity with them rather than drawing near to your Lord with clean hands and pure heart, trusting in Jesus’ promises. Secret knowledge and spiritual wisdom available to a select few allure you. (This is gnosticism revisited, the very heresy the apostle John so vigorously confronted in his letters.) You may also be among those who rarely study the Bible yourself, allowing others to spoon-feed you. That’s dangerous! Deception can sneak into your beliefs, and you have no confirmation that the rituals and traditions practiced in your congregational gatherings are even scriptural.

Symptom:	Definition:
___ ___ Denies Jesus as God and Man	Confesses Jesus as great teacher or prophet but not God incarnate; accepts Jesus as one of many created “gods” (1 John 2:22; 2 John 7-9)
___ ___ Bondage to Man-made Teaching	Holding to religious rules and traditions added on to Scripture (1 Timothy 4:3-5)
___ ___ Manipulation	Leading others astray through demonic empowerment (1 Timothy 4:1,2)
___ ___ Prophecy for Pay	Intent to profit by sharing “spiritual insights”; appearance of humility masks greed (Micah 3:11)
___ ___ Prey to Cults/ Heresies	Open to doctrines and ideas contrary to the Word of God (2 Peter 2: 1,2)
___ ___ Encourages Lawlessness	Denies God’s commands are still valid today; perverts grace into freedom to sin via “blanket forgiveness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)
___ ___ Counterfeit Miracles	Proclaiming as God’s handiwork the supernatural acts of those not in Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)
___ ___ Contrives Dreams/Visions	Fabricating or spiritualizing dreams or visions to draw attention to yourself or to gain influence over others (Jeremiah 23:25-32)

WITCHCRAFT / FAMILIAR SPIRIT

“Then said Saul unto his servants, ‘Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her.’ And his servants said to him, ‘Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.’ And Saul disguised himself, ... and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, ‘Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?’” (1 Samuel 28:7-9, KJV). “And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out... But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out at that very moment” (Acts 16:16-18, NAS). “He sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger” (2 Chronicles 33:6). “all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft” (Nahum 3:4).

Perhaps you've been fascinated by the "dark side" since childhood, eagerly pursuing seemingly innocent ventures such as astrology or ouija boards. Later, you found yourself drawn to books or movies that graphically portrayed violence and the occult. Dabbling in the demonic realm starts you on a slippery downward spiral on which you lose sight of truth — especially the unique Truth of the Gospel of Jesus. There's an old saying which sums up the dark goal of the enemy's enticing arena: "Satan doesn't care *how* you don't get to heaven, as long as you *don't* get to heaven." And if your life evidences that you're following a so-called Jesus other than the One known through His Spirit and His Word, you're leading others astray with you down that demonic path.

- ___ ___ Blasphemy Denying the God of the Bible through word or action; creating your own god to supplant the truth (Revelation 13:6)

- ___ ___ Preoccupied With Evil Obsessed with music and media with occult themes, horror, violence; "Dungeons and Dragons" type game, thrilled by ungodly acts, whether vicariously or experientially (Proverbs 2:12-15)

- ___ ___ Psychic Experiences Dabbling in occult through seances, drugs, channeling, divination, magic, etc. (Deuteronomy 18:10)

- ___ ___ Rebellious Defies authority; insubordinate, stubborn, willful (1 Samuel 15:23)

- ___ ___ Devalues Life Suicidal thoughts; pro-abortion, euthanasia; may torture animals (Proverbs 28:17)

- ___ ___ Identifies With Sinful Nature You call yourself "Christian" but are controlled by evil desires; do nothing to resist temptation (Galatians 5:19-21)

- ___ ___ Fixated on Future Habitually drawn to sources that reveal what is to come; use astrology, fortune telling, tarot cards; chase after "prophetic words" from conferences, Internet (Jeremiah 23:16,17; Isaiah 8:19)

INFIRMITY / DESTROYING

"And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself" (Luke 13:11, KJV). "This is what the LORD says: "See, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai" (Jeremiah 51:1). "When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down" (Exodus 12:23). "And don't grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the Destroying Angel" (1 Corinthians 10:10). "Is someone among you ill? He should call for the elders of the congregation. They will pray for him and rub olive oil on him in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered with trust will heal the one who is ill — the Lord will restore his health; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, openly acknowledge your

sins to one another, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:14-16).

Not every illness or disease is caused by the working of evil spirits. However, Scripture reveals enough accounts of Jesus casting down these harbingers of illness to make you consider the possibility, especially if you’ve given way to sin. King David groaned with anguish under the painful weight of inflamed bones and overwhelming weakness, acknowledging that this condition had been brought on by guilt from unconfessed sins. Yet you can also sabotage yourself in response to unclean spirits through choices that endanger your well-being.

Symptom:

Definition:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ___ ___ Physical Manifestations | Outworking of spirits attacking your body (Matthew 8:16,17) |
| ___ ___ Unconfessed Sin | Refusing to give up wrongful acts, attitudes (Psalms 32:1-5) |
| ___ ___ Abuses Body | Habitual destructive behaviors such as gluttony, intoxication, chemical substances, anorexia/bulimia (1 Corinthians 10:6-8) |
| ___ ___ Devalues Life | Ignoring reality of God’s image in humanity for your own selfish purposes; abortion, infanticide, euthanasia (Psalm 106:37,38) |
| ___ ___ Chronic Grumbling | Continual complaining and dissatisfaction with the way your life is going (James 5:9) |
| ___ ___ Thoughts of Suicide | Strong yearning to escape personal misery or circumstances through self-destruction; obsessed with death (Psalm 55:2-5) |
| ___ ___ Drawn to Danger | Participation in “extreme sports”; disregard for those concerned by your dangerous pursuits (Luke 4:9-12) |

Step Three

Demolishing the Strongholds in Jesus' Name

So far, everything you've done in this workbook has helped you identify the demonic strongholds that have influenced and/or controlled you. Now it's time to become free!

Let's emphasize once again that all demonic forces **submit to the authority of the Name of Jesus**. Your eviction of their control, influences, arguments and pretensions is totally dependent on their submission to our Lord Jesus. The Name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ delivers you, not your own strength or some prayer technique.

REMEMBER

You are dealing with demonic spirits and fortresses that occupy your soul.

Don't delay in praying for your own deliverance. Keep going!

Demonic forces will do all they can to delay or stop their eviction. Your earnest follow-through is critical at this time!

1. A Witness Is Helpful But Not Necessary For Deliverance

Many have found it helpful to have a witness with them as they renounce the influence of the strongholds. A witness is beneficial, not because you need others to help you demolish the strongholds, but **to remind and encourage you** later when the demons try to convince you that nothing has changed in your life. The strongholds will no longer occupy your soul, but the spirits may whisper to you in "drive by's" to harass you with tempting thoughts. Evicted demonic spirits no longer have control or influence over you. However, they'd like to seduce you into letting them back in! As we'll discuss in Chapter 5, **After You've Demolished the Strongholds**, you need to be diligent in taking back that surrendered ground.

If you're married, it's helpful for your spouse to join you in prayerfully evicting the strongholds that affect you, your marriage and family. If you're not married, or if your spouse is unwilling to help you renounce the stronghold's influence, press on by yourself!

2. Your Repentance Is Essential In Renouncing Spiritual Strongholds

We realize that you may have identified several demonic strongholds in your soul. No matter how many you're about to demolish, remember this: **You are responsible for the sins you committed** while being influenced by the strongholds. Take ownership of your responsibility. You can't say, "The devil made me do it!"

Repentance is a critical part of our pilgrimage to salvation. Biblical repentance is far more than acknowledging that you've sinned by violating God's commands. **True repentance** flows from you taking full responsibility for the *hurt* and *harm* you have brought about in your fellowship with God. **True repentance** always demands a heart conviction that you both **turn away from** that sin (your violation of God's Word), **and** that you **turn to** God and discover that which His Word requires of you.

That's the vital message in this verse: *"I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must **turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus**"* (Acts 20:21; emphasis added). You need to purpose in your heart to leave those sins behind! *"**Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret**"* (2 Corinthians 7:10; emphasis added). Repentance calls for action.

If you don't recognize the hurt you've caused, you won't take heart-felt responsibility for it. And, if you don't seek God's way to fill in the ruts of your sinful actions, you'll return to the same sins *"like a dog to its vomit."* You'll fall prey to the same pattern of ungodly thoughts > ungodly emotions > ungodly actions > habitual action, which then becomes a controlling stronghold in your mind, will and emotions. Jesus warns what will happen if you are delivered from an evil spirit but *don't* fill in that sin area God's way:

*When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. **Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.** That is how it will be with this wicked generation* (Matthew 12:43-45; emphasis added).

Continue to stay immediately repentant throughout your life. A heart that is ready to repent is harder for demons to seduce. Be quick to confess your sin when you fail, and turn away from further tempting situations. Unrepentance will lead you back to stronghold development. How life-giving to hold on to this rich truth because of the shed blood of Jesus: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and **will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness**"* (1 John 1:9; emphasis added). So do as Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, *"Now go, and don't sin any more"* (John 8:11b).

3. Remember, You Have Divine Power In The Name Of Jesus

Each follower of Jesus has the power of the Holy Spirit to renounce spiritual strongholds with the authority of the Name of Jesus our Lord. We *"have divine power to demolish strongholds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). After you've examined the symptoms that identify the strongholds, **renounce each stronghold** by name. **Confess any sins** of which the Holy Spirit convicts you that you committed under that spirit's influence. **Pray, relying on the authority of the Name of the Lord Jesus and the power of His shed blood to demolish these strongholds.** As a reminder, read the following verses and consider the power and authority that Jesus has given His followers:

- *"He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have **authority to drive out demons**"* (Mark 3:14,15, emphasis added).
- *"They went out and preached that people should repent. They **drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them**"* (Mark 6:12,13, emphasis added).
- *"And these signs will accompany those who trust Me: **In my name they will drive out demons**"* (Mark 16:17, emphasis added).

- *“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘**Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.**’...’I have given you **authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you**” (Luke 10:17,19, emphasis added).*

4. Now, Go Demolish The Strongholds In The Name Of Jesus

Now go back, beginning with the stronghold of Deceit, and renounce in the Name of Jesus **each prevailing stronghold** — those you’ve numbered a symptom higher than 0. Let the symptoms also be a trigger to guide you in remembering the type of sins you may have committed under the stronghold’s influence.

Remember, you must repent of any sins as the Holy Spirit convicts you, purposing in your heart to not repeat them.

Don’t rush! Our loving Father is looking for you to be “squeaky clean” when you’re through, with all strongholds gone and all sins confessed and repented of.

If you’re unsure how to pray, you might consider something like this:

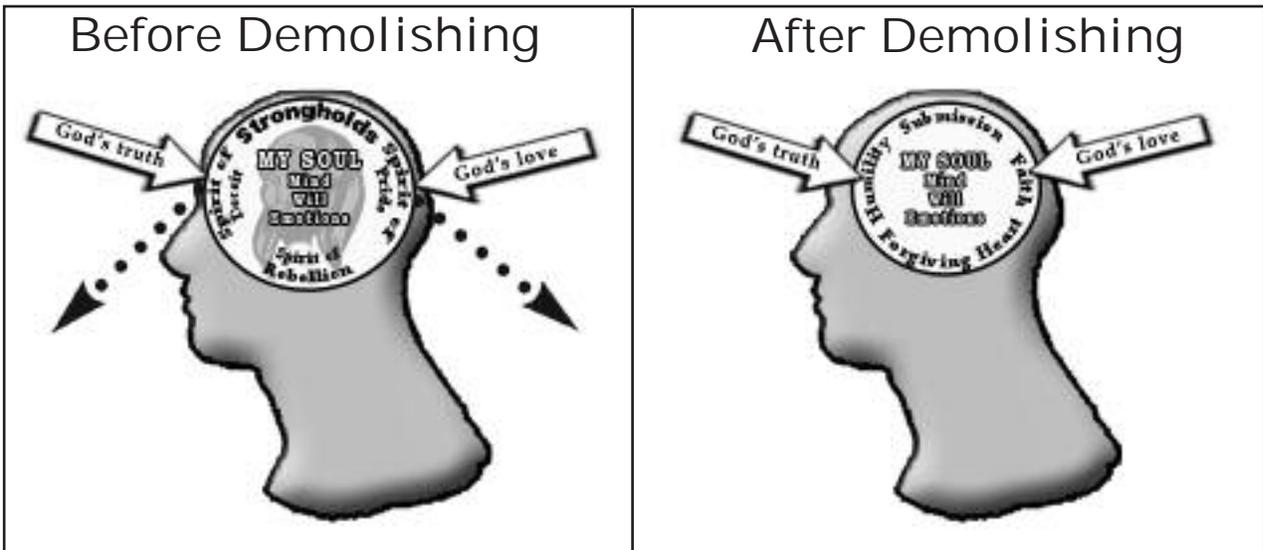
Father in heaven, I come before you in the Name of Jesus. I recognize the power You have given me by the shed blood of Jesus to demolish spiritual strongholds in my life. I confess that I have given a foothold to the sin(s) of _____ (list them)_____.

I renounce the stronghold of _____ by the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ according to Your Word.

I take back through Your power that ground that I surrendered to the enemy. I pray that You will fill me with trust-grounded obedience to Your Holy Spirit so that this area of my life will be in conformity to the image of Christ. Amen.

After You've Demolished The Strongholds

If you've renounced your spiritual strongholds through reliance on the authority of Jesus' Name and have fully repented of your sins, you're free! However, we want to warn you once more. Satan will try to convince you that **nothing has changed** in your mind, will and emotions. He'll try to deceive you that you're still a slave to those spirits. Remember: God's Word is true! **You have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and you will walk in freedom by the word of your testimony!**



How To Hold Onto Your Freedom

1. Make Every **Thought Obedient To Jesus**

• It's essential that you make a lifelong habit of **taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ** (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). Be alert! Don't let the destructive cycle of negative thoughts, emotions, actions, habits, and strongholds begin again in your soul. No one can take your thoughts captive for you. Consistently making your thought life obedient to Jesus will help you grow into His likeness.

Firmly implant this important truth:

“You cannot entertain thoughts Jesus would have and thoughts influenced by demons at the same time; the Lord and demons cannot occupy your soul together.

You will become like whoever you allow to influence your thoughts.”

Our Lord created the human brain with unique wiring. Recent studies have shown that the memory parts which the demonic strongholds once influenced still have negative *chemical attachments* called “toxic memories.” After the strongholds are demolished, the chemical composition of those memories must also be replaced if you’re to experience complete freedom.

Deliverance in the Name of Jesus rids you of the demons and their stronghold control. *But*, filling in the ruts of your old sinful attitudes and behaviors requires further intentional effort. You need to free these memories of their toxic chemicals so the Holy Spirit can have full reign in your mind, will and emotions.

All of your memories from birth onward are stored in your brain as either good or toxic, with specific chemicals attached to them. In brain scans, toxic memories actually appear as dark and thorny “branches”. They represent an accumulation of past unbiblical, un-Christlike responses to emotionally painful encounters with people or situations.

If the chemical attached to a *toxic memory* is bitter, insecure, rejection, or whatever, that will be your default response when similar negative thoughts enter your brain. If an incoming thought is not taken captive, it will seek out a *similar toxic memory* and form a thorny demonic stronghold around it, taking control of that area of your brain.

Look at the series of diagrams to the right.

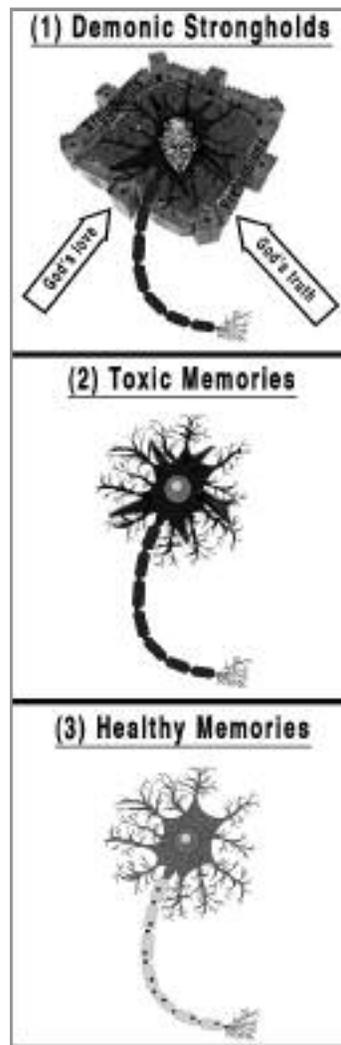
(1) *Demonic Strongholds*. This diagram reveals what happens within your brain when demonic strongholds are built around your toxic memories. The demons *block out* God’s truth and love in those areas of your mind. You’re not only held in bondage within a *demonic prison*, unable to experience God. You’re also held captive in a *chemical prison of toxicity* which influences your attitudes and behaviors long after the original painful experience created that hurtful memory.

(2) *Toxic Memories* form because the negative or painful thought was not taken captive as soon as it appeared. It became a dark and thorny toxic memory with a specific chemical attached.

(3) *Healthy Memories*. As toxic thoughts enter your brain, they’re captured and reflected on in light of the character of Jesus and the principles of God’s Word. The thought then becomes a healthy memory.

Healing Toxic Memories

Long after a negative situation causes a toxic memory to form, just recalling that particular event can release the same painful emotions in you all over again. In fact, any *new* encounter or situation might remind you of a memory in which something unChristlike was spoken or done. You need to confront each and every toxic memory as it surfaces so that you can deal with it according to the Holy Spirit at work in you. Your toxic memories won’t be changed all at once. But your trust that Jesus can and will heal you will motivate you with each negative memory to pray for whoever hurt you in your past. It’s when a toxic memory comes to your conscious mind



Mara could not believe that God would abandon her at her most desperate hour. For the whole fourteen years of her troubled marriage, hadn't she tried to be the perfect wife and mother? During her unhappy childhood Mara had vowed that she would never be like her own mother, who had browbeaten her husband and made Mara feel inadequate and worthless. Mara couldn't see that the more she focused on not being bitter like her mother, the more the bitterness in her manifested itself toward anyone who didn't meet her expectations. Unfortunately, her very busy husband most often fit that category. For years Mara had pursued a frantic search for peace and joy, overspending their budget and discarding hobbies and jobs repeatedly. The growing despair and captivity caused by her bitterness blinded her to the caring believers God continued to send her way. She could only view them with suspicion and distrust. Countless sessions of professional counseling had left her convinced that she was a perpetual victim, powerless and persecuted. Isolating herself from anyone who might help her, Mara challenged God to supernaturally change her husband and marriage. Refusing to appropriate God's grace and humbly ask

that you must exercise any *repentance* or *forgiveness* that is needed in the situation. Forgive that person from your heart (Matthew 6:14) and pray God's blessing on them (Luke 6:28). That's part of His healing process for you!

Cry out to the Spirit of Jesus within you to replace the toxic memory of that past encounter with something good and redemptive in your mind (see Philippians 4:8). He won't erase the memory, but He can *heal the pain* of it—changing the memory from toxic to healthy. And, you may find that the victory you now have over that once toxic memory is a source of hope and comfort to others as you bear witness. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.)

Quite often the people close to you can recognize a toxic memory surfacing in you before you're conscious of it. That particular memory has become part of your identity and history. Certain reactions and attitudes emerge when you're hounded by a toxic memory, and you may be unaware of them yourself. Don't resist someone who out of loving concern points out that you may be operating from a past negative memory. That pain has to be acknowledged and confronted if you're ever going to be healed by Jesus.

Remember, if you're to end lingering resentment toward others that is undermining present relationships, your original toxic memories must be acknowledged, repented of and forgiven. Then you need to replace them with good memories through prayerfully and purposely establishing thoughts that align with the character of Jesus.

2. Study God's Word For Application

- It's critical from this day on that you **apply the Bible to all areas of your life**. The earliest followers of Jesus didn't just study the Bible; they sought to **live it out**. They recognized that their life journey was **the way** that Jesus, "the Way", had taught and modeled for them. This is why in the Book of Acts the early Christians were known as "the Way": "*However, I admit that I worship the **God of our fathers** as a follower of **the Way**, which they call a sect. I believe everything that **agrees with the Law** and that is **written in the Prophets***" (Acts 24:14, emphasis added). This use of the term "the way" has a very distinct Hebraic impact on lifestyle known as *halakhah*. The root word, *halak*, means "to walk." Thus, *halakhahs* refer to **walking out your life in a way that coincides with God's Word** — your pattern of life choices based on your obedient trust.

Halakhahs aren't intended to be a mere code of rules to delineate behavior for each life situation you encounter. The aim of *halakhahs* is an expression of your yearning for a dynamic love relationship with God: "*The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love*" (Psalm 147:11). The Hebrew people recognized this relational aspect. Unlike pagan religions, the God of the Hebrews was **approachable**. A major purpose of *halakhahs* binds a believer to God through love that's

seen in his or her obedience to God's ways: *"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:22).

As you and your family confront daily decisions, you can establish your own *halakhahs* by prayerfully searching God's Word to find **His** perspective on your situation — and then **apply it**. [For more on this topic, download a free copy of our book, ***Christian Halakhahs***, from our website.]

3. Put On Your Spiritual Armor

- Choose to clothe yourself with the **spiritual armor** that God has given His people through His Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18): the **belt of truth** — trust in the Lord Jesus, Who declared Himself to be the Truth; the **breastplate of righteousness** — assurance that the blood of Christ enables you to stand righteous before our Father; feet fitted with **readiness from the gospel of peace** — prepared for His service because **He** is sanctifying you through and through; the **shield of faith** — which by God's power extinguishes the enemy's darts; the **helmet of salvation** — which focuses your mind on **eternity with God** and guards against further enemy intrusion; the **sword of the Spirit** — which we wield as we immerse ourselves in His Word; and **prayer in the Spirit** — that we may be alert and available at all times for communion with God.

4. Ask Others To Help You Meet Your Seven Needs

- **Seek help** from your spouse, family, or other believers with whom you have a close relationship. In Chapter 4 we mentioned the ruts of sinful behavior that strongholds have dug in your life. This is the time for others to help you fill in those ruts with righteous patterns. One of Mike's symptoms under the influence of the stronghold of rejection was "Seeks Acceptance." People thought he was a nice guy because of the things he did for them. Far from it! All his kindnesses were designed to forestall being rejected. With Sue's help and that of our home fellowship, he was able to stop acting from a wrong motive. Through their coming alongside with love that was willing to confront, his dignity grew. He was finally able to show kindness to others because it was the **right thing to do**, not because he feared rejection.

God will use those close to you to help you discern the means He has provided for you to **meet your seven needs**. Otherwise, you may seek a carnal way to meet these needs and provide a foothold for strongholds to return.

We encourage you to study further the Hebraic relational priorities we discussed in the beginning of this workbook. Download our Hebraic article, ***The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***. Prayerfully go

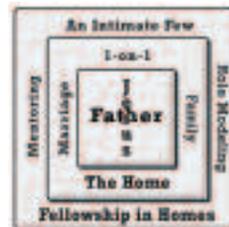
her parents' forgiveness for her years of bitterness toward them, hopelessness and heaviness engulfed her. Mara was herself a prisoner of that demonic spirit.

“I’ve been one lucky guy,” Cal thought. Ever since he could remember, he’d wanted to fly. Now he was an airline pilot with a beautiful wife, comfortable home, smart kids. He was recognized in his community as a man of high moral fiber, active in influential civic groups. So what were these divorce papers he was holding in his shaking hand? What had happened to his orderly, orchestrated little world? Sure, over the years Sara had dragged him to various counseling sessions, hoping that somehow they could develop warm and meaningful communication in their strained relationship, but what did those counselors know, he thought. Anger and frustration burned in him. He reluctantly called a friend, who listened sympathetically and then recommended that he call us. Cal was a charming, likable guy, but he expected life to operate from his point of view. As Mike probed around a little, we discovered a man who had made it on his own, a man almost oblivious to the needs of others. Sue walked into the room as we were talking, and Mike asked Cal to repeat a point he had been making about his wife. Sue countered, “I don’t think any woman would respond positively to what you just said.” Cal had never paid much attention to female perspectives, and he fired question after question at Sue, who unveiled to him a totally new approach to his

through this so you can better understand how to live your journey to salvation in ways that glorify our Father.

Discern and apply that which our Father requires of you in your own home. Remember, **your home** is the best place to experience relational intimacy. It’s also the primary place for spiritual development for you and your family.

Extended spiritual family who meet together in each other’s homes is the Hebraic model in the Bible. They’ll help you live in righteousness and not let you drift back into sin and strongholds. As long as these seven needs are *not* met God’s way, you’ll be increasingly vulnerable to further satanic temptation in these areas.



5. Review the Stronghold List Periodically

- Any time you aren’t experiencing intimacy in your relationship with God, or you’re facing habitual struggles in some area of your life, go back over the list of strongholds and the accompanying symptoms. Check if any **habitual patterns** of unrighteous attitudes or actions are returning.

This last recommendation has been one of the hardest for people to do. Often they’ll have a fear of revisiting the stronghold sheet because of what they might find. But God isn’t exposing these strongholds to condemn you. He’s seeking you out so that you will **confess your sins and turn away from them**. Through His forgiveness and cleansing, your **fellowship with Him** will once again be restored (see 1 John 1:9). Only in fellowship with your Father in Jesus can you ever bring Him glory and serve His purposes for your life.

A Reminder: Members of the body of Christ can be used by God to meet your seven needs in ways that He intended. Until you meet your needs within the will of God, the potential for strongholds to form again is very great.

6. Learn to Biblically Confront Others

- Remember that many of your close relationships — your family and faith community — are influenced by the same prevalent strongholds that once held you captive. These spirits’ influence will try to trap you into despising those who are still imprisoned. People who are still captive to strongholds will tend to steer you toward bitterness and resentment, especially toward your family members.

Fight this trap by taking your thoughts captive, as we mentioned earlier. Also, learn how to confront the captives effectively with a Christ-like attitude. [We encourage you to download for free our book, **Growing Relationships**

Through Confrontation. We discuss biblical ways of confronting people redemptively.]

7. Re-align How You Relate To Others

• Earlier we wrote that while you were under the influence of strongholds, your relationships were established on the foundation of your soul and body. Now you need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and ask Him to help you relate righteously to everyone close to you. Re-aligning relationships will also involve your relationship with your Father and His Son, Jesus. Continually ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your love and obedient trust as a lifestyle.

Relationships **With** Strongholds

First: Soul

Second: Body

Third: Spirit

Relationships **Without** Strongholds

First: Spirit

Second: Soul

Third: Body

8. Free To Serve God and Help Others Find Freedom

• The freedom you've received in Jesus must be taken to others. You need to take responsibility to help those in your family, faith community, workplace and neighborhood. That's why you've been set free — to serve our Father's purposes with His compassion and power! *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows"* (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

As you help others, it will be more difficult for demonic forces to ensnare you. Even now you can make copies of pages 36 to 65 and share them with your family and relatives. They're probably not familiar with generational strongholds, so you can offer them insight into the demonic forces that have hurt and hindered their lives by sharing the results of your own survey.

Find out other ways you can serve the interests of Jesus. We suggest you download for free our book, **God's Instruments For War**. Learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit among your fellowship family to bring praise and glory to our Father. This book will help you discern your own spiritual empowerments so that you will know how God wants to use you. As the apostle Peter exhorts, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (1 Peter 4:10). Those who serve God's purposes **together** walk in a spiritual power that gets noticed by unbelievers!

Don't be afraid to go back and Demolish Strongholds whenever anything is blocking the Truth and Love of Jesus in your life.

wife. He was astonished, yet intrigued. Since his awkward flight schedule could be hindering his marriage, we confronted Cal with a proposition: Call both his father and father-in-law for discernment and ask them if his flying was contributing to his wife's unhappiness. Cal sank low in his chair. He truly loved his wife, but flying had been his passion. To his immense relief, both men reassured him that his problem lay not with his flight schedule but with the multitude of other activities he was immersed in when he was home. Sara and the children had felt neglected and unimportant to him. Cal began to see how his self-centered insensitivity to his wife had dammed up any hope in her for their marriage. When he repented of his self-righteous attitudes and hurtful disregard of his family, Cal was able to renounce the strongholds of pride and rebellion that had so closed his spirit to the promptings of God's Spirit. Cal then began a process of wooing back his wife, exposing to her a humble vulnerability that she had never before seen in him. He marveled at the depth of his wife's comments and conversation; he had previously never taken the time to explore her unique capabilities. Even the children rejoiced in the change in their dad. A new gentleness and warmth permeated their home. Cal and Sara were prepared to help other troubled couples in their church.

“What a pleasant neighborhood,” Sue remarked as we drove to our dinner engagement. We took in the tidy lawns, modest but neat homes, and paraphernalia of youth: bikes, basketball hoops, swings. We had been invited by Jim and Gina, whom we had met briefly before. As soon as we entered their sunny home, Gina began a litany of apologies: “I’m so embarrassed to have people in. All our friends have such beautiful homes decorated by professionals, and this place needs so much work.”

Actually, we thought it was very comfortable, and we were surprised by her discomfort. As our relationship with Jim and Gina continued, we noted that envy and coveting had become almost an obsession for Gina. How others dressed, where they shopped, even what kind of car they drove meant a great deal to her. Her frustration at being a “have-not” was straining her relationship with her husband. His business had been slipping financially, and rather than emotionally supporting him during this trying time, Gina was nagging him for more funds. Soon all their conversations as a couple deteriorated into squabbles over money. Sue could see the tension in Gina, and gently asked to go over the

9. Take Back Surrendered Ground

- Jesus Christ is the personification of God’s character — His wisdom, understanding, and counsel. As such, He desires His people to **experience Him** completely. His love, His truth, and the fruit of that love and truth in your life are glorious! But He also yearns for you to **appropriate His character**. When you live under the influence of strongholds, the visible evidence of Christ in you is blocked by these spirits. When the strongholds have been demolished, you can **pray in agreement** with the Holy Spirit for God to produce His spiritual truths in you. Through His grace you can reclaim the previously surrendered ground of your soul.

REMEMBER: The spirits dwelling in their strongholds strongly impacted certain areas of your mind, will, and emotions. Again, those areas of your life that you **surrendered to sin** were the fertile ground for demonic spirits to influence your thoughts, feelings and decisions. As your thoughts were distorted by those spirits, they were able to construct a fortress around that area of your soul. The truths of God did not penetrate the barrier that your sinful choices have allowed to stand. When the influence of the spirits in these strongholds has been renounced by the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re able to discern the truths that God wants to reveal to you. The strongholds that were in your soul can now be replaced by the truth and love that He’s wanted to fill you with all along!

Instructions

Meditate on the following verses, **inserting your name** into each verse to personalize the truths in it. Pray for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's prompting as He reveals ways in which to **apply** the spiritual truth He wishes to develop in you. Some have found it helpful to use the paragraph beneath the verses as a prayer guide.

Stronghold	Spiritual Truth
DECEIT	SPIRIT OF TRUTH

“Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’” (John 8:31,32). “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:10-12).

Because Satan is a liar and the father of lies, he has at his disposal many devious means of infiltrating the pure truth of the Gospel. Paul warned Timothy to **stay away** from those who engage in godless chatter or quarreling about spiritual topics. Recognize that some elements of falsehood may indeed have penetrated your mind, will, and emotions. Heed Paul's admonition to Timothy, appropriating its truths by the Spirit: *“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).* Choose companions whose hearts are also set on loving obedience to God.

Stronghold	Spiritual Truth
BITTERNESS	FORGIVING HEART

“If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14,15). “[Love] keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5). “And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your offenses” (Mark 11:25).

Ask God to fill you with the sacrificial love that He demonstrated by sending His Son to lay down His life for you. **Pray God's blessing for those who have mistreated you**, remembering that the only One Who can handle vengeance without sinning is God. If you are to walk in the steps of Jesus (see 1 Peter 2:21), if you want to call your Heavenly Father *“Abba”* (see Romans 8:15-17),

strongholds material with her. Gina immediately pointed out idolatry. She could see that she had spent the entire twenty years of her marriage living a lie: pretending that they were better off than they were and maintaining an image of peace and prosperity that was far from reality. Even her walk with God had been stunted as she focused more on what others were doing in her church than on intimacy with Him and gratefulness to Him. She cried out to God, repenting of all the ways idolatry had separated her from her relationship with Him and with others. She renounced the demonic influence of the stronghold, asking God to fill her spirit with a desire to know Him more. We encouraged her to immerse herself in His Word and pray for a renewed wonder to appreciate His love and sacrifice on her behalf. She asked God to release in her a gratefulness for all He had done in her and for her. Subsequent weeks found a new peace in her home. Their financial crisis passed, and contentment replaced the greed that had so imprisoned her. Her neighbors became a source of joy to her as she deepened her relationships there and began to reflect Christ's love to them.

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

CONFUSION **FAITH**
(DOUBT AND UNBELIEF)

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (Isaiah 40:28,29). “To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:1-3).

Meditate on the above verses, focusing on the **righteousness of Christ** and **His divine power**. God Who is your Creator knows your every fiber. He understands when you’re weary and weak. He is the One Who sustains you when you feel lost and downcast. Reclaim that ground the enemy built upon by praying for *“the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better”* (Ephesians 1:17). Earnestly **seek Him** in the Word and prayer. Be encouraged by the lives He continues to change around you. He keeps His promises, so fix your hope on His faithfulness. **Meditate** on the faith of your spiritual forefathers in Hebrews 11. **Pray** often throughout the day to walk in His will so you can fulfill the **life and godliness** He has given you in Jesus.

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

REJECTION **ACCEPTANCE**

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5). “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

How could you be any more acceptable to our Father, Who has declared you to be **His own treasure**, empowered by His Spirit to declare His praise! Praise God for this irrevocable truth. He has **great and mighty plans and purposes for your life**. His command to His people Israel apply to you as well: *“To love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul”* (Joshua 22:5). Pray that His Spirit reveal the **specific means** for you to enact these commands, step by step, and to fill you with joy as you realize how precious you are to Him. You have been purchased by His Son’s blood and are His very own! Trust only the voice of the Holy Spirit Who reaffirms His faithfulness as you walk in love-grounded obedient trust.

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

PRIDE HUMILITY

“Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:5,6). “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Always remember to thank God for the grace that He has promised to you as you **humble yourself** before His Lordship! See yourself as a **servant to others**, as though you were serving Christ Himself. Be sure that your heart attitude is **pure**. If ulterior motives for personal gain or recognition are there, repent and appropriate God’s forgiveness and cleansing (see 1 John 1:9). Pray that God will provide **opportunities for spiritual fruit** — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control — to be manifested as you put others ahead of yourself.

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

RELIGIOSITY LOVE AND PEACE

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live’” (Luke 10:27,28). “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it’” (Isaiah 30:15). “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalms 46:10).

Set aside for yourself a **sabbatical** from church-related activities. Spend time quietly before God, asking Him to reveal to you the amazing facets of Who He is. Ponder in the Word the different **names of God** and their implications for your life, e.g., the Prince of Peace, the Alpha and the Omega. Allow the Spirit to well up within you a heart of praise for God. Ask Him to open your eyes to opportunities to serve Him by serving others **only as He reveals them**. Resist attempts by well-meaning friends to get you back into the “old groove” unless God makes it clear that He is the one opening each door. **Be accountable** to your spouse or intimate circle of friends to move at the impulse of His love, not out of guilt or performance motivation. Remember, our Lord has called you into a covenant relationship of love like that of marriage. Don’t let busyness rob you of intimacy with Jesus!

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

INDEPENDENCE UNITY AND COMMITMENT
AND DIVORCE

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

REBELLION FEAR OF THE LORD

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29).
“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them” (Psalm 145:18-19).*

Pray that the Holy Spirit will restore in you an **awesome respect** for God’s power and Person: God is *“the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God”* (see 1 Timothy 1:17). Ask that the blind area of your mind that has rebelled as Satan did to *“be like God”* (see Genesis 3:5) would instead *“see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). **Stand firm** in recognizing the tempter’s wiles to lure you away from the awe and reverence due our holy God. Search the Scriptures daily to reinforce a constant grateful awareness of **Who He is** and who you are. Don’t be swayed by current teachings that He disregards the sin of His people because “they’re already forgiven.” Instead, humbly love Him as your Redeemer and the King of the universe, and live according to His standards and ways.

Stronghold

Spiritual Truth

FEAR AND INSECURITY COURAGE, FAITH, AND TRUST

*“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man” (Psalm 118:6-8). “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).
“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).*

The devil attempts to block your absolute trust and faith in the Lordship of Christ in your life. His weapon of deceit tries to make you feel as if all responsibilities and decisions rest on you alone. Prayerfully relinquish all goals, activities and outcomes into God’s hands. His goals for you are love-grounded **joyful obedience** to Him and the **development of Christ-likeness** as you interact with others. Begin to perceive the people He has placed in your life as **instruments of refinement** for your character. Pray that God will develop spiritual fruit in you as you choose to value individuals more highly than the tasks you hope to accomplish. Pray for the Holy Spirit to breathe into you an overwhelming sense of “holy boldness” for the sake of Jesus. Then you can take your eyes off your perceived inadequacies and focus on being a **faithful servant** of God. Cast all your worries and anxieties on your Father, firmly trusting that He cares for you (see 1 Peter 5:7). And if you suffer for doing what is right, be assured that the “Spirit of glory” will rest on you as you identify with Jesus in His sufferings.

Conclusion

We would like to leave you with a poem given to us by our dear friend and spiritual father, Frank Murray, at a very difficult time in our walk with Jesus. We pray that its thought and meaning bless you as it has blessed us.

STEP BY STEP

“As thou goest, step by step I will open the way before thee”
(Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

Our Lord gives His children only one step of guidance at a time. If you're looking for the whole plan to be laid out for you, stop. It will never be given to you! And your frustration will make you vulnerable to the return of demonic spirits. One step is far enough for anyone's faith to see. Take that step before you seek the next step on the journey. And may God deliver you from all your strongholds and fill you with the truth of His Spirit!

Are You Experiencing the Freedom Jesus Promises?

Do any of these attitudes and emotions habitually plague your life?

- Insecurity • Worry • Despair
- Bitterness • Anger • Self-pity
- Lust • Pride • Rejection



Demolishing Strongholds is a life-changing workbook that will equip you to rid your soul of demonic spiritual influences. These strongholds hinder your relationship with God and with your family, friends and co-workers. But you can experience the freedom promised you through the Lord Jesus! You'll be shown how to demolish demonic fortresses that have been passed along within families from generation to generation.

A demonic stronghold acts like a prison, keeping you from experiencing freedom in your soul. Stronghold spirits habitually influence you into thoughts and actions that are contrary to the will of God.

When your strongholds are demolished, your seven God-given needs can be met as He has always desired for you. And, you can experience your Father's love in a way you've never known before!

Use this workbook on your own – or go through it with your family or members of your faith community. Your life will never be the same again!

We suggest you use this workbook along with the Demolishing Strongholds Video.

ISBN 1-890592-09-9

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