

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

24. Have Your Behaviors And Attitudes Become Christ-like?

*"SET THEM FREE FROM THE EMOTIONAL PRISON THE DEMONS
HAVE PUT THEM IN SO THAT THEY MAY GLADLY
PRAISE MY NAME AND BECOME LIKE ME."*

The evening air resonated with deep voices as the seven men on Jack's back deck filled each other in on how they'd seen God at work in their fellowship families during the past couple weeks. After a brief time of prayer welcoming the Spirit of Christ to guide their discussion, an older member of their group spoke up. "I sure enjoy these bi-monthly gatherings!" Other heads bobbed in agreement.

"I do to, Bill," Jack agreed as he looked around at the six shepherds of the fellowship family groups he and Dee had started over the years. "I'm sure our wives feel the same as they're encouraging and exhorting each other inside the house."

The men and women met separately the first part of these gatherings so that information and direction specific to their gender could readily be shared. Then they'd all come together for a time of worship and prayer. Jack and Dee also met individually with these elder/shepherds and their wives as specific needs arose.

Ted, who was shepherding the most recent fellowship family Jack had established before the one he and Dee were raising up now, voiced earnestly, "I think these meetings and being able to call each other when we need to have helped Lauren and me not feel alone as we're learning to serve our extended spiritual family."

"I'm glad each of you is willing to take the time on behalf of each other. I think we all appreciate each other's insights." Jack paused a moment as his voice took a more serious tone. "Tonight I'd like to discuss the threat of complacency that's paralyzing some in our fellowship families. Tom called me a few days ago with what the Holy Spirit had prophetically given him about this."^(1Corinthians 14:1) Turning to the lean, gray-haired man next to him he urged, "Tom, why don't you share the prophetic insight you received and let us test this in our spirits."^(1Thessalonians 5:19-21)

Tom took a moment to look at each of his brother shepherds, then spoke with a tone of deep concern. "At our last get together two weeks ago Jack mentioned his unrest about how complacent a number of people in our fellowship families were." The others nodded, encouraging him to continue. "I began to seek our Lord for His guidance, and recently one morning He awoke me early. The Spirit of Christ pointed out that while we've helped our flocks become free of strongholds, we haven't been diligent enough to help them fill in the old behaviors and attitudes the demons had fostered in their souls. Even though the demons are gone, the people are still living captive to their old demonically inspired motives."^(2 Timothy 2:26)

A portly man across from Tom piped up, "My spirit bears witness to what you've said! As you spoke, the Spirit revealed to me that as long as these unChrist-like behaviors and attitudes remain in someone's soul, they can't have the mind of Christ. The character and the love of Jesus will elude them."^(1Corinthians 2:16)

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“Ken, that agrees with what the Lord gave me,” Tom continued. “Until these demon-inspired behaviors and attitudes are filled in by Christ-like ones, our faith families are still living with unrighteousness.” The others were fully attentive. “The Spirit of Lord impressed on me that we need to make sure each member of our flock willingly makes known their old ruts and asks the others in their faith family to help fill them in with God’s ways.”(1Thessalonians 5:11)

Bob, one of the more senior elders, jumped in, “It sounds like the same deliberate-ness God wanted the Israelites to have before Passover in removing the yeast from their homes and putting blood on their doorposts.”(Exodus 12:7,19)

“I believe that’s exactly the purposeful intentionality our Lord wants us to have in dealing with unrighteousness among our families,” Jack affirmed. “In fact, I believe that *not* confronting unrighteousness is why our brothers and sisters lack the holy boldness they need to be making disciples(Proverbs 28:1) or to be living as our Father’s ambassadors.(2Corinthians 5:20)

José said quickly, “Tom, I’m affirming as well that your prophetic insight is of our Lord. These unrighteous ruts of old ways of acting are what keep the people in our extended spiritual family from even wanting to make contact with each other during the week. You know, to “one-another” as the Bible calls for.” He sighed and shook his head sadly. “Some of the folks in our fellowship family are clamoring for a Bible study, but they aren’t willing to fulfill our Lord’s purpose for them in the Kingdom. It seems like they’re the very ones who say they don’t have time to get into His Word themselves and *live it*; they just want someone else to spoonfeed them.”(Hebrews 5:12-14)

As the others cited various signs of complacency in their own fellowship families, somberness fell on them. The weight of the seduction of unclean spirits still committing “spiritual adultery” in their midst brought home the seriousness of their role as shepherd/elders.

Bill broke the silence with a word from the Spirit. “Years ago I read a book entitled *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. The opening chapters explain the relationship between God and the Israelites, through whom He’d chosen to reveal Himself to the world.”(Deuteronomy 4:6) He paused for a moment. “But instead of reaching the world for the One True God, the Israelites became smug. Now I can see why, since Jesus censured the Israelites of His day that their father was the devil!(John 8:44) That’s why His ministry included freeing people from the influence of the very demonic spirits that kept them in bondage.”(Matthew 10:1; Mark 1:39)

“You’re on the right track,” Jack noted, encouraging Bill to continue. Bill was eager to connect some historical dots. “God has grafted us Gentile followers of Jesus into Israel to tell the world about Him.(Romans 11:25) Yet Hellenism introduced doubt about the devil’s reality and his influence in a person’s soul. And modern science relies on things which must be *seen* to be proved—though I can’t say I’ve actually *seen* gravity!”

Several chuckled as Bill went on. “Throughout history Christianity has failed to carry out our Lord’s mandate to ‘*go and make disciples*’.(Matthew 28:18-20) In Europe, many heathens became Christians not because of the efforts of the Father’s children but rather when the heathens captured and enslaved Christian nations.”(Nehemiah 9:30) He found no argument there. “The book concluded that whenever the followers of Christ fail to be His ambassadors, *He* subjugates them to oppression just as we see in the Older

Testament with Israel and her enemies. Can it be that at both a personal and national level, this is what's happening in the United States now?"(Isaiah 3:5,12)

"I couldn't have asked for a better lead-in to the point I want to share with you men," Jack grinned. "After Tom shared his prophecy with me about complacency, I found a new article Restoration Ministries put on their website entitled *Demolishing Your Strongholds*. It's a shorter version of their workbook. As Dee and I read it, we saw that it totally agreed with Tom's prophecy."

One of the other men announced sheepishly, "I need to confess that Lea and I seem to have to fight our way through a fog of complacency at times."

Jack nodded at him as he handed a copy of *Demolishing Your Strongholds* to each man, telling them he'd had 100 copies printed up as part of his new purpose. "For too long we've misunderstood the difficulties our extended spiritual families are encountering. For instance, when we see emotional hurt, we've often counseled them trying to help them feel better. But it never occurred to Dee and me until we heard Tom's prophecy and read this article that our Father is letting them undergo these emotional problems specifically so they'll earnestly seek to be *free to serve Him!*"

"I see what you're saying, Jack," interjected Bill. "Too often people just want to get out of their problems and feel better. So maybe our Lord is doing this on a national and global level with the recession, the oil spill in the Gulf, and even Muslims building mosques in this country. He's trying to get people's attention through the apprehension and discomfort they're experiencing!"(Isaiah 42:23,24)

By the way the men looked at each other, Jack could tell they understood. After a moment Ted broke in quietly. "On a personal level, my wife and I have demolished our strongholds and we're really glad we're experiencing a certain amount of freedom from emotional oppression. But, something still seems missing."

"That's my point, Ted," Jack answered. "Please turn to the bottom of the last page with me and let me read what the authors cite as indicators that a person is really free. And listen to this in light of Tom's prophecy:

You'll know you're really free and have made it tough for the spirits to return when:

- all your strongholds are demolished
- your seven needs are being met God's way
- your old ruts of behavior and attitudes are being filled in with Christ-like character
- you have compassion for your family and close friends still enslaved to demonic strongholds.

You're eager to *help them become free*—even the people who have hurt you.

As the men looked back and forth at each other, Jack could tell that some of them had never become fully free themselves. José was the first to confess, "I want to let you know that after demolishing the strongholds, Sharee and I stopped there. We're still suffering in the old ruts of how we think and what we do! And we've done absolutely NOTHING to reach out to our family members or others to help them get free."

An ache pained the hearts of each of the men Jack had disciplined to elder their family flocks. "I can see by the hurt in your faces you men want to change," he assured them. "Dee and I are convinced that this article has helped us identify the cause of the complacency in the faith families who *aren't* being our Father's instruments of reconciling people to Him and helping them achieve the freedom Jesus promises."(Luke 4:18) Eager eyes urged him to continue. "It's because we shepherds need to be adamant

in ensuring that not only our own families are free, but also that each person in our flock has their seven, God-given needs met. We also need to help them fill in their old ruts of behavior and attitude with Christ's character, so they can be filled with compassion for those who are still imprisoned in darkness."

Bill's voice quavered. "I think that's where we've each failed our flock. We need to be unwavering both within our homes and with our flocks that we're all free—NO ONE'S FREE UNTIL WE'RE ALL FREE!" The others chuckled at his zeal, but agreed that they too needed to be determined about this.

"I suggest each of you download and print multiple copies of *Demolishing Your Strongholds* for two purposes," Jack encouraged them. "First, give a copy to each person in your fellowship family. Have each one make sure their strongholds are gone. Then ask them to share with your fellowship the more dominant symptoms they had. Keep with this until you've all helped each other become free."

The others sensed the wisdom in Jack's words. He went on, "Let compassion for their family and close friends and the desire to see them set free be a sign that everyone in your flock is free. In other words, keep working with them until each person is lovingly reaching out to others so that they can be free too." (Galatians 5:13)

"I think I'm speaking for all of us," Ted chimed in. "We're determined to follow through because people's freedom in Christ depends on it."

Jack smiled. "I'm reminded of Juan, a soldier in our fellowship. He was wounded in Afghanistan a while back and sent home to recover. Yet, the whole time he was recovering he knew the goal was to return to war. This is what we need to do," he added pointedly, "to help our fellowship families experience freedom from demonically-inspired motives and attitudes and get them on the front lines to represent our Father's concerns."

José added eagerly, "I can see now that freedom produces the love Jesus calls for in His followers. And, His purpose for love is to create something new, like the union in marriage produces children. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Out of the love that's replaced our old attitudes and behaviors, we yearn to be our Father's ambassadors!" He then turned to Jack. "You said there are *two* reasons for using *Demolishing Your Strongholds*."

Jack leaned forward. "Begin using copies of *Demolishing Your Strongholds* as a tool for evangelism. Encourage your faith family to start listening up for symptoms of strongholds in people they have contact with each day. I want them to have the courage to hand out a copy to the oppressed people they encounter. And ask them to put their phone number on it so they can follow up if needed."

Zeal filled every man. In their spirit they knew this was of the Lord. "For too long Christianity has tried to get people 'saved,'" Jack concluded, "only to see them plagued by demonic strongholds in their soul—especially the stronghold of deceit that convinces them they're okay with God no matter how they live. But we're going to do what Jesus and the early disciples did—free people from demonic oppression and the ruts the devil caused them to live in. Then we'll give them *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation* so they can live in union with our Father. How does this sound to you guys?"

Eager hearts voiced commitment to not only helping their flocks be truly free, but also to use this tool to reach the lost.

[You may download a copy of *Demolishing Your Strongholds* by putting the link below into your browser: <http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/hebraicArticles/DemolishingYourStrongholds.pdf>].

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