**Sin-based Strongholds**

**Handout**

There are three basic kinds of strongholds: those that are **sin-based**, those that are **demonic**, and those that are **lie-based**. Today we will be talking about sin-based strongholds. Let me point out from the beginning that most of the strongholds that we struggle with are a combination of all three basic kinds of strongholds. However, it is easier to talk about them one at a time. Later, we will gain some practical experience in discerning and dealing with the overlapping mixture of strongholds we usually find in people’s lives. Tonight we will be focused on sin-based strongholds. Lie-based and demonic strongholds will be the subjects of later sessions.

I. There are 3 basic kinds of sin-based strongholds. **I John 2:15-16.** These are illuminated by the example of Eve in **Genesis 3:6.** The example of Jesus given in **Luke 4:1-13** shows us the godly way to respond to temptation.

 A. Lust of the eyes: greed, jealousy, envy, covetousness, materialism, ambition

 Lust of the flesh: sensuality, immorality, gluttony, drunkenness, eating disorders, frigidity, homosexuality, promiscuity

 Boastful pride of life: bitterness, rebellion, ungodly ambition, competitive spirit, arrogance, selfishness, stubbornness, critical spirit, harsh judgment

B. When Christians do not submit to God (when they sin and refuse to repent, when they fail to forgive others who hurt or offend them, when they persist in known sin, when they dabble in the occult) then they surrender ground in their soul to Satan and Satan begins to build a fortress on that surrendered ground. If we persist in sin, a stronghold belonging to the enemy, erected in our soul, will develop. All three kinds of sin-based strongholds are built on ground in a person’s soul that has been surrendered to the enemy through persistent sin, usually in at least one of these two areas:

1. Involvement with cults, occultic activities, witchcraft, tarot cards, ouija boards, eight balls, fortune telling, horoscopes, séances, New Age religion, crystals, transcendental meditation, yoga, hypnotism, eastern mysticism or other false religions

 **a.** ***Ephesians 6:11-17***

 **b**. “whatever you play with will play with you.”

**c**. We are protected by the armor of God when we minister to people or do battle against the enemy, but you take off your protective armor is you to dabble in what God forbids.

**2**. Unforgiveness. Unforgiveness almost always plays a significant part in the development of a stronghold in someone’s life. Repentance for the unforgiveness and forgiving the person who offended is necessary for the stronghold to be destroyed and for freedom to be achieved and to last. Even when there has been involvement in cultic or occultic activity, there is usually an underlying groundwork of unforgiveness wherever a stronghold appears, **Matthew 18:21-35.**

a. This servant was full of pride, arrogance and ingratitude (the boastful pride of life) as well as greed (the lust of the eyes). This caused him not to forgive the debt of another even when his own debt had been forgiven.

b. The scripture tells us that because of his unforgiveness, his master cast him into prison (a stronghold) and turned him over to “torturers” who would torment him until he repaid his debt.

c. The scripture further tells us that God, “My heavenly Father” will do the same to us if we do not forgive our brother from our heart.

 i. God will allow us to be locked in a stronghold.

 ii. God will turn us over to torturers.

iv. God’s purpose in this is that we should repent and forgive.

v. God’s response is triggered by our arrogant refusal to forgive those who wrong us when we ourselves have been forgiven so much by God Himself.

vi. God hates unforgiveness in the hearts of His people.

 d. **Matthew 6:14-15**

 e. **Mark 11:23-25**

f. **John 20:22-23**

 **3.** What does it mean to be “handed over to torturers?

a. Torturers = Greek word *bas-an-is-TACE* = to vex, to torture; one who applies torture, an inquisitor; a prison keeper, jailor, tyrant who inflicts pain and torment. It is used in the New Testament to describe the effect of the smoke from the fires of hell (Rev.18:7, 10, 15), the ravages of disease (Matt. 8:6), the effect of the wrath of God (Matt. 8:29, Mark 5:7, Luke 8:28, Rev 11: 6 & 10, 14: 10, 20:10).

b. In this passage of scripture, it means that Satan has built a fortress on the ground of unforgiveness in someone’s soul and he has invited his friends in to share in tormenting them.

i. The unforgiving person is tormented by these demonic powers. The symptoms may or may not appear symptomatic of the unforgiveness that allowed it in the first place.

ii. These torments are usually the things that drive people to seek relief through counseling, deliverance, or healing ministry. But unless the root problem of unforgiveness is dealt with the person will get no PERMANENT solution to their problem.

iii. Some examples of torturers are irrational fear, nagging doubt, regular sleeplessness, uncontrollable anger, habitual lust, sexual addictions, pornography, anxiety attacks, depression, persistent discouragement and fear, pervading sense of shame, self-rejection, perversion, rejection and insecurity, self-pity, paranoia, compulsive behavior, eating disorders, sense of hopelessness and despair, constant sense of condemnation, excessive busyness. This is not an exhaustive list!

**A Strategy for Pulling Down Sin-Based Strongholds**

These may or may not follow the chronological order given. Follow the Holy Spirit as He brings things to mind and don’t get in a hurry. These may even take place over several days’ time so it’s a good idea to have paper and pencil in your pocket when you are seeking God about being set free. Don’t let yourself become frustrated and impatient if it doesn’t happen all at once. Wait on the Holy Spirit and find time to sit before Him and listen.

1. Where there is a persistent problem with a specific sin, ask God to show you when the sin first began. Ask Him to bring to your remembrance the first time you gave place to the sin. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you why you gave in to temptation. Were other people involved? Is there someone you need to forgive? What was the root problem in your soul? (desire for acceptance, desire to escape from pain, pride, greed, lust, anger, vengeance, etc. Call sin what God calls it. Beware of making excuses.)

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your remembrance of the first and subsequent times of committing the sin. Do not rush this part. Ask Holy Spirit to reveal your heart to you, to uncover the things that need to be repented of. Write them down as Holy Spirit convicts you.

3. Ask Holy Spirit to give you the gift of repentance, then wait for the godly sorrow to arise in your heart.

4. Forgive those who have wronged you. Do not make excuses for them. Forgiveness must be unconditional. Forgiveness means that you release them to God and give up any right or desire to seek vengeance or to make them suffer for what they did. Remember that you can only forgive at the level that you have faced the pain and suffering they caused in your life, so do not hide from the pain but give your pain to God and ask for healing as you forgive.

5. Where you recognize the presence of tormenters in your life but do not know what has allowed them in, ask God to show you where you harbored unforgiveness. Ask God to show you who you have not forgiven and to bring to your remembrance the circumstances when someone wronged you. Give Jesus permission to walk around in your past and remind you of events you may not subconsciously want to remember so that you can forgive those who hurt you and be healed. When God has reminded you of something, write down what He shows you, following steps 3-4 above. Do not rush.