

Transforming Life '22

Living Free by the power of God's grace



Transforming life is about people being changed. Because change *is* possible. Because God has amazing plans for you. Because living free is what Jesus died to win for you.

Transforming Life looks at the basis for change, what prevents us from living free, & the tools God has given us to 'live life to the full'.

We begin each session with worship, followed by an introduction to the topic. Small groups will help us know how we can put into practice what we're learning and we conclude with prayer and ministry.

	Page
Recommended Reading	2
Part 1 Waking up to the Spiritual Battle	3
The reality of the spiritual realm and spiritual battle – the purpose of Jesus' ministry today.	
Part 2 Understanding Strongholds	9
Strongholds and how they're established- understanding core lies and love-deficits- how together they resist the breaking-in of God's Kingdom in our lives.	
Part 3 Living in Freedom	14
Introducing freedom- recovering God's original design- how strongholds shape our lives- examples and ministry	
Part 4 Pulling down strongholds	20
The power of the cross – connecting to God's power- the 5 'Rs' - the Weapons of our Warfare	
Part 5 Positioning ourselves for Grace	25
Postures of the heart that enable the transforming power of God – receiving grace- spiritual disciplines	
Part 6 The Power of Forgiveness	28
Breaking patterns of unforgiveness – exposing the strongholds that resist forgiveness.	
Appendix 1 Taking it Home	32
Appendix 2 Strongholds Worksheets and Freedom Plan	34
Appendix 3 Steps to Freedom 'The 5 R's'	53

Transforming Life

Recommended Reading

Much of the material that follows in *Transforming Life* has been explored by a variety of writers over many years (some of them Christian classics in their own right).

The Screwtape Letters (CS Lewis)

A Theology of the Dark Side (Nigel T Wright)

Renovation of the heart (Dallas Willard)

Spirit of the Disciplines (Dallas Willard)

The Calvary Road (Roy Hession)

Live no Lies (John Mark Comer)

Living Free: Recovering God's design for your life (Mike Riches – available as a Kindle Book)

The Bondage Breaker (Neil Anderson)

The truth about lies and the lies about truth (David Takle)

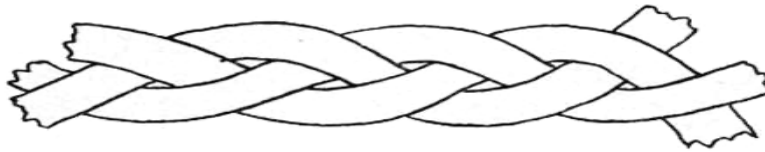


1. Waking up to the Spiritual Battle

1. Introduction

- a. Life as a spiritual battle:
'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)
- a. Understanding the difference between 'positional truth' and 'relational reality'.
- b. An illustration from the life and times of Joshua

2. Battle fronts



The world

The flesh

The devil

The Devil

'For Jesus there is an invisible but real intelligence at war with God and values of His kingdom'.
(John Mark Comer) (John 8:44; 1 Peter 1:5-8)

The Flesh

'be free, but not to indulge the flesh...' (Gal 5:1)

The World:

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world...' Romans 12:1-3

As a result of the intertwining of these 3 things, Sins are not just bad deeds, they become empowered by the devil making them harder to simply 'snap out of'. Sin becomes addictive to the point where we 'do what we do not want to do' (Romans 7:19). The Bible calls sin a 'power'.

3. Living in Two Realms

The reality of the spiritual realm is referred to frequently throughout scripture. There are two 'realms' operating simultaneously in our lives.

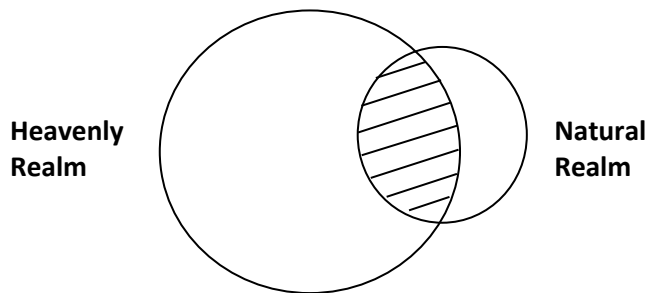
- The Heavenly Realm
- The Natural Realm

(See Ephesians 1:3, 1:26, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12. Greek *epiourainios* means "of the heavens")



The Natural realm includes all that can be perceived by our natural senses in the physical world.
The Heavenly realm includes all that is spiritual, invisible and not seen in the natural realm.

- An Illustration from Science



Most of life is lived with the heavenly realms effecting and energising the natural realm

The Spiritual realm in action

1. The example of Job
 - a. Job's world collapses (Job 1:13-19)
 - b. Satan as the agent behind Job's suffering (Job 1:6-12)
2. The example of Elisha
 - a. Elisha's servant panics at the size of the Aramean army (2 Kings 6:15)
 - b. Elisha opens his eyes to see God's invisible army (2 Kings 6:17)
3. The example of Judas
 - a. Judas betrays Jesus (Luke 22:4&5)
 - b. The source of the betrayal (Luke 22:3)
4. The example of Peter
 - a. Peter caves into fear and betrayal (Luke 22:54-62)
 - b. The source of the pressure and fear in Satan (Luke 22:31)

The principle stated: Ephesians 6:12

'This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps; a life and death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.' Eph 6:12 (The Message)

Powers and forces that inhabit the heavenly realms bear a direct impact on events in the natural realm. We must learn to ask these questions:

- Is my bad mood "just happening"?
- Is my strained marriage "just happening"?
- Is oppressed corporate worship due merely to the weather and the seasons?!
- Is a persistent lack of joy and zeal due merely to personality?
- Are bigotry, prejudice, racism and ethnic cleansings "just happening"?

The scriptures speak directly to numerous sins being directly allied with hell and Satan.

- In your anger do not sin...Do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26, 27).
- ‘God has not given us a *spirit* of fear’ (2 Tim 1:7)
- ‘But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, this wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.’ (James 3:14-15)
- See also 1 Kings 22:22 (lying spirit), Luke 13:11 (spirit of infirmity), 1 Timothy 4:1 (Deceiving spirit), Mark 9:25 (deaf and dumb spirit)

4. *The Western Mind-set is Resistant to the Biblical worldview*

a. **Genuine Discipleship**

It is common today for Christians (especially in the West) to try to change their behaviours in their own strength, whether that’s about trying ‘not to sin’, or ‘to have more faith’ or ‘not to be so afraid’ etc. But sin, fear and doubt are not just ‘emotions’ or ‘actions’, but spiritual forces and powers.

This is a central reason for some of the weakness of the church today in the West. Reducing things such as love, joy, conviction, pride, addiction and fear to ‘emotional feelings’ means we think they simply need to be ‘managed’.

b. **Why there’s a battle**

But real transformation cannot come about simply by ‘trying harder’ or by passively waiting for The Holy Spirit to do it all! The battle for freedom and transformation is not won by human technique or resistance but by recognising the true source of the conflict and using weapons appropriate for what we are dealing with.

5. *Jesus’ ministry today*

The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 provides a great summary of Jesus’ ministry. We don’t know exactly what transpired at Zacchaeus’s home, but the result was a complete turn-around of his life. Luke ends this story with a summary statement of Jesus’ mission:

‘For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost’ (Luke 19:10)

The word ‘to save’ is the Greek word ‘Sozo’ which means deliverance, restoration, protection, preservation, healing, making whole, setting free. Jesus’ ministry is one of restoration.

The word ‘Lost’ is the Greek word ‘apollumi’ which also means ‘destroy’ (as in Jn 10:10). Jesus’ ministry was to restore and repatriate and bring back to life God’s original plan and purpose where it has been stolen and destroyed by the enemy. This is still the purpose of Jesus’ ministry today.



Imagine a church where:

- No one is hiding from others out of fear of rejection
- No one is drawing back from God-given challenges for fear of failure
- No one is hiding their gifts because of their own sense of inadequacy and insignificance
- No one is a slave to the idols of money, sex and power
- No one is trapped by the fear of others
- No one is stuck in passivity and apathy
- All are standing up in spiritual power and authority, living real lives and committed to the flourishing of others.

6. Questions in Groups

- In what ways have you found the Christian life a 'struggle' or challenge?
- How do you feel about the idea that things like greed, rejection, fear, doubt are spiritual 'powers' and not just thoughts and emotions?
- How have you found this to be true in your own life's experience?
- When Jesus said 'If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed' – what do you find yourself beginning to long for?

In order to identify some of the resistances to God's plan for our own lives, we will use a number of worksheets as a basis for recognising these patterns in us and exercising genuine repentance. Everyone will identify with some of the statements as we're all wrestling with strongholds of one kind or another.

These are not intended to produce condemnation! It is simply to help identify where they may be a discernible pattern of behaviour indicating the presence of spiritual strongholds. We can't fight if we don't recognise the 'enemy within'.

WHO AM I IN CHRIST (Positionally)

I AM ACCEPTED...

Psalm 17:8	I am the apple of Gods eye
Zephaniah 3:17	God sings over me with joy and pleasure
John 1:12	I am God’s child
John 15:15	I am Christ’s friend
Romans 5:1	I have been justified
1 Corinthians 6:17	I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him
1 Corinthians 6:19	I have been bought with a price; I belong to God
Ephesians 1:1	I am a saint (a Holy one)
Ephesians 2:18	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit
Colossians 1:14	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
Colossians 2:10	I am complete in Christ
Colossians 3:12	I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved and therefore, jealously protected
Hebrews 4:16	I am welcomed into Gods Holy Presence

I AM SECURE...

Psalm 91:1	I am able to rest under Gods mighty protection
Isaiah 49:16	I am held in the palm of Gods hand
Romans 8:1-2	I am free forever from condemnation
Romans 8:28	I am assured that all things work together for good
Romans 8:31f	I am free from any condemning charges against me
Romans 8:35f	I cannot be separated from the love of God
2 Corinthians 1:21	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God
Colossians 3:3	I am hidden with Christ in God
Philippians 3:20	I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected



Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of Heaven
2 Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind
Hebrews 4:16	I can find grace and mercy in time of need
1 John 5:18	I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me

I AM SIGNIFICANT...

Matthew 5:13-14	I am the salt and light of the earth
John 10:27	I am able to hear Christ's voice
John 15:1,5	I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit
Acts 1:8	I am a personal witness of Christ's
1 Corinthians 2:16	I am able to know the mind of Christ
1 Corinthians 3:16	I am God's temple
1 Corinthians 12:7	I am able to move in all the spiritual gifts to fulfil Gods will in my life
2 Corinthians 5:17f	I am a minister of reconciliation for God
2 Corinthians 6:1	I am God's co-worker (1 Corinthians 3:9)
Ephesians 2:6	I am seated with Christ in the Heavenly realm
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship (masterpiece)
Ephesians 2:10	I am called to fulfil Gods destiny on earth
Ephesians 3:12	I can approach God with freedom and confidence
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
Luke 10:17-20	I am living in Christ's authority which gives me power over the enemy
2 Peter 1:3	I am full with every supernatural resource to live fully for Christ

(From 'Living Free in Christ' by Dr Neil Anderson)



2. Understanding Strongholds

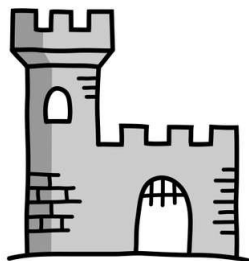
1. What are Strongholds?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

'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.'

- They are speculations and reasonings, attitudes and beliefs, thoughts and values that are in opposition to God's truth – truth about ourselves, about life and how life is to be lived according to God's original purpose.

A stronghold is a 'wrong way of thinking' (ie thought-patterns contrary to the truth about God and about ourselves). Through constant repetition, these thoughts produce in us certain habits and behaviours, causing us to act and respond to life situations in a certain way. These in turn are then often re-enforced through life-circumstances which seem to justify our thoughts and actions adding yet more weight and credibility to them. As this cycle continues, so a stronghold is being woven into the fabric of my personality.



a. Defending our strongholds

We often add defence-walls to strongholds in our lives in order to minimise the pain, hurt and shame on which they've been built. This adds yet further resistance to the transforming power of God:

- Exceptionism
- Denial
- Minimising
- Normalising
- Avoidance

b. Normalising Lies

These strongholds may seem almost 'normal' to me – simply 'the way I am' (for example 'I'm just never going to be a person of great faith'...'I'll never really hear God's voice – better just to

accept that's me'; 'I'll always have this pain in my life...that's all I can expect'; 'I always feel like I'm an outsider...I guess that's just the way it is'; 'I always get angry when that happens...doesn't everyone?' etc, etc).

We create mental maps of reality in our minds for life...how to navigate certain things...how to respond in certain situations. Mental maps are made up of experience, hurts and a whole bunch of ideas. They become 'muscle memories'.

- Every degree of opposition to God's truth that we accept in life (often without realising it), becomes a foundation on which strongholds can be built.

2. How do strongholds show themselves?

a. Behaviours and character traits

Certain attitudes and actions that we probably know are contrary to God's will but seem powerless to overcome or know why we keep doing them

b. Mental mind-maps

Circumstances, experiences and hurts in our lives form mental 'mind maps'-assumptions about life and the world that may not be true. For example 'people can never really be trusted'; 'I guess I'll always carry the shame of that'; 'I must be a bad person...etc. They can also show themselves in what the ancient church Fathers called 'vainglory': 'I must succeed to show I'm special/important'; 'I'm impressive because of what I've achieved or earned; My value is in what I've accumulated etc. See 'The stronghold wall' on p15.

c. Sin-Reactions

The battles we face in our lives are not only the problems and challenges that happen TO us, but more often than not, the way we respond to them with our MINDS and HEARTS.

Freedom is not the absence of difficulties and challenges. Jesus said 'in this world you will have trouble...' (Jn 16:33). Freedom is the ability to respond to all things in exactly the way God intended. It is learning how to fight well with the weapons of our warfare (Psalm 18:34)

3. How do strongholds get built?

a. Sin

- 'Slaves to sin' (Romans 6:6) Re-enforced by repetition
- Ungodly involvement. Paul commends new believers for decisively renouncing idolatry (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

b. Wounds

- Unmet love needs
- Deliberate harm
- Omission of care

c. Life-circumstances

- Traumatic Life-circumstances
- Repeated life experiences

d. Generational Issues

Generational patterns. (cf 1 Kings 15:3, 26,34).

e. Soul ties

- Through ungodly, damaging or dysfunctional relationships
- Through misplaced trust, fear, desire for approval.
- Unforgiveness

Each of us is battling strongholds of one kind or another. Part of God’s purpose for the church is that we help each other learn how to fight (Psalm 18:34), to encourage each other to keep going and to stand alongside one another, helping them to contend for the Lord’s plan to prevail when we feel weak or defeated.

God’s truth and love is absolute and unchanging. It is the foundation and basis of lasting change. It is the liberating power that breaks the hold of the enemy. Strongholds don’t just happen, they have roots and foundations. True freedom comes when our identities are rooted and established in the power and truth of God’s unconditional everlasting and abundant love.

4. Core Lies

- a. Satan, the Father of all lies (John 8:44)
 - ‘...Did God say...?’
- b. Disarmed
 - i. Colossians 2:13-15
 - ii. Ephesians
- c. The power of Lies
 - Believing God’s truth and re-building my life upon it is a life-time’s effort
- d. The Beauty of God’s truth

Core Lies

The lies of the devil are not random. They are targeted to undermine God’s truth and reality. It didn’t start with the devils lies, but with God’s truth. Core truths the enemy opposes include:

- The purpose God has for my life
- My identity in Christ
- God’s provision for me
- Hope in God’s future plans
- My exalted status as a child of God
- My ultimate happiness in being Christ-like
- God’s ability and willingness to forgive
- The spiritual authority God gives his children
- The call of God to shine His light so others can see

The effects of believing lies

- ‘When we believe lies and let those lives into us, it’s not so much that we tell lies but live lies.’ (John Mark Comer)



- ‘Ideas are more than just thoughts in our brains. They are open to spiritual entities that have the power to enslave us’. (John Mark Comer)
- ‘Repent and believe’ simply means to re-think your mental maps of what you think will lead you to a happy life and trust in those of Jesus himself’. (Dallas Willard)

‘We all hear all sorts of ideas every day – some brilliant, some ridiculous but they have zero effect on us unless we begin to trust them as accurate maps to reality. At that point that become animated/energised by divine and spiritual energy and authority that begins to release life...or death into our lives’.

Why do we fall for his lies even when we know it’s untrue?

- a. Because it’s a ‘power’.
- b. Because we start by ‘believing’, and we stop believing only when our doubts and misgivings are exposed, admitted, owned and rigorously broken.
- c. Because the lies plays to the desires of the flesh. Essentially, we believe a lie about what will make us happy.
- d. Because the world tells us ‘it’s normal’.

5. Love Deficits

‘For this reason I kneel before the Father..., 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. (Ephesians 3:14-18)

i. Our need of love

Love is foundational and fundamental to our personhood: When one is deprived of love, then the foundation of wholeness and the healthy development of who God designed us to be is compromised. It will take power to break through the strongholds that resist the love of God.

ii. Love is foundational to our being, “Love deprivation” will affect us various ways:

- It may cause us to seek love elsewhere, often from dangerous and inadequate sources, but we’re bound to them by our desperate need.
- Others learn to live without it and yield to a deep sense of shame or insignificance.
- Others become hardened to the world, unable to give and receive love as God intended.
- We may compensate by becoming angry and aggressive, uncaring of others
- Love deficits can lead to crippling ‘rejection’ and loss of security

e. What we know of the Father’s love (Based on Luke 15:11-32)

- Unconditional, not based on performance
- Genuine delighting, not tolerating
- Freeing, not controlling
- Patient
- Forgiving



f. How do we experience God's Love?

God's love is always towards us and it never changes. God's love is poured into my heart by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). My heart's capacity to receive it and 'benefit' from it however, depends on certain heart-attitudes which scripture says we are to cultivate:

- Humility,
- Faith
- Forgiveness

Heart attitudes that can hinder our receiving the Father's Love

- Pride (leading to independence and rebellion)
- Anger
- Unbelief
- Unforgiveness (leading to bitterness, judgementalism and revenge)
- Jealousy

God's desire is that as we embrace his truth, we recognise these strongholds because they prevent me walking freely in His purpose for me. He intends us to use the weapons of our warfare to pull down the strongholds, leaving me liberated and free to respond to people and events with the love and wisdom of Jesus.

6. Questions in Groups

- How aware are you of strongholds in your own life or in the lives of others?
- Can you identify certain areas of your life where you know the truth, but constantly struggle to believe it and live it out?
- How do you feel about the fact that strongholds become 'energised' by demonic power? Why should this *not* make us fearful?
- Do you identify with the concept of unmet love-needs? Can you identify strongholds of behaviour stemming from unmet love needs?

3. Living in Freedom

1. Introducing Freedom

Freedom is at the heart of God's purpose for us.

- Through the waters of the Red Sea, God led His people out of Egypt and into *freedom* in the Promised Land.
- Isaiah foresaw that God's anointed one would 'bring *freedom* for the captives' (Isaiah 61:1).

Freedom is at the heart of the gospel: Jesus takes the message of the Old Testament and applies it not only to a Nation, but to each individual. Freedom is not just liberation from political and social oppression, but a personal journey out of slavery to the powers of sin, fear, guilt and condemnation and into the 'glorious freedom of the children of God' (Rom 8:21).

- The apostle Paul proclaims 'It is for freedom Christ has set us free' (Gal 5:1).
- Jesus said 'you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free' (John 8:32)
- 'If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed' (John 8:36)

2. Original Design

'It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.' (Ephesians 1:11-12)

'Freedom' implies that there is some original design or intention for us, that for whatever reason is now obstructed. To be set free is to recover the original purpose and plan for which I was intended.

- a. General
- b. Specific

A definition of Freedom:

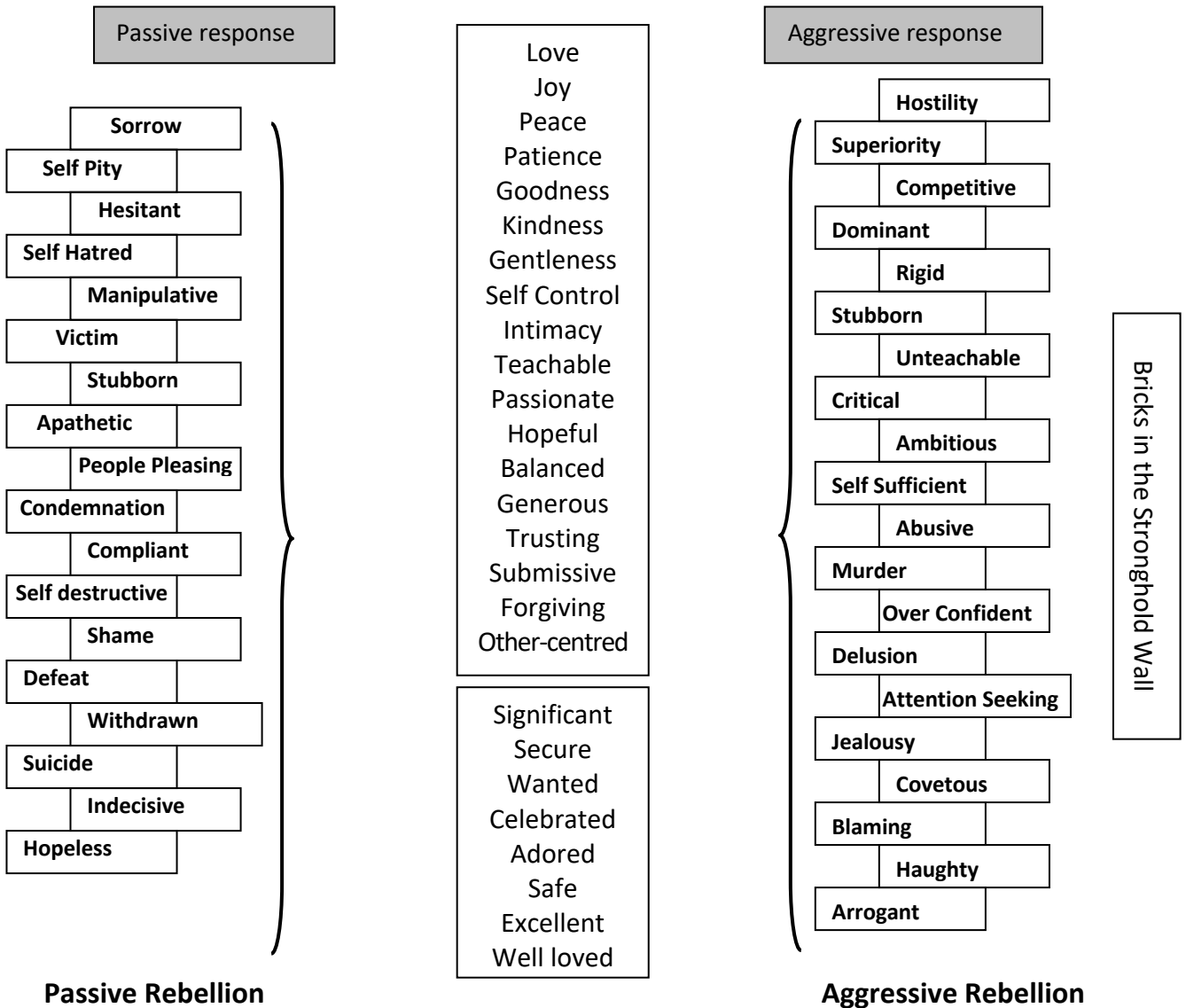
Discovering my identity and purpose in Jesus and tearing down every stronghold and resistance that stops me walking in its way. What needs to be understood to live in freedom?

1. The **calling** and **destiny** Christ has for us
2. **Patterns of resistance**; how they are built into our lives and how to tear down these **strongholds**
3. Understanding the 'weapons of our warfare' for pulling down strongholds
4. How to exercise Jesus' **power and authority** in the pursuit of freedom

The enemy of our souls targets God's plan for us by deliberately seeking to establish strongholds that oppose his original plan and purpose. True freedom is the ability to respond in any and every situation in exactly the way God intended. The 'weapons of our warfare' are not primarily exercised against the troubles and difficulties we encounter in this life, but against the sin-responses these things produce in us.



God’s Original Design



‘Every spiritual blessing in Christ’ (Ephesians 1:3)

SIN REACTION – “Personality Traits”

Love Deficit and Core Lies

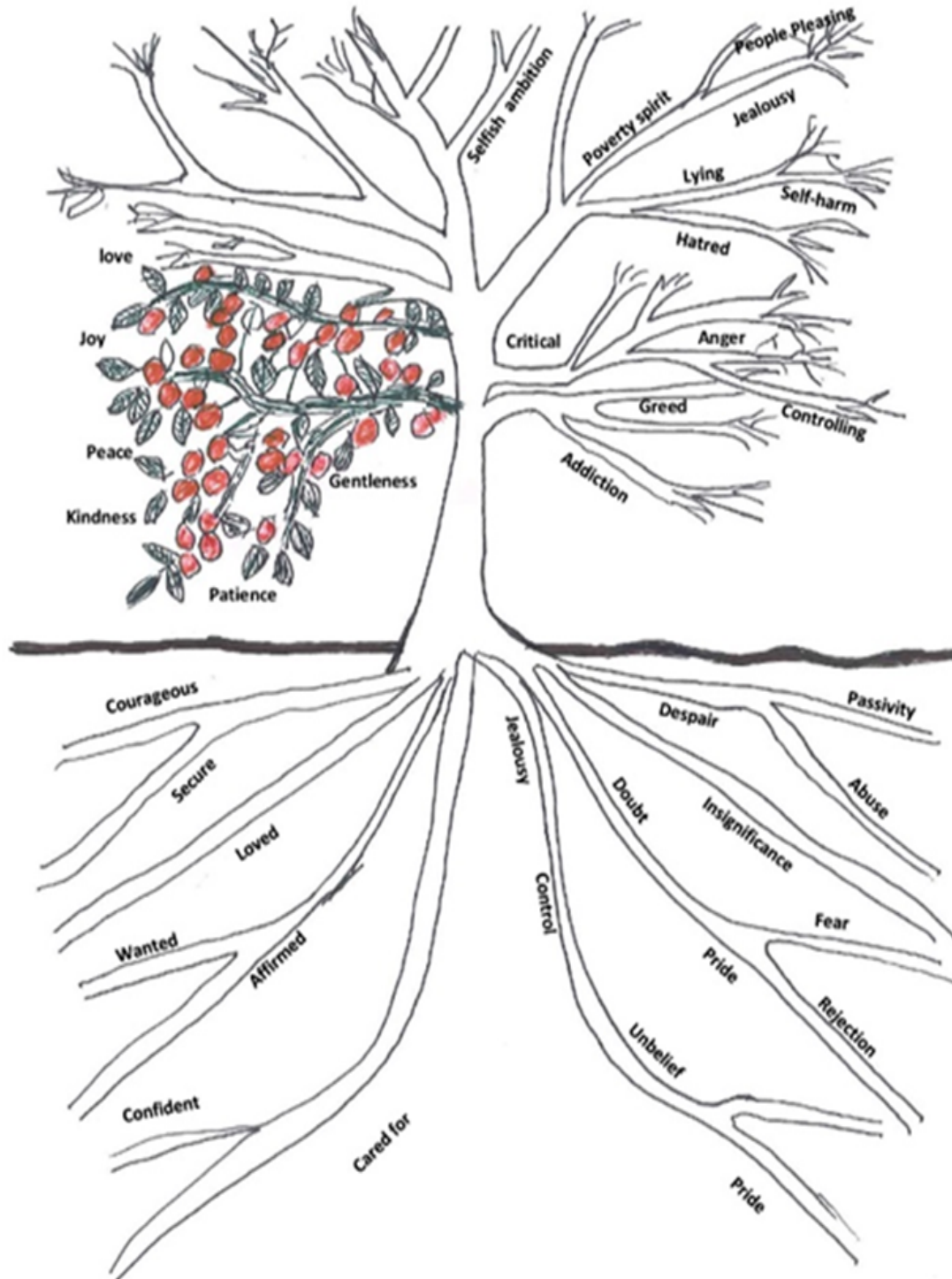
The foundations of Strongholds

Human beings were designed to grow on a foundation of love and truth. Whenever these are missing or distorted in some way, it can produce a variety of behaviours or ‘postures’ which push God’s love and truth out of alignment. These can build up a wall of resistance, enmeshed within my personality which then actively resists the truth that can and will set me free.



The Tree and its Fruit

Galatians 5:19-24



3. Gideon- A study in Insignificance and Passivity

Judges 6:1-16

Passivity

Passivity is not from God, it is a form of rebellion. It's the vacuum left when action should be occurring. It's a stronghold because it becomes an automatic response.

Passivity is not so much what we have done – it's what we haven't done. Sins of omission.

- A lack of initiation
- Passivity is a form of independence
- Passivity is a form of resistance to God
- Passivity allows self-pity to remain
- Passivity is about being comfortable where I am -

Passivity was built up in Gideon's life over many years

The root causes of Gideon's Insignificance

1. Fear. (v27) Fear we'll fail. Fear I'll look a fool if I go out on a limb for God. Fear born out of disappointment. 'Tried that before didn't work'
2. Doubt that God's word is true (v13)
3. Insignificance. V15. 'My clan is the weakest and I am least in my family'.

What is God's response?

1. God is on his case to call him out of insignificance and passivity
2. God calls those things that aren't as if they are (original design).
3. Promise of provision and protection
4. Go in strength you have

God will not provide Gideon with a response that isn't blundering in his own strength, nor is it about doing nothing. The middle way is obedience – what does God want? Gideon simply had to learn to obey.

4. The Five 'R's

1. Recognise

This includes recognising our sin or what it is and being willing to name it. The sin of others against us and our own subsequent sin reactions act as access points that give Satan authority to energise and empower destructive and binding patterns on our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Forgive and bless those who have sinned against you

2. Receive

Take time to consciously receive and thank God for his forgiveness and cleansing, claiming his promise: '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**

3. Repent

This includes recognising our sin or what it is and being willing to name it. The sin of others against us and our own subsequent sin reactions act as access points that give Satan authority to energise and empower destructive and binding patterns on our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Forgive and bless those who have sinned against you

4. Rebuke

Exercise your authority in Christ over the specific energising work of the enemy with regard to the strongholds you face. You rebuke the powers of darkness with energy and conviction. They have already been defeated by Christ on the cross (Col 2:13-15), and have only become part of my life through the enemy's stealth and my ignorance.

5. Replace

This is essential to on-going freedom and must be embraced on a daily basis. Replace old thoughts and behaviour patterns with biblical truth and obedience

Choose to live daily in the 'opposite spirit' to our old, sinful ways. Ask the Lord what this looks like in your particular situation. For example, if you are breaking a stronghold of fear, you may need to start making a conscious decision to 'do' and 'face' the thing you are afraid of. God will empower you as you do!

5. A Practice, not a formula

The 5 'R's are not a formula or a set way of praying. It is a reminder of the various components needed if we are to tear down strongholds. Some will involve actions that will take time to develop. We may have to keep praying in the face of strongholds that do not immediately yield. Don't despair or give up! Pulling down a stronghold will be more like a battering-ram than a bomb! Sometimes we do see immediate breakthrough's -someone is instantly delivered from addiction after prayer, while others have to 'do the work' of freedom.

6. Recognising Strongholds

a. Revelation and observation

- Seeing patterns of behaviour

b. Owning them

We accept responsibility for our own thoughts, actions and reactions. While we may be the victims of abuse, deprivation, slander etc, God's path for our freedom doesn't come by blaming, condemning or punishing the other.

c. Naming them

We learn to call strongholds for what they really are. We are tempted to minimize thoughts and actions that we know are contrary to what God intends for us. We are tempted to say 'I'm a little anxious about such and such', rather than 'I recognise a stronghold of fear in my life...!'

d. Not to condemn but to liberate

'It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.' (Ephesians 1:11-12).

7. Receiving forgiveness

As we consider the strongholds that are in our lives, it is vital we draw on the love and forgiveness of God. We do not examine ourselves in order to bring us into condemnation but so that we might better see what we have been forgiven from. We take authority over unforgiveness and despair at what we might discover about ourselves.

8. Questions in Groups

- How would you imagine 'total freedom' for your life – what would it look like? What would be different and how would you feel?
- How can we discover God's purpose and intention for us in any given circumstances?
- Can you share an example of a stronghold you have seen broken in your own life? How did that come about?

Pulling Down Strongholds

1. Our need of Spiritual power

How can we dismantle the strongholds that we encounter as we pursue God's wonderful plan and purpose for us? We have already discovered that overcoming those things that resist God's love and truth can never be by our own human efforts. No amount of 'trying harder' will truly overcome strongholds because strongholds are spiritual in nature.

- Freedom does not fully come from self-help techniques or positive thinking
- Freedom cannot be earned or won from God by our own efforts
- Sheer application of will power cannot bring lasting change
- We cannot 'wish away' a stronghold.

Of course some of the destructive behaviours resulting from strongholds can (and should) be tamed through effort and discipline. But if we want the Holy Spirit to be flowing through our lives unobstructed, then dealing with the spiritual roots of the issues will be vital.

'God's way is not a matter of mere talk; it's an empowered life.' (1 Corinthians 4:20 Msg)

The source of that power took everyone in the ancient world by surprise. Power is usually seen as might, force, military superiority, subservience to those in command, intimidation of the weak. The source of God's power is the Cross of Christ.

'The cross stands as the centrepiece of human history. Everything before leads up to it and everything after leads from it'. (Bob Gordon)

2. What the cross accomplished

In Genesis 3, we see that through the fall, humankind became subject to what are sometimes called the 'six woes', which have been the source of every pain and affliction of the human body and spirit. Here in essence, is everything we need to be *freed from*.

1. Guilt and condemnation.

The immediate effect of sin was to produce shame and guilt. Lost peace with God...

'Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people – free of penalties and punishments chalked up by our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free!' (Ephesians 1:5 – The Message)

2. Oppression by the Devil.

Adam and Eve resisted God's plan for their lives and chose instead to listen to and obey Satan's lies, thereby giving him authority and dominion over them. Satan has therefore become the 'god of this world' (2 Cor. 4:4)



‘God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins...and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.’ (Colossians 2:13, 15)

3. Pain and suffering

Sickness and suffering were not God’s original plan for us. While he can use pain and suffering to his own gracious ends in our lives, the coming of God’s Kingdom included healing and a restoring of God’s original design.

‘By his wounds you have been healed’ (1 Peter 2:24)

4. Anxiety and Care

Difficulty, effort and sweat would characterise a life separated from God. The ground/earth would now become their source of provision, not the Lord. (Gen 3:18-19)

‘But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’ (Matthew 6:33)

‘Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you’. (1 Peter 5:7)

5. Death

Death is the inevitable result of sin – a final judgement on the state of fallen humanity. But in the death of Jesus, the judgement of death has been removed:

‘since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death’ (Hebrews 2:14-15)

6. Rejection and Separation from God.

The rejection of God and his truth resulted in banishment from God’s presence. From that time on, rejection became an integral part of human nature – its pervasive power infiltrating our lives in many ways.

‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Christ, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’ (Colossians 1:20)

Taking up the cross

We see then that the life of Jesus and his death on the cross has already broken the power and inevitable hold of these forces on our lives. The key to a victorious Christian life is to connect with that power and learn how to let His life flow through me so I can walk through life in freedom.

3. The Power of Repentance

The way we connect with the power of the cross is primarily through repentance and faith. (Mark 1:15). It’s the way ‘into the Kingdom’, but it’s also the way we go on in the Christian life.

*‘So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue** to live your lives in him’.*
(Colossians 2:6)



a. A Gift from God

‘Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?’ (Romans 2:4)

Repentance is a beautiful gift from God. It is the capacity God gives us to choose something against our basic or naturally desired instinct. In repentance, we turn from agreeing with the lies and ways of the kingdom of darkness and align ourselves to the truth and ways of the kingdom of light. There is no spiritual growth without repentance. It is the basic move of the disciple.

The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. (Mark 1:15)

b. A Spiritual Transaction

True repentance initiates a transaction in the heavenly realms. Intention and desire is stated and God sees and acts. Repentance is not just a prayer we say but a ‘position of the heart’.

‘For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power’ (1 Corinthians 4:20)

‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ (Acts 2:38)

c. Analysis of repentance

Our response in faith and repentance is more than a cursory ‘sorry’ to God. True repentance is a radical turning away from what is sinful, wrong and destructive. It includes God’s revelation of strongholds and destructive patterns in our lives and exercising the authority we have been given to make our repentance genuine and effective.

- i. Realistic Recognition – Discerning patterns of behaviour (including omissions) as sin – no denial - name sin as sin. No excuses.
- ii. Remorseful Request – Not a technology of repentance (ie here is a tool to get me out of a mess), but genuine sorrow at having offended against God leading to a request for his forgiveness. Exercising faith in God for restorative blessing.
- iii. Rigorous Renunciation - A verbalized enactment of turning from the behaviour in question. Verbally leaving behind (matched by heartfelt intention) specific named behaviour and turning towards life in trustful obedience.
- iv. Resolute Rebuke. Rebuking Satanic deception and demonic exploitation of our sinfulness. This alerts you to the reality that Satan has no grounds on which to stand in our life and therefore must be gone.

d. Repentance is a lifestyle.

Repentance becomes an every-day habit...discerning what is happening in the spiritual realm, identifying God’s original plan and purpose for me in whatever situation I face, and deliberately turning my heart and setting my will in obedience to Him. As we walk in this more and more it becomes ‘second-nature’, simply to put into practice throughout the day.



4. Exercising authority

a. Speaking

'I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' (Matthew 16:19)

The Power of words

- God creates the world with a word of command (Genesis 1:3,6,9,11 etc)
- God creates human beings in his image (Genesis 1:27)
- The power of words to bless and curse (James 3:6-10)
 - 'The tongue has the power of life and death' (Proverbs 18:21).
 - 'A kind word cheers a person up' (Proverbs 12:25)

b. Empowering the New Self

When we speak out aloud the truth (what scripture calls 'confessing with our lips), we are exercising the 'new self', created in the image of Christ. We are giving voice to what God is doing, saying and willing, rather than submitting to the voices of doubt, anxiety, self-sufficiency, bitterness, anger etc etc.

Following the example of Jesus (who, when tempted in the wilderness draws on the Word of God to defend Himself against the enemy) we also walk in freedom by having constantly on our lips the truth of God's intention for me in each and every situation I face.

I say that we must talk to ourselves instead of allowing 'ourselves' to talk to us! Do you realize what this means? I suggest the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to ourself. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?

Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you to you? Your self is talking to you. Now the psalmists treatment was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why are thou cast down, o my soul?' he asks. His soul has been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to youWhy art thou cast down? – what business have you to be disquieted?....And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who he is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.' (Martyn Lloyd-Jones 'Spiritual depression')

c. Exercising Christ's authority by virtue of our commission and calling (Matthew 28:18-19)

d. Exercising Christ's authority in prayer.

e. Exercising Christ's authority by 'taking our stand' (Eph 6:11)



5. Replacing

The final 'R' stands for replacing the lies of the enemy with a rigorous determination to walk in the truth. Repentance is not just turning *away* from evil, but deliberately turning *towards* the Lord. It can involve identifying an action- plan, including accountability to others as you walk into greater freedom.

For many, this will be what takes the most time. Learning not to yield to habits and behaviours formed as a result of strongholds will take some determination and may need the ongoing accountability with others.

We actually need to become more comfortable with others knowing my particular struggles so they can help me and support me as and when I'm tempted to go back to old patterns.

6. Questions in Groups

- How has your understanding of repentance changed as a result of today's teaching?
- What experiences have you had of 'exercising authority' in different circumstances?
- Can you identify an area of your own life where you've deliberately 'replaced' a thought pattern or behaviour with the godly counterpart? What helped you to do this?



5. Positioning ourselves for Grace

We sometimes talk about ‘positioning ourselves’, our hearts before God. There are certain ‘postures of the heart’ that attract the power and presence of the Spirit.

‘Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life’ (Proverbs 4:23)

1. Submission

Laying my whole life before Jesus, holding nothing back. Allowing no rebellion or partial obedience to God’s call on my life to knowingly remain. While I have been given authority in Christ, my ability to exercise depends in part on my submission to the one from whom I receive it. The greater the submission, the greater the ability to exercise authority.

2. Humility

Definition of Grace

‘The Empowering presence of God - Enabling me to be what God intends me to be and do what God has called me to do’.

Approach throne of grace with confidence so we may receive mercy and FIND grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

HUMILITY – THE GATEWAY TO GRACE

Grace is the gift of God. It cannot be earned or manipulated. The heart-position that enables the grace of God to flow more freely into my life is *humility*.

- James 4:6. Humility is gateway to grace. Pride is gateway out.

Definition of humility:

‘The accepting of God’s plan for me without pretense or regret’.

Humility then is laying down my plans and ideas, in order to hear God’s. It starts by assuming I don’t know what’s right or best, and I may not know what God has planned in a certain situation. It means having an attitude of teachability – one that doesn’t resist being challenged or being over-confident that we already know all we need to know, or that there’s nothing x or y can teach me

‘There is a way that seems right to a man, but it leads to death.’ (Proverbs 14:12)

3. Faith

Faith is exercised by coming to a ‘position’ of trust in our minds and hearts. A place where we’ve ‘set’ our minds, made a choice to believe. Faith shows itself and is reinforced by speaking out aloud. It is a rigorous lining up of my will to agree with God’s. It’s about ‘positioning my heart and mind’ in lines with God’s will and word.

‘Say the welcoming word to God – ‘Jesus is my Master’ – embracing, body and soul, God’s work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That’s it, you’re not doing anything; you’re simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That’s salvation.



With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: ‘God has set everything right between him and me’. Romans 10:9-10 (The Message)

4. Enquiring

- i. What do you want to accomplish today (in specific situations)?
- ii. What strongholds are playing out in my life right now?
- iii. Why am I angry?
- iv. Why am I anxious?
- v. What do you want me to do? What attitude should I have in this situation?
- vi. How much money should I give Lord?
- vii. Who should we invite to lunch Lord?
- viii. What would really bless Anna...?

By learning to hear the voice of the Spirit, I discern His unique will and purpose for my life and his priorities and the ways He intends for me to follow in every situation I face.

Through the prophetic Spirit, and by developing a listening heart, I am also able to discern the strongholds that are preventing me from moving forward into the purposes of God. I learn to welcome the conviction of the Spirit when I discern behaviours and strongholds because I know this is how freedom comes. It is the pathway to love, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

5. The Ministry of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is powerfully present when we are willing to *position* our hearts and minds in repentance. Of course in His mercy, we may know significant times when we did none of these things, yet God broke through in miraculous and sovereign ways. We’re always glad for that and pray for Gods breakthrough’s all the time. Nonetheless the scriptures are given to us to show how we can better co-operate with this ministry to give the Spirit access to our hearts.

6. The Power of Agreement

When we agree on something it releases energy, joy and momentum. If agreeing with each other on things releases joy, momentum, unity and empowers us, how much more when we agree with God! His power is released through us. This is something I can make a choice to do.

‘Whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, lovely or admirable. Whatever is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things’. (Phil 4:8)

Why are we told to think like this? Because that’s what God is thinking, and agreeing with him releases his power into our lives.

The Bible says the mind and the spirit work closely together. The Spirit is released into a person in large part by the mind.



The Gateway to the spirit is your mind, and you have to fling the gates of your mind open so that the King of glory may fully inhabit your life. (Ps24:7)

‘Be transformed by the renewing of your mind....’ (Rom 12:1)

The Spirit ‘flows’ into agreement and truth. ‘Do not resist the Holy Spirit’.

7. Spiritual Disciplines

In the wilderness Jesus fights the devil through solitude, prayer and scripture. (Matt 4:1-11)

- ‘Spiritual disciplines are embodied practices in a real world where we present ourselves to the reality of the Spirit’s presence and the word of truth. They are designed to minimise distraction and enable us to be as fully present as possible to the truth of Christ, his unconditional love, and absolute commitment to my flourishing as a child of God.’
- Study - filling my mind with the beauty of God's salvation and mercy
- Confession
- Fasting – Depriving myself of food in order to feed on the Living Word
- Celebration – choosing joy in the presence of daily life and challenges

8. Repentance Re-visited

Repentance is not only a prayer or liturgical act. It is a lifestyle of humility and acknowledging that our ways are not God’s ways.

9. Questions in Groups

- Which spiritual disciplines have you encountered most? How have they been helpful?
- Which of these ‘heart postures’ are you most aware of in your life?
- Which of these heart postures do you feel you most need to engage with right now?

6. The Power of Forgiveness

1. Our need of forgiveness

The Forgiveness of sins is the most amazing thing Jesus has done. Throughout history People of nearly every culture have been alert to the sense that life is not as it was supposed to be; that certain things said and done put the community into a place of jeopardy, cursing and a failure to flourish. Communities have sought ways to ‘atone’ for such things; to put them right, so that the community can be in harmony with itself and its environment.

Jesus’ way of dealing with sin and evil is not to ‘balance it out’ with good or to ‘wish it away’, re-define it or ignore it. Her forgives it. We are free to know God because of the forgiveness Jesus offers us.

2. The Need to forgive others

a. Jesus warns us of the dangers of unforgiveness:

‘Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors....’ (Matthew 6:12-14)

‘Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.’ (Matthew 18:32-35)

b. The power of withholding

We know that withholding blessing, affirmation and love can do immense damage to another. *Withholding* what God intended me to give away is a ‘power’. The withholding of forgiveness forms a strong spiritual bond that ties me continuously to the very thing I wish hadn’t happened in the first place.

c. The law of sowing and reaping

‘Do not judge and you will not be judged.’ Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you....’ (Luke 6:37-8).

What the scripture is saying is that what we withhold from others (that God intended us to give) will in turn be withheld from us. What we sow, we will reap. My capacity to receive mercy and forgiveness is linked to my willingness to give it.

3. What Christ has Done

- a. Christ dies for me as my substitute
- b. Christ dies for me as my example

When Jesus died, he gave up his right to justice He didn’t overwhelm sin and evil with love, though it was love made him do it. He CHOSE forgiveness. He didn’t claim his right to justice,



his right to revenge, his right to grasp for the power to save himself. Instead he DIED to that right and chose the life of extreme trust and total faith. He chose to trust that God would somehow raise Him to new, immortal, dynamic and wonderful life.

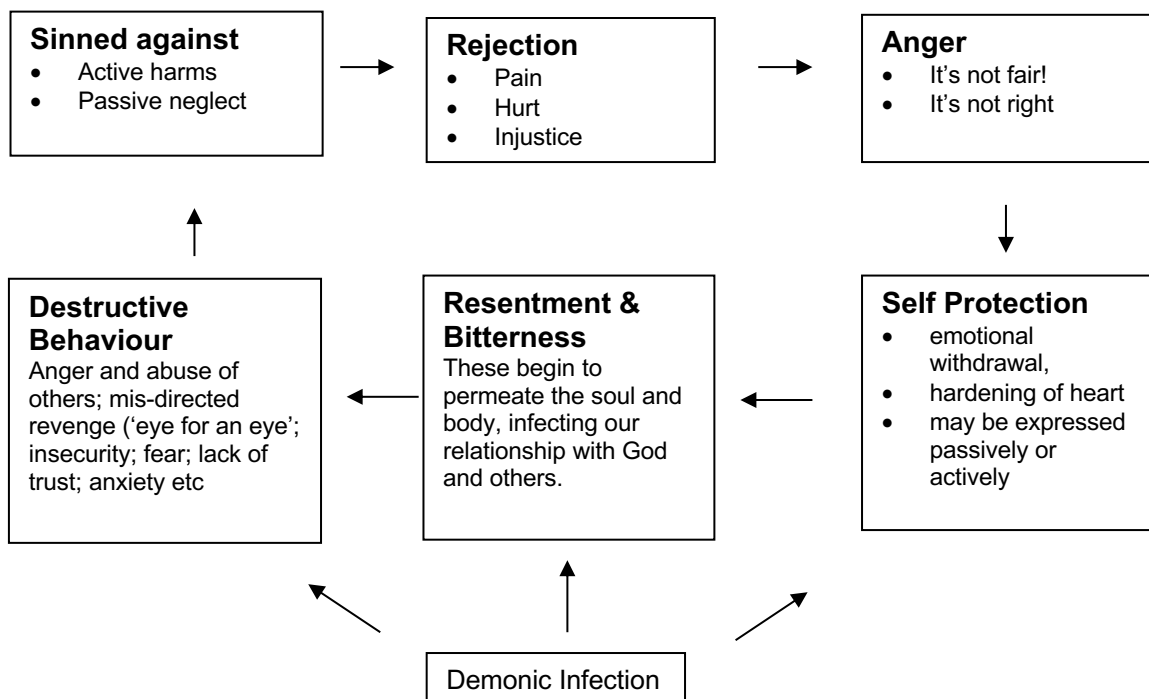
The cross is where God provides forgiveness and demonstrates that the cost of forgiveness has been paid. Jesus died IN MY place to forgive my sins

But Jesus also said ‘as the master, so shall the servant be’. He said to be his disciple we must ‘take up our cross’. And now we are called to Die to revenge, bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness. The promise is that when we do, like Jesus, we are promised resurrection power.

4. Breaking the unforgiveness Cycle

The enemy seeks to provoke rejection and anger within us to trap us in the cycle of rejection and bitterness, causing us to become emotionally distorted. This results in behaviours and attitudes that change our whole being, not just our relationship to the original issue.

The diagram below shows how initial Injustices and love deficits cause patterns of response in our lives that can develop into strongholds.



While we may be victims of sin and injustice, the effect is often to produce a sin-reaction in me which can mask the real root of the problem. Freedom from the effects of ‘love deficit’ and injustice in our lives is to go to the very core and release forgiveness to the people and situations involved.

Sometimes we think that if we experience more and more of the love of God, it will squeeze out the pain, rejection and anger in my life. Living free is losing, letting go what binds me to my



anger, rejection. It requires me to DO something. To position my heart in forgiveness so that the resurrection power of Jesus will flow through you.

The Power of forgiving

Remember: forgiveness is a transaction of the will and the mind and the emotions follow later. Forgiveness releases heavenly blessing. Forgiveness breaks the destructive soul ties / inappropriate influence and sets us free to experience the grace of forgiveness, the wonder of true salvation, the hope of glory.

Forgiveness enables deliverance and healing to take place. It is the act of ‘loosing’ (Matthew 18:18). It is something I must rigorously choose to do – to root out patterns of judgementalism, bitterness and unforgiveness, learning to become aware of the tell-tale signs of its presence.

The BIG truth: Forgiveness won’t necessarily change the person or the thing that happened. It changes YOU!

5. The Principles of forgiveness

a. A realistic honesty

Ask for the revelation of the Holy Spirit – to show you areas of anger and bitterness in your heart.

‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.’ (Psalm 139:23-24)

Embrace emotional honesty. Dare to see the anger and bitterness you would much prefer not to be there! Name the sin of the person done against you. Do not minimize it. Call it by the real name (e.g. betrayal, abuse, manipulation, rejection, prejudice...)

b. Four key attitudes that resist granting forgiveness:

- Vengeance: “I want him to pay.”
- Self justification “I will forgive when they change”, “I am entitled to be angry.”
- Self righteousness: “I am in the right, I want my justice.”
- Self Pity / victim mindset: “It’s too painful to forgive, you can’t expect me to just let it go.”

While in some ways, these are understandable responses, they will not bring freedom from their effects. In fact, they will tie us ever more closely to them. God has forgiven us completely and now asks us to walk in his footsteps, following his example. Forgiveness is a matter of obedience, humility and faith in our relationship with the Lord.

c. Common misunderstandings about Forgiveness:

- Pretending the injustice did not happen
- Forgetting it
- Saying sorry
- Feeling love for the offender

It does mean cancelling the debt that person owes you for their cruelty... the debt signifies that which the person should have done or said according to God’s standard of truth and love. We therefore cancel the debt, placing the person into the Lord’s hands.

d. Who would God want you to forgive?

Maybe several people. Maybe a situation you can't control. If the power and presence of God is to flow through our lives, nothing hinders it more than unforgiveness in our own lives. Our forgiveness doesn't guarantee the other person will necessarily respond. But we must be obedient to God no matter what.

e. Following in His footsteps

We choose to treat them as if they had acted properly towards us, and we give up our right to exact justice or revenge or to get them to realize how wrong they were. (This does not mean we won't address the problem with them but that we do so having released them in our hearts).

We make a decision to bless the person in prayer. Give up the desire / right / intention to seek the person's approval (especially true regarding mothers / fathers).

6. Practical Exercise

1. Ask the Lord to show you one significant person to forgive. Write out / express on paper / name what was done against you and how you feel about them.
2. Before God and in his presence you address the person/situation involved in your mind's eye – speaking to them.

Dear Heavenly Father, I acknowledge to you today the sin done against me by_____ "What you did to me was wrong and it was sinful. I hoped that you would have treated me differently. I have held you in debt because of what you did. But here's what I choose to do today. I cancel the debt you owe me; I release you from my judgment. I forgive you.

I sever the soul tie of unforgiveness towards you. You owe me nothing. You are released from your debt. I choose to rise up and transcend your sin and move on in my life in obedience to my God."

Father, I repent of my own anger and bitterness and I receive your forgiveness. I declare your victory over the spirit of anger, bitterness, resentment and I refuse to give them any place in my heart.

Having set my mind towards mercy and forgiveness, I ask for your empowering presence to help me do this and I ask you to heal and restore me. I commit to replacing destructive thought patterns with your love, mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

3. Ask the Lord for revelation from him how to treat / handle the person/people or situation in the days ahead.

Taking it home

Summary

We have looked at God's desire for us to be transformed and live in freedom. Christ has done all that is needed for this to happen. We cannot 'earn' our freedom – it is entirely by the grace of God. The work we are called to do as disciples is to position our hearts in such a way that His grace can flow through our lives and to exercise our mind and believer's authority toward the goal of freedom.

The scripture shows us there are various disciplines which 'put us in the way' of His grace (for example repentance, humility, desiring and welcoming the Holy Spirit, worship etc). These disciplines help us experience and walk in the freedom God has won for us.

Christian freedom is not about being freed from all constraints. We are set free from all that opposes the will of Christ...in order that we might become his servants. True freedom is to do the will of God. Many find that once strongholds in our lives have been identified, brought into the light and prayed into, their power is significantly diminished and broken. Some may experience demonic manifestations during prayer, but when we genuinely want freedom for our lives, many sense a release and a fresh empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Where do we go from here?

Spiritual warfare will continue to be a reality for us in this life. The enemy opposes God's good and perfect plan. There may be strategies that come against me through circumstances and life-issues and as well as my own strongholds and sin-reactions. While the controlling power of strongholds is broken in our lives as we pray in faith, we often find the patterns of sin-reactions and behaviours live on in habits and automatic responses that have simply become the way we do life. Therefore we need to keep taking authority over them so that the *pattern* as well as the *power* of strongholds is broken.

We are called to exercise the authority of Christ in this way so that it becomes an every-day habit...discerning what is happening in the spiritual realm, identifying God's original plan and purpose for me in whatever situation I face, and deliberately turning my heart and setting my will in obedience to Him. As we walk in this more and more it becomes 'second-nature', simply to put into practice throughout the day.

Better Together

We were not meant to walk the Christian life alone. Our experience is that it helps to have a prayer-partner or small group where we can share what we're seeking breakthrough in and be accountable to others. When you pray for one another, start asking the Lord 'what is coming against this person right now?' 'How does the Lord want this person to respond?' Being willing to share and open up my life to "trusted" others is a vital discipline for anyone who seriously wants to grow in their faith.



The Case for Freedom

- Why should the scriptures emphasise freedom so much?
- Why is it the theme of so many of our songs?
- Why is freedom such a big deal for individuals and for the church?
 - a. **Mercy.** Struggling with strongholds of fear, rejection, unforgiveness etc cause pain and discomfort in our lives and in the lives of others. Mercy alone means we should want to help people get free.
 - b. **Message.** People become Christians on the basis of a promise, that when they commit to Christ, He can set us free from the things that bind us. If that's the message, we need to be bearers of it, not just in words but by changed lives. 'The word must become flesh' (John 1:1-5 and 14)
 - c. **Majesty.** God wants his glory to fill the whole earth. 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive.' God wants to reveal his glory and majesty to the world through what He is doing in my life. God is glorified when I'm pursuing freedom.
 - d. **Mission.** God wants his message to reach all people and has commissioned us as His servants. To the extent that we're bound by strongholds of fear and insecurity, we're not as open or available to the Spirit to work through us and reach people as He intends.
 - e. **Ministry.** We want to be more effective in ministry to others. We long to hear God's voice more clearly, see more healing; encounter God in a deeper way etc. However strongholds of unbelief and pride are resisting the very thing we're desperate for.
 - f. **Making disciples.** Jesus has commanded us to go and make disciples and that involves transformation not just information. We will need to know how to 'set the captives free' and teach others how to exercise their freedom.



Independence Stronghold Worksheet

The symptoms of independence run deep in the human spirit as a result fallen-ness. The temptation to run our own lives was manifest in the Garden of Eden and directly empowered by the enemy. This worksheet is intended to help us identify independence in our lives and corporately, in the life of the church.

1. Self-sufficiency

The deception: Self-sufficiency is safer!

- I know I often act independently of others because they ‘slow me down’ and I constantly find myself thinking they’re not ‘up to the task’.
- I don’t enjoy being in any team-based ministry at church
- I feel I need to ‘prove’ to God that I can do it.
- My need to achieve and be successful often overrides my ability to function in a true team.
- I believe once God has handed out the assignment, it’s up to me to get on with the job.
- I feel I have nothing to offer the wider team
- Frankly, I just find it easier to be independent

2. Fear of Failure

The deception: The Lord gives you something, and then puts all the lofty expectations on you to deliver/prove yourself worthy of it. This deception causes the person to go to extreme lengths to prove self.

- I fear trusting tasks to others because they might fail and let ME down.
- I live with constant low-level fear that I’m not quite good enough/measuring up.
- I tend towards a ‘perfectionist mentality’ (pride).
- I frequently over-react when things go wrong
- I don’t like relying on others
- I am fiercely competitive

3. Lack of seeking the Lord

The deception: I must get things done on my own, without the Lord’s help. The Lord handed out the assignment, now it’s my job to get it done.

- I am tempted to believe I can work out God’s will with my mind.
- I do not regularly believe that the Lord will speak, or care about the details of my life.
- Deep down I believe good management alone will create effective lives and churches.
- I spend large amounts of time trying to make something happen in my own strength.

- I don't consult the Lord about my personal life
- I don't honestly believe the Lord would speak, so I don't ask

4. Lack of unity

The deception: I will not fully be expressing myself and will be 'less of a person' if I submit to the plans and vision of others.

- I rarely submit to the vision and plans of others without criticism or comment.
- I often think: 'I could do a better job than that'.
- I fail to realise the importance of unity to the plan of God for my life.
- I place what I want and desire before the needs of others.
- I frequently make plans and decisions contrary to those in authority over me.
- I often fail or am unwilling to recognise how my actions impact others.
- I do not easily ask for or receive direction from those in authority over me
- I am often critical that the church doesn't do 'this' or 'that' ministry
- In church I like to be involved only in the ministries I think are important
- I with-hold blessing from others

5. Identity based on striving and performance

The deception: I believe I must be perfect, and that perfection is expected of me by others and by God. I still function as one trying to earn others love and trust. *I believe that weakness will mean rejection.*

- I receive comments of admiration and success as 'love'.
- I constantly need to exceed the expectations of others.
- I am apathetic towards projects where I cannot make an immediate, discernible contribution.
- I am a perfectionist and demand that I measure up to my own standards.
- I am often accused by others of being a perfectionist
- If one of these definitions doesn't apply to me perfectly, I won't tick it!!
- I desire to impress people
- I tend not to easily express gratitude to others
- I live with a deep-seated sense of inferiority – fearing others who highlight my sense of inferiority. Correction exposes that I'm not perfect and leaves me feeling hopeless and depressed.

Passivity Stronghold Worksheet

Definition:

Passivity is inactivity where godly obedience *should* be taking place; allowing oneself to be unhelpfully acted upon; submitting without objection or resistance; hesitation on areas of biblical obedience; lack of initiation.

Recognising Passivity

Passivity is not from the Lord, and is a form of rebellion. It occurs in the place where activity should be occurring. God calls us out of passivity. He calls us to be active in our faith, active in building relationships, active in service, active in every area of our lives.

“A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.”
(Proverbs 20:4)

“Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.” (Proverbs 10:4)

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” (Hebrews 6:11-12)

1. Passivity is a lack of initiation

- I walk in passivity when I fail to initiate conversations with others, always waiting for someone to come to me.
- I am passive in building relationships
- I don't initiate activities with others
- I do not affirm others; I withhold words of blessing
- I do not initiate growth in my relationship with the Lord
- I can't seem to motivate myself to read, pray or worship
- I feel no urgency or hunger in my relationship with God
- I know I need someone to pray with me for freedom in some areas, but I never get around to asking for help
- I do not initiate in serving others, because I figure someone else will do it
- I don't believe I can change the way I am
- I often let others do what I could do for myself

2. Passivity is a form of independence, and leads to isolation

- I resist interdependence
- I do not ask for help from the church body
- I do not offer help / service to others in the church body
- I see myself as more of a “private” Christian; I am reserved and keep to myself
- I am critical of the way things are done in my church, and I have doubts about the leadership (I can see many flaws); this is my reason for not getting too involved
- I tend to observe the activities of others (socially or in ministry); I rarely feel motivated or worthy to join in

3. Passivity is a form of resistance or rebellion

- I resist God’s forgiveness by not taking the authority Jesus has given me over my sin
- I do not seek the place of repentance
- I have become familiar with, and indifferent toward, sins in my life
- I do not believe it would do any good to take authority over sins in my life
- I resist receiving the Lord’s gifts
- I do not want to believe that God would give me spiritual gifts, and use them through me
- I resist ‘leadership positions’, because I don’t want that much responsibility or pressure
- I don’t like to do what everyone else does; I am my own person
- It’s just not like me to take the lead or be assertive

4. Passivity allows self-pity to remain

- I am familiar with feelings like fear and rejection, so I tend to believe that is the way things will be for me
- I am comfortable with the way I am
- I am a victim; I don’t know how not to be a victim
- Others are wrong to push me to become someone I am not. I blame others for the way that I am

5. Passivity is about being too comfortable

- I allow myself to be comfortable with where I am spiritually. I’m alright with my walk with God right now
- I allow myself to be comfortable with where I am emotionally. I have always struggled with (for example, depression, insecurity, shyness, fear, loneliness, etc). This is the way things are, so why should I worry about it and try to find freedom?”
- I allow myself to be comfortable with where I am physically-I never get around to taking godly care of myself and my body (ie getting fit/losing weight/ treating my body as a temple of the Holy Spirit

6. Lies / Deceptions:

- “I am not meant to step out and initiate or I would really ‘feel like it’”
- “I will be a failure if I try to initiate”
- “There is nothing wrong with me, so I don’t need to seek change or freedom”
- “I resent people telling me how to act!”

□ Fear Stronghold Worksheet

Most of us do not realise how deeply fear is rooted in our everyday life. The nature of fear is to deceive (mislead by a false appearance or statement; outwit, misrepresent, dupe, misinform, misdirect). The scriptures make it clear that the Lord wants us to be free of fear. Freedom from fear is gained as we:

- Allow the power of the Holy Spirit to uncover the presence of fear in our life.
- Bring fears to the Cross through forgiveness and affirmation of the truth.
- Commit to take action to move in the opposite spirit.

How does fear play out in our lives?

1. Fear of Punishment: little peace, hope, faith or joy

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 4:18)

- My prayer and bible reading is motivated by fear.
- I have a 'Performance-based' relationship with Jesus.
- I have a constant Fear of failing the Lord.
- I have a fear of punishment from God or him withholding his love or gifts.
- I have a Lack of deep intimacy with Jesus.
- I am fearful of the whole 'Freedom' process.

2. Fear of Others (insecurity)

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. (Prov 29:25)

- I am constantly in fear of what other people think or say about me.
- I fear being rejected by those close to me.
- I Fear people in authority.
- I am fearful of confrontation.
- I have a fear of being accountable to someone.

3. Lack of contentment and fear of uncertainty

You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"-because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. (Deut 28:66)

- I fear not knowing God's will or missing the call of God.
- I fear being inadequate to respond to God's call.
- I am fearful of commitment:
- I am afraid that committing myself to something right now may cause me to miss something better;
- I Fear that God will ask too much of me



4. Fear of the Ministry of Jesus

‘Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left’. (Luke 8:37)

- A fear of deliverance and demonic powers
- A fear of praying for healing in case it doesn’t work
- A fear of persecution or rejection by family/friends
- A fear of being regarded as fanatical.
- A fear of the cost of following Christ.
- A fear of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- A fear of false manifestations or deception.

5. Fear becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy

Fear of failure often plays right into the hands of the enemy. Fear can work against our faith, sometimes helping to bring about the failure we fear. How often people are instructed by God or His agents: ‘Don’t be afraid!’ We are not to fear anything.

- I am fearful of falling back into old sins and habits
- I am fearful of not getting married or failing in my marriage
- I am fearful of intimacy and being seen for who we really are.
- I am fearful of not succeeding in a good career.
- I am fearful of disappointing my parents or others we respect.

6. Fear of our past becoming known (and the possible ramifications)

- Fear that our past may disgrace us, or hinder or stop God’s work in our life.
- Fear of God’s punishment for sins with which we currently struggle.
- Fear of shame and guilt for having had an abortion.
- Fear that we may not be healed from scars or wounds that occurred in our past.
- Fear of being found out for ‘who we really are’.

7. Sudden unnatural fears are often from the enemy

‘When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked’. Proverbs 3:24-25

- Fear of loneliness.
- Fear of hopelessness.
- Fear of death.
- Fear of sickness or accidents.
- Fear of cancer.
- Fear of financial hardship



Control Stronghold Worksheet

Definition: Control is based in the fear that God does not have control over our life. Therefore, it is our responsibility to determine and do what is best.

Recognising Control

Control can become so integrated into a personality that we may not be able to detect any element of it. It can hide so deep within us that we may be unable to distinguish between our true, God-given personality and the stronghold of control. Our sense of identity and our emotions can be completely submerged in the stronghold of control. There are few, if any, emotions related to control; feelings typically come when we feel out of control and that we must, therefore, take control. The process by which control establishes itself can be extremely subtle. We may be unable to determine when or where it became a driving force, thinking it simply to have developed as a part of our personality.

1. Control is rooted in fear and manifests itself in selfishness and insecurity. Our attempts to exercise control over others can twist God’s blessing and desire for us into control and manipulation. Examples include:

- Communicating disapproval (verbally or non-verbally) with the aim of changing other people.
- Not telling the whole truth; telling only what we think will serve our purposes.
- Speaking and acting with hidden motives in order to put ourselves in a better light or to fulfil our own desires.
- Exercising authority (genuine or perceived) in a shrewd or devious manner so as to influence others for personal gain.

2. The following characteristics are frequently used to describe those dominated by a controlling spirit:

- Controlling
- Manipulative
- Disobedient
- Resistant
- Direct and overbearing
- Influential
- Take charge
- Opinionated
- Confrontational
- Know-it-all

3. Statements that suggest the presence of a controlling spirit:

- I dominate or butt-in on conversations, whether or not I am a part of those conversations.
- I have a ‘take charge’ personality.
- I have a history of broken friendships or relationships.
- I feel I know what is best for other people.
- I tend to make other people work around my schedule.

- I resist having others speak openly into my life.
- I fear being hurt or rejected by others.
- I am offended when others don't follow my advice.
- I do not find it easy to encourage and build up others.
- I get angry when I or my contributions are not acknowledged.
- When I was growing up, I received approval only after I accomplished or fulfilled specific expectations.
- If someone does not want to do what I want them to do, I become more persuasive until they agree.
- When I don't receive the response I desire immediately, I continue to press for it.
- I am easily frustrated by changes in plans.
- I try to influence others to do things my way.
- I think my way of doing things is the best.
- I want to do things for others, when I think I can do it better than they can.
- I have a hard time accepting the opinions of others.
- I always have an answer to justify my stance or my situation.
- I am afraid of being wrong, so I will push a subject until others give in.
- I get upset when things don't go my way.
- I feel threatened when others have the same gifting or talents I have.
- I want to be the best and sometimes put others down so I look better.
- I try to take control of situations when I am comfortable or when things are not going my way.
- I am upset by group activities in which others do not perform to my standards.
- I feel it is my responsibility to help others understand and 'get better'.
- I am available when it is convenient for me.
- I do or say things so that my needs will be met first (mental, physical or emotional).
- As long as I am satisfied, everything is fine.
- I feel like others try to control me.
- I try to get others to do for me what I can do for myself.
- I frequently feel rejected by others.
- I try to get others to hang out with me even when they don't seem to have time.
- I sometimes make others feel guilty in order to get my way.
- I have my life planned out and resist and resent circumstances that undermine that
- I have an unhealthy need for security; I want to be assured that I have a job, spouse, friends, physical comforts (home electronics, sports equipment, furniture, clothes, nice car etc.)
- I am concerned about my reputation and act in various ways to enhance it.

Insignificance Stronghold Worksheet

Definition: Insignificance is believing that we are lower in order (of less value, of less importance) and status than another; somehow poorer in quality; below average; believing that we are common, low grade, low quality, second-rate, or substandard.

Insignificance is rooted in lies and labels about you and your worth in the sight of God. It is rooted in being overly conscious of one's self, and coming up short when comparing one's self against others. People struggling with insignificance often have significant struggles with envy, anger and coveting as well.

We feel that we do not belong, and we always get short-changed (*self pity*). We can nearly always see how others are greater, or more significant, than we are - in everything. We cannot see our own value. We believe the Lord does not see us or smile upon us, and we often reject the promise that He has a purpose for us. We find no joy in the fact that He has chosen us. We live with buried resentment toward people who represent groups I would like to have been welcomed into. We are often critical of these people because they make us feel inferior.

Insignificance is rooted in the "I can't / I am nothing" lie.

- I am nobody from nowhere.
- I am ugly and weak and to be despised.
- I have nothing to give to anyone.
- You don't want to speak to me because you are superior to me.
- I don't say "hi" to people, because no one knows me and it seems that nobody cares.
- I am shy (or I am often labeled "shy"), because I have nothing to say to others.
- I don't see any "good" in who the Lord created me to be
- I dislike myself.

Insignificance breeds a heightened awareness of self.

- I am always self-conscious and internally focused.
- I often compare myself to others.
- I find myself wondering what others think of me, which leads to a sense of insecurity.

Insignificance means we always lose when comparing ourselves with others.

- I constantly compare myself to others, and I usually fall short.
- I fear speaking to people who I regard as superior to me.
- I covet the gifts of others (boy/girlfriends, jobs, positions, friends, possessions).
- I am jealous of what other people look like, how they act and speak.
- I only build friendships with those I regard as my equals or who I regard as inferior to me.

Insignificance causes us to fear or avoid healthy, God-given challenges intended to bring new growth in our life (*passivity*).

- We are relieved when "the other person" is chosen for an assignment.
- We are fearful or anxious of being responsible for tasks, because we believe we will probably fail.
- We prefer to remain hidden and anonymous, and be passed over for assignments.
- We only choose to do things familiar to us.
- We only speak to people with whom we are familiar.
- We avoid risks (praying out loud, speaking in front of people).



Insignificance rests on heavy unbelief about our authority and our God-given place in the body of Christ.

- The Lord does not take my prayers seriously.
- It's hard for me to believe that God has chosen me for a significant purpose.
- The Lord doesn't speak to me.
- I often question God's presence in my life.
- I do not believe I have any authority or spiritual "punch;" everything I do is weak.
- I can't see my destiny (even when someone tries to tell me), or how I will be used to advance the Kingdom.

Insignificance finds comfort in self-pity.

- I blame others for not seeing anything good in me; "it's not my fault."
- My parents weren't very encouraging to me, so that is why I don't believe in myself.
- "These are just my character traits – God made me this way!"

Insignificance causes us to withhold blessing from others.

- I withhold blessing from others because I have nothing to give.
- I withhold blessing from others because my thoughts/encouragements about others don't really matter to them.

Lies/deceptions.

- False humility: I have nothing to give; you are better than me.
- False peace: I would like things to be easy or comfortable.
- The Lord does not extend His hand of authority over me when I move or speak.
- No one cares about me or sees me.
- Being gifted in service or intercession/prayer (or anything behind-the-scenes) is less significant than being gifted in teaching or leadership.
- False measurement of truth: comparing myself to others is a good measurement of my worth.
- I can never win this battle.
- I must fight the battle on my own strength; it's up to me, and not the Lord.
- Related/intertwined sins: fear, insecurity, criticism, self-pity, passivity.

Insignificance seeks 'man's' approval (1 Samuel 15:30)

- I feel rejected if I am not encouraged or recognized.
- I do what I think others would like me to do.
- I say things I think will cause others to approve of me.
- I feel insecure if others think badly of me.
- I hate unresolved conflict.

Insignificance Leads to Ambition (1 Samuel 15:30)

- I find it hard to cope with failure.
- Success is a very high priority for me.
- I judge myself and others by the measure of their success.
- I want people to think highly of me.
- I value my reputation among those I respect.



Human-Centred Reason Worksheet

- I like to see things in a logical way and struggle to embrace things that appear unprovable and/or are seemingly illogical
- I find people who believe in a world of angels and demons as “over the top”
- I look first for logical and natural reasons for the cause of a problem before asking for the Spirit’s wisdom and understanding
- I have valued and relied on my mind and intellectual capacity to see me through life
- I often find it hard to see with ‘the eyes of faith’ and easily become despondent because I underestimate the power of God to bring change
- My family placed a high value on thinking logically and clearly and on having good solid reasons for thinking / believing something
- I am fearful of the thought that some of my attitudes and behaviours might be energised by spiritual forces I am unaware of. I just don’t ‘go there’.
- I rarely look for an invisible spiritual reason for a natural problem / issue
- I think I understand that much of the battle is ‘spiritual’ in nature, but I am more comfortable working out a solution than asking God to see the situation from his perspective
- I struggle with the idea that things like pride, jealousy, envy, rejection etc are ‘spiritual powers’ and not just human emotions that need to be ‘managed’.
- Surely all I need is to ‘understand God’s Word’ and to get on and live it? This stuff about the ‘spiritual realm’ isn’t my responsibility.



Shame Stronghold Worksheet

Definition

Painful feelings of guilt and fear for things I have done, or had done to me; a pervading sense of ‘condemnation’ for attitudes or actions; a fear of being found ‘wanting’ in different situations; fear and embarrassment of being seen for who I really am.

1. Shame causes us to develop shallow relationships

- I’m afraid that others might find out about my sin/particular sin.
- I have trouble forming trusting relationships because I guard against being too ‘known’ by others
- I am fearful that others can ‘see’ who I really am, stopping me from getting too close to others
- I am in fear that others would reject me if they found out who I really am
- I struggle with feelings of unworthiness or low self-esteem in relation to others
- I find it hard to admit I’m wrong or ask forgiveness because of the shameful feelings I know it will bring

2. Shame leads to Self-condemnation

- I struggle with feelings of inferiority
- I tend to think negatively about myself and battle negative thoughts about myself continually
- When I compare myself to others, I always come out the loser
- I beat myself up continually because of my past
- I tend to think everything is my fault, even when it clearly isn’t
- Being ‘overly responsible’ in situations is a constant issue for me

3. Shame can lead to self-hatred

- I feel ‘dirty’, ruined, like damaged goods
- I have trouble finding intimacy with God because I feel so far from him
- I seem unable to forgive myself and receive God’s forgiveness deeply
- I hate myself and don’t blame others for not wanting to be friends with me...I don’t deserve their friendship anyway
- I feel ashamed about how I look/my appearance
- I distance myself from others and ‘hide’ because I don’t like myself
- I believe people are talking or thinking things about me behind my back



- I don't take care of my body because I don't like what I see in the mirror
- I hate myself for that thing I did/that thing that was done to me

4. Shame brings constant reminders of the past

- I can't stop thinking about what happened
- I constantly fight off disturbing memories of shameful experiences
- I have disturbing dreams and visions about shameful experiences
- I find it hard to live in the 'present' and disqualify myself from legitimate relationships, activities etc because of my 'past'

5. Shame robs me of my spiritual inheritance

- I do not believe God can genuinely forgive me
- I am not convinced about my salvation because of the enormity of what I've done/had done to me
- I will never feel truly 'clean'
- I cannot 'rejoice in the Lord' because of the weight of guilt I carry around with me
- I have no right to believe God has a significant purpose for my life



Hopelessness Stronghold Worksheet

Psalm 43:5 'Why am I discouraged, why so sad? I will put my hope in God, I will praise him again, my Saviour and my God'

Characteristics of Hopelessness

- Seeing no possibility to solve, change or overcome
- Having no expectation of a favourable outcome
- A despairing and despondent attitude

1. Passivity adds to the weight of hopelessness

- I find it difficult to spend time with God when things are challenging
- I have the constant thought go through my head 'what good would it do...?'
- I don't initiate conversations with friends, family or colleagues Gravitate towards tasks that do not require me to move out of fear or my comfort zones
- I expect others to approach me and 'meet me where I am'.
- I struggle to believe I'm needed or my contribution will make any difference, so I withdraw
- I don't confess the sin in my life because I don't believe it will do any good
- I allow personal boundaries to be infringed because I feel powerless to stand up for myself
- I lack motivation to pray or invest in my spiritual life because I don't believe it will make much difference

2. Self-pity and introspection

- I find most of my thoughts are about me and what I can do
- I'm aware I frequently have a 'victim' mentality
- Clinging to my 'right' to be demotivated, passive or even angry in the face of difficulty
- I place a high expectation on other people to make me feel better or included and am frequently upset, disappointed and let down by others

3. Inability to value God's call on my life

- I genuinely believe my life is fairly pointless
- I don't think my not being here would make any real difference
- I have a hard time thinking of things I can genuinely thank the Lord for
- I often despair that I will never break out of this hopeless cycle I'm in



- I admire, yet also deeply resent those who seem confident in God's plan and purpose for them

4. Inability to believe God's future promises

- I am overwhelmed at the state of the world and all its problems.
- I find it hard to pray with faith for future outcomes because I cannot see how they will happen
- I find it difficult to be in church among hope-ful, joyful people
- I find it difficult to genuinely rejoice with others' good news or answered prayer, because I rarely see those for myself
- I have given up praying about things because I no longer think God is listening
- I cannot believe God loves me *equally* as others
- I feel trapped in my current situation because I don't think it will ever change
- I need to 'pull others down' into my own despair to feel 'understood'.

Scriptures to stand on

- 'You are my refuge and shield; I have put my hope in your word. (Ps 119:114)
- 'I know your eyes are upon me, because I put my hope in your unfailing love' (Ps 33:18)
- 'I believe that you delight in me, because I put my hope in your unfailing love' (Ps 147:11)
- 'I know that because I hope in you, you will renew my strength, and I will soar on wings like eagles. I will run and not grow weary, I will walk and not be faint.' (Is 40:31)
- 'And I will not be disappointed...' (Rom 5:5)
- 'You are the God of hope, and you will fill me with joy and peace and I will overflow with hope by your Holy Spirit. And because of this hope, you will give me boldness (Rom 15:13 and 2 Cor 3:12)



Worldly Affection stronghold Worksheet

Severing our affection to the world

6 core areas of 'affection' help bring to light the truths set forth in 2 Cor 6:14-18 and 1 John 2:15-17. This worksheet is designed to help us move beyond a simplistic understanding about love of the world and to expose the deeper issues of the heart.

1. Comfort

Avoiding the life of faith, preferring to live out of our '5 senses'.

- Gravitate towards tasks that do not require me to move out of fear or my comfort zones
- Require a certain amount of money in the bank to feel secure
- I'm constantly focusing on how to reward myself for my work and duties
- My love of comfort frequently stops me from being spiritually proactive
- Indifferent towards evangelism, discipleship and freedom

2. Pleasures

- Overly preoccupied with a hobby or 'side' project
- Emphasis on 'days off' rather than 'days on'
- Most of my non-working times is consumed with Movies, food, leisure time, naps, games, internet etc
- See work as undesirable and necessary. I 'live' mainly for my pleasures
- Constantly fantasizing about future pleasure when trying to focus on other things

3. Status

- Who I know is very important to me
- I prefer the company of people who make me feel important
- My reputation with others is more important than my reputation with God
- I am pre-occupied with the need to impress others
- I am jealous and envious when someone is honoured or promoted above me.

4. credit

- Desire to 'get the credit' for what I do
- I cling to the notion that some or all of my gifting is merited and deserved.
- Tendency to be angry with God (or others) when we don't receive the recognition we think we deserve
- I want to work in a ministry where my contribution can be easily recognized



- I need to be noticed by others for what I do before I feel fulfilled
- The driving need to obtain accolades, certificates of merit etc

5. False Image

- Changing my voice, accent, demeanor to deliberately impress others
- Constantly putting on a 'façade' to feel comfortable in different circumstances
- Fear of letting people see who I really am

6. Approval of Others

- Seek the approval of others for my decisions when God has already clearly spoken
- Hesitant to obey God due to concern about what others might think or say
- I Fear others more than fearing the Lord
- I find it hard to receive and accept God's approval of me, so look to others for it instead

What is the thought, feeling or sensation that persistently comes to mind	What is the lie or stronghold beneath the thought, feeling or sensation?	What it will mean for me to replace this lie with the truth (ie walk in the opposite spirit)	Scriptures to live by
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
5. _____		



Steps to Freedom

The Five 'R's

A brief guide to the biblical principles of freedom and how to exercise our authority in Christ so that we may live 'life in all its fullness' and walk free from strongholds which have held us back in the past.

'Freedom' is discovering my identity and purpose in Jesus and tearing down every stronghold and resistance that stops me walking in its way.

This is not a formula, but a guide to the kind of prayer that, with faith, is powerful in the pulling down of strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).



INTRODUCTION

As part of our ongoing relationship with God, the Holy Spirit brings to mind areas of our life which prevent us from living according to his original design for us (what we are calling 'strongholds'). God has made every provision for us to be free from these hindrances and below is a reminder of the biblical principles of freedom and the necessity of living them out on a daily basis.



"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
(Galatians 5:1)

The foundations of strongholds are rooted in sin. The sin of others against us and our own subsequent sin reactions act as access points that give Satan authority to energise and empower destructive and binding patterns on our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

1 RECOGNISE

This involves recognizing our sin for what it is and being willing to name it. For example, 'frustration' needs to be named 'anger' and/or 'control'. 'Feeling a bit anxious' is really 'fear'. We do this not to condemn ourselves but as a prelude to receiving forgiveness and living openly before God. It may be that ours is a sin reaction to a genuine injustice by someone else. Without excusing those who sinned against us, we nonetheless recognize the strongholds that have been energised in us.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart ... see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-4)

2 REPENT

Forgive & bless those who have sinned against you.

Bring your sin into the light before God, naming it and stating your intention to turn from it.

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:32)*

3 RECEIVE

Take time to consciously receive and thank God for his forgiveness and cleansing, claiming his promise:

“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)

4 REBUKE

Exercise your authority in Christ over the specific energizing work of the enemy with regard to the strongholds you face. You rebuke the powers of darkness with energy and conviction. They have already been defeated by Christ on the cross (Colossians 2:13-15), and have only become part of my life through the enemy’s stealth and my ignorance. I command them to go and refuse to allow them further access in my life.

5 REPLACE

This is essential to on-going freedom and must be embraced on a daily basis. It involves replacing old thoughts and behaviour patterns with biblical truth and obedience.

When we make a choice for God’s Kingdom, a powerful spiritual transaction takes place. We choose to live daily in the ‘opposite spirit’ to our old, sinful ways. Ask the Lord what this looks like in your particular situation. For example, if you are breaking a stronghold of fear, you may need to start making a conscious decision to ‘do’ and ‘face’ the thing you are afraid of, choosing to walk in faith, trust and love. God will empower you as you do!

An important key is not to focus on your emotions as the barometer of freedom. As we choose daily to live in the opposite spirit, we will find the old emotions and behaviours loosening their grip.

It may be helpful to make yourself accountable to a trusted friend while you engage in this process. They can help keep you on track. It can be helpful to repeat the rebuking and replacing steps as needed, especially if we find ourselves tempted to go back to our old way of thinking and behaving.

