

Week 5

Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds



Day 29: Strong Holds!

Monday, October 28th

“The Soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training - sacrifice. In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his maker gave when he created man in his own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of the divine help which alone can sustain him.”

Douglas Mac Arthur, General of the Army, U.S. Army



Today's Challenge: Ministry Visit (Visit a nursing home, food pantry, local jail, homeless center or other ministry)

“It’ll be alright, sir. We’ll make it back.” the First Sergeant tried to reassure his Commander who was uneasy about catching a ride from Baghdad North to Balad, with a unit of “cowboys”. The unit was a Field Artillery unit that was bound for Forward Operating Base (FOB) Paliwoda, but they had to go to LSA Anaconda first. The First Sergeant had struck an agreement with their First Sergeant to hop a ride back to Anaconda with them that night.

As the sun began to go down over the horizon, their First Sergeant began the convoy briefing, which was very lacking compared to the briefs that the First Sergeant and Commander were used to giving to their convoys, before they pushed out. The Commander looked at the First Sergeant and he just shrugged the sub standard briefing off. He trusted his Commander, but in this case he thought that he was being over cautious.

After the sun had disappeared the vehicles rolled out a gate and began their 56 mile journey. It would take approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes to cover the expanse of ground, barring that their convoy did not come under some kind of attack. Insurgent forces preferred to operate at night, especially in the neighborhoods around Camp Victory. The First Sergeant looked over at his commander and nodded his head confidently. The Commander looked back exchanging a glance of uncertainty.

About 14 minutes into the trek, the convoy came to an abrupt halt pulling to the side of the road. The Commander and First Sergeant, who were sitting in the back seats of the armored vehicle, looked through the tiny windows trying to see what was going on. The chatter through the TACNET headsets

was garbled. It was clear however that something was not right. The First Sergeant could barely make out the silhouette of an American M1 Abrams tank; sitting positioned on the opposite side of the road, about 200 meters (about 600 feet) ahead of where they were stopped.

After a short time the convoy rolled forward slowly and pulled up next to the tank. The vehicle driver, opened the tiny, bulletproof window and asked a Soldier standing outside of the tank what the delay was. The Soldier laughed and told the driver that their convoy had just driven through an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Corridor (a strip of road or other avenue of approach where at least one IED has been detected. Usually after detection the area or “corridor” is sealed off from both ends). There should have been a vehicle to stop oncoming vehicles on the other side of the corridor, but there was not. The First Sergeant looked toward his Commander. The Commander just shook his head back and forth and sat back into his seat.

In the wee hours of the morning, the First Sergeant took a sip of water, unable to sleep after they returned to the LSA. He looked at the cravat (big handkerchief) that hung on his wall. The desert cammo piece of cloth had the entire verse of Psalm 91 silk screened across it. He read the entire Psalm but was hit by verse 7, “A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you”. They had faced the very real possibility of death, yet once again, on that night. But as the Psalm said they were protected...

“The LORD is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life- of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1



Daily Reading

Strongholds are defined as, “a mindset that accepts a situation as unchangeable even though it is against the Will of God. It is something that captures you and you see no way out” (Evans, 2007, Spiritual Warfare Sermon Series). They are “faulty thinking patterns based on lies and deception” (<http://www.greatbiblestudy.com/strongholds.php>, 2019). As we have already mentioned many times in this study Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). Deception is one of the tools that he uses as the foundation for building strongholds in our minds.

A further look at strongholds tells us that they will control us and that there are Physical and Mental Strongholds that exist (Evans, 2007, Spiritual Warfare Sermon Series). These Physical Strongholds, where our flesh is captured, can include but are not limited to; abuse, incest, rape, patterns of living, life dominating, substance abuse, etc. The Mental Strongholds, where our minds or thoughts are captured that we face, can be even greater than the physical ones. These can include, but are not

limited to; sexual addictions (such as pornography), addictions to social media and other forms of virtual reality, idoitary, negative parental upbringing and improper views of God and of self, etc. Strongholds can take us hostage and it doesn't take much for Satan to place a stronghold in place. One lie, doubt, word, or action can be all it takes for that stronghold to take root. These can remove us from the status of being a fighting warrior in this great war, where we become Prisoners of War (POWs); and in some cases we don't even realize it! Some Christians have even been led to believe that strong holds that they have, are supposed to be there.

Another thing to consider about strongholds is that in most cases people in the physical realm do not cause us to face strongholds. The struggle that we are fighting in the Great War is against spiritual beings. Strongholds, especially those of the mind, are *our* issue. People (especially those who Satan may be using against us in the physical realm) can only encourage us to pick the easy wrong over the hard(er) right. I often remind my sons that the only person who can affect their attitude or make them do something wrong is them!

So how does the Satan build strongholds within us? He begins in the normal way that he does with everything, by lying. He tries to focus on what we have done wrong, such as past failures, sinful patterns or behaviors, or things that we should have let go of long ago. He tries to keep these things at the forefront. In the same way that he tries to "relate" to people to get them to see things his way, he lie to us! Where God forgives us when we truly repent, Satan tries to invalidate that forgiveness. We must not give him an inch. We must not allow him to deceive us. If we start to believe the devil's lies and begin to focus on our failures, it will begin to cripple us spiritually and strongholds will start to form. We will begin to see ourselves in a defeated manner instead of the victorious way that scripture describes us as.

Strongholds can and will affect the way we feel. When we allow ourselves to think a certain way, then our feelings and emotions can have a corresponding effect. So if we see ourselves as failures, then we will begin to feel that same defeat. We must remember that the way we think will directly affect the way we feel.

We talked about being "Battle Minded" on Day 7. We must realize that being Battle Minded is what can carry us through the battle without incurring strongholds. We will close today's devotional with a bit of hope to carry until tomorrow. In Psalm 27:1 we are told, "The LORD is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the **stronghold** of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?" In this passage we see that Satan is not the only one who can affect strongholds. When we seek strongholds in the Lord than nothing can stop us...

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds



Kid Friendly Ideas



Day 30: Identifying Strongholds (General)

Tuesday, October 29th

“He that outlives this day, and comes safe home, Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named, And rouse him at the name of Crispin...Then will he strip his sleeves and show his scars, And say, “These wounds I had on Crispin’s day.” Old men forget, yet all shall be forgot, But he’ll remember with advantages What feats he did that day; then shall our names...Be in their flowering cups freshly remember’d.”

William Shakespear, Henry V, Act IV, Scene III



Today’s Challenge: Testimony. Create an electronic testimony or write out your testimony. Share about your life before and after you met Jesus.

The Command Staff had been at the Headquarters of the 52nd Military Police Brigade for over three hours. The Camp Victory Military Police Operation Center (MPOC) Desk Sergeant sat uneasily awaiting them to return to the MPOC. Suddenly the door to the MPOC opened and the Soldiers of the staff entered. They silently walked directly into the Operation Officers office and closed the door. THE Desk Sergeant sighed knowing that it would be a while longer before he had any news. Around 1400 hours (2 pm) the staff exited and the First Sergeant approached the desk area. “get everyone assembled in the common area (an area behind the MPOC that a camouflage net covered).” “Yes. First Sergeant.” his Desk Sergeant acknowledged, knowing that must have been big news coming.

The unit was assembled “under the net”, including an addition 12 Soldiers which had been convoyed down from Balad. The Provost Marshal stood centered on the formation standing above on a wooden deck off the back of the MPOC. She looked out over them and received the report from her First Sergeant, who stood in front of the 35 Soldiers. The unit Guidon (or Unit Flag) stood just to the First Sergeant’s left rear, with his Human Resources Sergeant gripping it tightly.

“We are about to embark upon a great operation. The 52nd MP Brigade has tasked our unit to take part in Operation Lightning (the operations codename).” The Provost Marshal read the applicable parts of the order, which the Command Staff had deemed critical for them to know. Her hand shook a bit as she read the order to the Soldiers who stood in the 20 degree heat. This was not going to be like any other operation that had been undertaken in the city of Baghdad to date. The First Sergeant had a

deep sense of foreboding connected to this operation. He could not shake it, even though he had seen his share of peril in this war. He looked back over his right shoulder and then over his left, at the Military Police Soldiers that stood behind him. He had never more proud of any Soldiers that he had been in charge of. He knew that they would perform admirably.

Later behind the MPOC several Soldiers sat around a small bonfire. It had become a tradition at the Camp Victory MPOC that his Soldiers would often gather around the fire pit and fellowship. This night was no different. He had made his rounds to see the Soldiers that had chosen not to attend the gathering and ensure that they were alright. Then he returned and stood outside of the 10 feet tall, concrete barriers that surrounded the MPOC. He just watched from around the side of the barriers as his Soldiers sat relatively quiet. They sat around the fire drinking colas and smoking cigars. Smoking “stogies” had become another tradition within the unit. Even Wilson took a puff off on, exhaling the intense smoke coughing several times. The First Sergeant quietly laughed.

He continued to watch his Soldiers as his mind wandered thinking of the mission ahead. Tomorrow he would be taking Wilson and Waters into combat. His 18 year old driver and gunner, sat with their fellow Soldiers cleaning their weapons and prepping themselves for battle. The First Sergeant thought about entering the MPOC through the main entrance and just going into the desk area, but as he turned to leave. he reconsidered. Maybe his Soldiers needed to see him there, he thought.

He entered through the T Wall barriers and his Soldiers shot up to their feet, acknowledging that he had entered the area. “At ease, Soldiers.” the gruff First Sergeant quietly spoke as he neared the fire. “Stogie, First Sergeant?” Waters asked handing him a cigar. “I’m good, Water’s. You keep it for when we get back. When we come back. I’ll take it then.” he said to them with a nod. The Soldiers all nodded back to him. He could see their faces dimly lit by the fire. He was struck by the way that the light cast across them. He had never looked upon them the way he did on this night. He had always wanted to bring them all home, but tonight was different. He looked at them not just as his Soldiers, but as his family. It was not merely his duty to protect them. He had a deep personal desire to see them through this operation. He thought back to August 2001, being at the US Army Infantry Advanced Non-Commissioned Officer Course (ANCOG) (the executive level leadership school for US Army Sergeants). He thought back to the quote (which is our quote of the day). He remembered how William Shakespere had proclaimed the way that King Henry disguised himself and circulated around the encampment to be with his Soldiers. This is the first time since they had been in Iraq, that he had sat amongst them like this. Like King Henry did. He was normally off somewhere completing paperwork that needed to be done after the long days duty had been completed. He had missed out on so much fellowship time with these brave men and women. Over the last few months he had become familiar with many of them, but not as familiar as he should have been. After tomorrow he knew that there was a very real possibility that he could be called to speak at some Final Salute Ceremonies, for these

valiant warriors. What would he say about them? Would the Lord give him the words? Would he carry the guilt of not being able to bring them all home alive with him?

So many questions. So many unknowns. So many things that could go wrong. At that moment the random thoughts of the motto of the US Navy SEALs ran through his mind, "The only easy day was yesterday." This would certainly be true after tomorrow. Then he looked to Waters and punched him in the leg saying, "On second thought, I'll take that stogie. I can chew on the (he cursed) thing." All the Soldiers cheered "Hooah" around as the First Sergeant took the cigar...

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." 2 Corinthians 10:4



Daily Reading

As we saw in today's vignette the First Sergeant allowed strongholds to creep into his mind as he contemplated the possible negative outcomes of the coming battle. Strongholds were a part of the First Sergeant's thought process throughout many of the vignettes. He always seemed to manage to overcome them however. In our daily lives we must learn how to overcome our strongholds as well.

In today's study we will look at identifying strongholds. Although strongholds can come in many different forms for almost every different person; we will look in general terms today at some of the most prevalent strongholds, that most all Christians face.

In June and July of 2017, Travis Penn the Pastor for Crosslife Church, gave a rousing sermon series on the "Seven Deadly Sins". We will detail in general terms how Satan will try to create strongholds through those seven sins:

Laziness (or slothfulness) can be defined as "decline in activity or exertion: not energetic or vigorous: "The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway" (Proverbs 15:19). "Laziness to the point of where you stop doing the Will of God. Laziness can destroy works" (Penn, 2017). If the Devil can infiltrate our minds and make us believe that it's alright to be "lazy" to the point where we stop doing God's Will then he has effectively neutralized us. In order for us to fight Laziness we must be diligent, intentional, and allow the Spirit to lead us as to what we must do. "We must be diligent in serving the Lord through our labor" (Penn, 2017)

Greed is an intense, excessive and selfish desire for something: “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Ephesians 4:19). This can include bribery (Proverbs 15:27), dissension (Proverbs 28:25), abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15), power (Matthew 23:25), and a host of other immoral deeds. When the Devil can tempt us with the Pride of Life he can cause us to be greedy. It says in Proverbs 15:27 that “Greed bring ruin...”. If we allow him to, Satan will ruin our lives through greed. On the flip side of this coin is generosity, or the giving with a joyful heart. When we give generously scripture tells us that we will be rewarded.

Lust is to have an intense desire or need: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). We have already cited many times in this study about 1 John 2:16 where it talks about the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. This is a unique stronghold that the Devil can use, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.” When Satan can deceive us into believing that we must sin “against our own body” he can exercise a great control over us. We must practice great humility and chastity before God and allow the Spirit to lead away or keep us away from this powerful stronghold.

Envy (Covetess) is a painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage: “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:1-2). This is a “counting of other people’s blessings” (Penn, 2017). If Satan can get us to gelously pursue what other people have he can distract us from accomplishing God’s Will. This can include hypocrisy, deceit, and slander in its worst forms. We must allow ourselves to bask in the blessings that God has given us! One way that always helps me to fight envy is to remember how little the people of the world have outside of our country. We are so blessed. Why squabble over trinkets?

Pride is a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired (Merriam-Webster, 2019): “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Examples of pride are the ideas of arrogance, cynical insensitivity to the needs of others, and presumption. When the Devil can trick us into thinking too highly of ourselves, where does that leave God? “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are **higher** than the earth, so are **my** ways **higher** than your ways and **my** thoughts than your thoughts” Isaiah 55:8-9. Let us exalt the Lord above ourselves with great humility!



Even as I write this study I always make sure that I tell people that I am not the one writing it, but the Lord is writing it through me.

Gluttony is an excess in eating, drinking, or doing anything that pulls you away from God: “for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags” (Proverbs 23:21). This can be where substance abuse creeps in. But this is not the only example of gluttony. Doing anything in excess, especially when it leads to sin, is the sin of gluttony. Excessive worry is also gluttony. So as we can see being gluttonous has far broader meaning and consequences than most people view this sin having. By controlling our passions with the Will of the Warrior and relying on the Spirit of the Warrior for strength we can combat this sometimes less identifiable sin.

Wrath is a strong vengeful anger or indignation: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). If Satan can convince us to create anger within ourselves it can cause us to lose the ability to think rationally. With this loss of rational thought, he can work in a number of ways in our thoughts. Once he has infiltrated our thoughts then he can begin to build strongholds in our minds. Anger is a key component in Satan’s strategy for infiltration into our minds through irrational and erratic thoughts or thought patterns.

Wow! There are seven ways that Satan can use *us* against *us*! I was very careful in my wording about how Satan can use sin against us. Short of the possession of our body by an angelic being, Satan can not *make* us do anything. *We* must make the choice to sin! The consequence of sin is ultimately death, but it can also lead to Satan’s ability to form these strongholds that allow him access to our minds and ultimately our hearts. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to combat Satan at every turn and keep the establishment of strongholds from forming...



Kid Friendly Ideas



Day 31: Identifying & Overcoming Personal Strongholds (Part 1)

Wednesday, October 30th

“Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all the others.”

Winston Churchill



Today's Challenge: Share your testimony at church. You can share your video testimony or your written testimony or share it “live.” :)

The passage of the Line of Departure (LD) (leaving friendly territory and entering hostile territory) had went well. The Tigris River, which was the LD for all of the forces of the 52nd MP Brigade projecting into Sadr City, was relatively clear. The First Sergeant looked in the mirror of his vehicle as his convoy exited the Yafa Street Bridge to see two American M1A2 Tanks roll across the road. These tanks put a 120 ton, impenetrable, titanium wall between them and the bulk of American Forces in Baghdad. The 64th Armor Regiment of 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team had been tasked to cut off all access to the nine bridges from the North side of the River until further notice. The First Sergeant knew that the “Iron Fist” Regiment would do just that without fail. It was up to them to keep the routes North of the River open.

Traveling up Yafa Street the First Sergeant received a call from the Brigade Operations Center, diverting them from their original mission, to sweeping a series of streets adjacent (beside) to that route to clear suspected demonstrators. He looked on his Blue Force Tracker Computer Screen and compared the digital map with the paper map that he had, ascertaining that they were nearly to the turn off point that they would need to enter into the neighborhood.

The convoy of four vehicles turned onto the access road followed by two other convoys of four vehicles. These two convoys had been directed to support the mission. The 12 vehicles drove across a deep, aqua green, canal on a rickety bridge that would lead them into the Baghdad Neighborhood. The First Sergeant curled his lips under looking into the neighborhood thinking, ‘it looks the same as every other neighborhood; like a (an obscenity).’ He crinkled up his nose and shook his head in a negative manner, seeing the area that they would be rolling into. The streets were narrow and restrictive with

tall multi-story buildings all around. These confined roads surrounded by elevated positions were perfect sites for insurgents to ambush them. “Head on a swivel, Wilson.” the First Sergeant audibly to his 18 year old, female gunner. “Hooah!” Wilson replied engaging the locking mechanism on the Gunner’s Cupala. Her M240B machine gun was oriented directly to the 12 O’Clock position (directly to the front) of their vehicle. She pulled the weapon in tight, ready to expend 200 rounds of 7.62 millimeter ammunition into anything that threatened their vehicle.

The First Sergeant signalled to James Waters to move forward toward the second road of the neighborhood that appeared to have several people standing in a mass grouping. Suddenly the First Sergeant heard a voice, “Don’t go down that road.” The voice boomed in his ears, yet was extremely calm and composed. He tapped his head set which was tightly pressed against his head under his helmet. The voice echoed again, “Don’t go down that road.” The First Sergeant signalled to his driver to stop and the vehicles all stopped. The First Sergeant looked at the paper map and saw that there was a secondary ally way to the East of the street, that they could drive around to get the other side of the neighborhood. “Enforcer elements, Enforcer Five’s convoy will proceed up the ally way to the other side of the neighborhood. Predator Two Seven, your convoy will remain in this position to provide an overwatch and support by fire (four vehicles that would stay on an elevated piece of terrain to provide covering fire) if need be. Predator Three Two, you will continue down the third street to the West of the neighborhood and rally with Enforcer Five’s convoy on the far side of the neighborhood. Enforcer Five, out.” The First Sergeant ordered through the radio, not being able to shake the voice that he had heard.

As their convoy turned onto the ally he saw Predator 32s convoy turn into the second road and not the third. His eyes widened and he tried to contact them on the radio with no answer. He signalled to Jim Waters to accelerate down the ally way to get to the other side of the neighborhood quicker. As the four vehicles rounded the neighbor's North Side, they heard a loud “Boom”! Wilson audibly through the radio, for them to look to the South, where a plum of dark smoke was bellowing. “Get us over there!” he directed to his driver.

Upon pulling up to where the second road came out on the North side of the neighborhood, they saw Predator 32s convoy stalled on the road. The First Sergeant had been quoted as saying, “One street in Baghdad they will throw roses at you and the very next street over they will throw rocks”. But today no rocks had been thrown. The second vehicle in the convoy had been hit by some type of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and was on fire. The street was relatively clear now, with only a few civilians that were running to get out of the area.

The First Sergeant and his crew surveyed the surrounding rooftops and could see no insurgents present, so the First Sergeant ordered Waters to drive down the road. He hoped that the voice he had heard wasn’t talking about the remainder of the road that they were about to travel down.

Upon arriving on the North side of the convoys position, the First Sergeant exited his vehicle walking toward the convoy. The squad was treating the casualties of the blown up vehicles in a casualty

collection point inside the cover of rear vehicle. When the First Sergeant walked passed the blown up vehicle he leaned over inside of the cab and saw the devastation that the bomb had left.

Then he looked to his left to see a Soldier that appeared to be resting against the rear vehicle. "Are you injured Soldier?" he asked nearing the young Soldier. The Soldier just sat with his weapon lying on the ground. His knees were tight against his body armor and he had his arms tightly wrapped around his legs. He rocked back and forth and made no sound. Amongst all the chaos the First Sergeant could smell the distinct smell of a dehydrated person's urine. He looked around the Soldier who was sitting in a puddle of his own urine.

The First Sergeant knelt down by the Soldier and took him by the shoulders. "You have to move. We need your help. We have to get these guys back to the Casualty Collection Point for evac(uation)." he said in a stern but somewhat compassionate voice. The Soldier just looked at the First Sergeant and said nothing and did nothing. "I got him Top!" his Team Leader expressed to the First Sergeant, grabbing the Soldier by the handle on the back of his body armor, lifting him up from the ground. The First Sergeant watched as the Team Leader drug the terrified Soldier around the Rear vehicle and stuffed him into the rear door...

"Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me." Psalm 144:1-2



Daily Reading

Last week in the Way of the Warrior we talked about fear and how you must use courage to overcome fear. Fear can become a stronghold if you allow it to. In today's vignette we saw fear once again in its physical manifestation, in the Soldier who was immobilized by it. In battle there will be fear, trust me! It's what you do with that fear that matters.

After yesterday you may already feel beat down over this part of the series. How do we defeat these strongholds that it seems the Devil can easily trick us into adopting? Well let's look at the verse of the day. "Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues

peoples under me.” _ Psalm 144:1-2. Alright, I’ve before and I’ll ask again, who's ready to go punch a giant! This verse should give us some comfort to proceed from.

On Day 1 of this study we made it clear that Satan will try to hit us in four areas of our life. Today and tomorrow we will focus on how he tries to use strongholds in our Personal Lives. But take heart we will also talk about how to overcome them. We know that Satan will try to infiltrate our thoughts (minds) and our feelings (heart). Before we go any further, let me address something that was alluded to yesterday. There are many Christian Warriors in the fight today that have strongholds in place in their minds or hearts already! These next two weeks should be weeks of self-confrontation for everyone going through this study. If you are a warrior that has any strongholds, now is the time to identify the specific strongholds that Satan has tricked you into believing that you should or must have. By identifying them you can get rid of them, and we’re going to talk about how to do that.

Yesterday we talked in general terms of how Satan could use the Seven “Deadly Sins” to allow him to infiltrate our minds and hearts. We also listed several examples on Day 1 of common (not all of course) ways that the Devil can hit us in our personal lives. Let’s take a look at those examples in brief again and then we’ll get down to how to eradicate them:

Depression is defined as feelings of severe despondency and dejection (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Sometimes we just don’t feel like ourselves. After this study, I hope that we all realize that depression could very well be caused by threats from the spiritual realm carrying over to the physical realm. With depression we must realize that this could be from a prolonged attack from spiritual forces that has brought us to a point where we have become so despondent that now we are POWs.

Downtrodedness as defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as “suffering oppression”. This suffering of opposition could be something as small as being questioned about a point of view upto and including severe physical, mental, or emotional persecution. Using a term from Day 25 study, with many *avenues of approach* that Satan can use to hit you, he might extensively use people that are under his influence to begin or intensify your downtrodedness. My son was “bullied” at school one day, which led to some mild anxiety and downtrodedness for him.

Discouragement is “is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow” (Ward, 1989, P.13). This amazing definition of discouragement by author William Ward, addresses exactly what we must fight against in this area. We must let the past go, be content in the present, and not fear the future, because God is in all those places. We must always be grateful for our blessings,, be open to the opportunities that God provides, and have faith that God will always be there for us.



Defeat is when we walk around like we have already lost the Great War. When we allow ourselves to live a defeated life, we will be truly defeated. We will miss out on our blessings, we will be ineffective as Christian Warriors, and we will not be able to fight and win the battles of the Great War.

Personality disorders is a psychological term for “a type of mental disorder in which you have a rigid and unhealthy pattern of thinking, functioning and behaving. A person with a personality disorder has trouble perceiving and relating to situations and people” (mayoclinic.org, 2019). There are several different types of these disorders. These sometimes serious mental issues can have different causes, but can be related to spiritual forces attacking us in the physical realm.

All of these issues and many others, can come upon us a varying rates depending upon the enemy’s method of attack.

Another highly destructive stronghold that Satan uses against us is an improper view of God. Like in the garden where he got Eve to change her view of God, he will do the same with us. We must not fall for these tricks. But we must also ensure that as Christian Warriors that we see God with the correct view. Some Christians view God as just a strict, judgmental, authoritarian master. This is the way that I viewed God for the early part of my life. On the other hand some Christians view God as just a flowery, all loving, *fair* God, that will forgive us of our sins, no matter what. Satan would be good with us viewing God either way, because neither of those characterizations is a true representation of God’s character in its entirety. God is loving (1 John 4:8). God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4). God will forgive us of our sins (1 John 1:9). At the same time God will judge us (Revelation 20:15). We must know God’s character in its entirety and not just see the view of God that Satan wants us to see.

No matter what personal stronghold Satan has laid against you there is always hope. You can never travel away from God too far for Him to help you. I often like to put it this way to people. You could travel all the years of your life and keep walking away from God. Now as Christians we know that you would miss out on abundant blessings and you would also miss out on being able to do the work that God has for you to do. You would miss out on a relationship like no other that you can have with any human. You would miss out on rewards that you would have received if you had not kept walking and did what you were called to do. But if you stopped and just turn around the Lord will welcome you back as it says in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”...



Kid Friendly Ideas

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds





Day 32: Identifying & Overcoming Personal Strongholds (Part 2)

Thursday, October 31st

“History does not long entrust Freedom to the weak or the timid.” Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953



Today's Challenge: Prayer Walk. Take a prayer walk around your neighborhood. (Or around your house)

The First Sergeant's convoy of four tactical vehicles turned onto Thawra Street headed toward their destination – Rafidain Police Station. The Coalition Designation for this Iraqi Police (IP) Station was IP Station # 103. The First Sergeant had never been here, but he had heard stories of how “hot” the district was. Today this district would no doubt be on fire. IP Station # 103 was positioned directly in between two major Mosques that were known to be highly loyal to Cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army were the ones responsible for the violence being incited against Coalition Forces in Baghdad. The Mosque of Saba Al-Dujail was the largest mosque in the district and sat five blocks away from the station, with the The Mosque of the Prophet Abu Al-Qasim Muhammad, setting just one block away.

The streets had been relatively quiet since pulling past Sheriqua Road, where the convoy had taken sporadic fire from al-Sadr Militiamen. The First Sergeant was glad to see Iraqi Police (IPs) Officers manning the checkpoint at the main gate to the compound that surrounded the station. The Station was a large station, towering five stories into the air. It had the traditional marking that all IP stations in Baghdad had; dark and light blue lines striped across the surface of the building at a 45-degree angle. The station appeared to be intact, so The First Sergeant prayed that they would be able to take a much-needed break inside this “semi-secure” position.

Upon rolling into the perimeter he examined the walls of the compound which seemed to be in good repair and would likely hold against the militia that he suspected were lurking outside. They quickly dismounted the vehicles leaving one Soldier in each vehicle to pull security of the surrounding walls.

The First Sergeant entered the Station Commander's Office and found an obese, Iraqi Colonel behind his desk. The interpreter came along side of the desk and intervened as the First Sergeant began to



question the Colonel, regarding the current tactical situation in the district. The two exchanged information. The First Sergeant was not surprised that the IPs had little knowledge of what was going on within the district, as the Colonel had no IPs out on patrol. The First Sergeant however, had ascertained this after entering the compound, seeing all the IPs loitering around in their body armor, helmets, and AK 47s.

Suddenly from outside the IP station's main building The First Sergeant heard weapons fire. He exited the building to see the IPs scurrying for cover. His gunners were poised in all different directions inside their tactical vehicles cover a 360-degree security perimeter with the vehicle machine guns. The First Sergeant squinted hard as an explosion sounded from outside the compound wall. The explosion sounded muffled and weak. He had to get to a position where he could see what was unfolding outside of the compound, so he darted back into the IP station and rounded the corner. He looked up the decrepit staircase and dashed up the four flights of stairs, nearly tripped on the sand covered staircase.

Once on the roof, he saw that there was a machine gun, that was fully loaded but had no one manning it. He snorted in frustration and moved toward the gun, out of breath from his climb. He looked skyward as he felt the intensity of the searing 120-degree heat beat down on him as he poured with sweat. His heart felt as though it would bust his body armor open from beating so hard. He knew that some of his exhaustion from the fear of what he expected to see outside of the compound.

As he neared the machine gun, he reached up grasping the pistol grip of the weapon with his right hand, releasing it from its stand with the left. The 40-year old, Soviet made machine gun had a thick coat of rust across the top of the gun and he had his doubts that it would even fire. None the less he pulled the gun tightly against his right hip and took a deep breath. The First Sergeant was in total dread at what would come next.

He looked directly over the side of the compound's wall to see several insurgents scattered around in the ally way with AK 47s, not paying attention to what was going on above them. The First Sergeant quickly scanned them all and as he moved his eyes toward the compound wall, he could clearly see that one of them was placing a large bag against the wall, just adjacent to where his squad was on the ground in the compound. It was a bomb. A big bomb. His eyes widened, his nostrils flared and the hair on the back of his neck stood up, as he realized what they were doing. 'If they blow a hole in the wall they'll get into the compound', he thought. He knew that if the band of insurgents got into the compound that they would kill many people, including some of his Soldiers. These men and women were just like his family. He squinted his eyes as it became clear what he needed to do to protect them.

The First Sergeant leaned out over the wall and did what needed to be done...

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9



Daily Reading

Just as the First Sergeant did what he needed to do, we as Christian Soldiers must do what we need to do to live in this perpetual “state of warfare”, which we find ourselves in. Our Families, friends, and churches are counting on us to “stand in the gap” even when times are tough. They are counting on us to face down whatever giants come at God’s people, just as David did with Goliath. In fact, when David was faced with this giant he did not run and hide. He did not hesitate. We are told in God’s Word in 1 Samuel 17:48, that “As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him” (Biblehub.com).

For the last three days we’ve been defining and talking about the identification of strongholds. Today go onto the offense! We’re going to look at overcoming them! Dr Tony Evans in his 12 part sermon on Spiritual Warfare has identified four key areas that are needed when overcoming personal strongholds:

We must remember our position in Christ. During week 2 we talked about the authority that Jesus has. In fact we saw in Matthew 28:18, that Jesus has been given “ALL authority in Heaven and on Earth”. Pastor Evans points out that this is “the road to deliverance and freedom”. We must be reminded in Ephesians 2:6, “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,”. When we access our authority in Christ (being “seated with Him” we are victorious. Since we said that Jesus is in Heaven at the right hand of God, then our minds and our thoughts need to be focused on the things in Heaven. If our minds are set on Earthly things we will be apt to seek Earthly answers to rid of our strongholds first. This seeking of worldly ways before we seek God can not deliver a Heavenly response. We must take legal authority over Satan. As Christian Warriors, who have put our trust in Christ and take power from His authority; we have been placed in authority (Psalm 8:5) over Satan. This “crowning with Glory and Honor” over angels that we were created “just a little lower than” is what tells us of this authority. Satan hates to be reminded of this fact. Many Christian Warriors not only don’t seek or use this authority, but often forget that it’s there.

We must remember the provision that God gives. “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” _ James 4:6-7. God’s Grace is far greater than any sin that we can commit. Therefore, regardless of what happened to us in the past, not saying that happenings and events in the past don’t matter (to us), God’s Grace is all sufficient to wipe it out! No matter where we

find ourselves in life, God's Grace is greater! So how do we get Grace? Look back at verse 7 of James 4. Submit ourselves to God! Too often Christian Warriors find themselves not submitting to God because we are still fighting the battles ourselves. When we lose the battle we are not submitted to God. Once we have submitted through acknowledgement that we can't save ourselves and then make the commitment to do God's Will or as Philippians 2:13 puts it, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." Now that we have submitted let's take this to the next level. We need to ask God to bless us. Let's look at what James 4:8 says. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (NKJV). When we draw near to the Lord He will bring the blessing to us (James 4:10). As we draw closer to God, the Devil will flee from us.

We must Repent of our sins. In James 4:8-9 we are told to, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." I said this week was about self-confrontation. It's time for us all to confront our sins. We must decide TODAY that we are going to call them what they are - sins! Not mistakes. Not flukes. Not screw ups. We must stop pointing fingers at others. We must stop blaming traumatic or unfortunate events from the past that happened to us. These events do not excuse us from sin and repentance that we made of past sins does not exonerate us for current sins. We must stop letting circumstances and situations dictate who we are and control us. We are not bound by any of this. We are Christian Warriors! Children of the most High God (Psalm 82:6). "Jesus didn't die for mistakes" (Evans, 2007, Spiritual Warfare Sermon Series).

We must resist the Devil. It says it in James 4:7! This entire series has been about standing against the spiritual forces of evil. There has been promise throughout the scripture that we have looked at today. But I want to look at 1 Peter:8-10 to see even greater promise in resisting the Devil, "⁸Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will **Himself** restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." Did you catch the bolded word there? The Lord **Himself** will save us from Satan. We can force Satan to leave our minds and our hearts, to abandon his strongholds within us, by using one weapon above all others - The Sword of the Spirit! The Word of God is the only way to resist Satan. We saw this in Matthew 4, where Jesus countered the Devil at every deceit that he tried to speak upon Jesus. Strongholds can not be cleared through "positive thinking", self help, or behavioral modification. The only way we can free ourselves from the strongholds that dominate our personal lives is through Jesus...

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds



Kid Friendly Ideas



Day 33: Identifying & Overcoming Family Strongholds (Part 1)

Friday, November 1st

“I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism and everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a Soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country...P. S. The Lord is on our side”

William Barret Travis, Lieutenant Colonel, Garrison Commander of “the Alamo”



Today’s Challenge: Do a Special Favor for an Immediate Family Member

After concluding action at IP Station #103, The First Sergeant’s convoy received orders to travel down Thawra Street and conduct resupply operations near the Al-Kindy Medical School, just short of Al-Kah Hal Street. Their machine gun ammunition was critically low, and they were blessed enough to get a resupply from UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopters that were bringing ammunition and supplies into Sadr City. This blessing would not be without risk though. They had been tasked to escort a convoy of wounded Coalition Forces back to a Casualty Collection Point (CCP) (an area setup to treat wounded Soldiers with higher level medical care than can be rendered by the average Soldier and to prepare those casualties for evacuation to higher level medical treatment facilities), which was back across the Tigris River, at the Traffic Circle (roundabout) at the intersection of Thawra and Hayfa Street.

The Blackhawk was already in bound with ammunition to the Drop Zone (DZ), in a carrying configuration known as a Sling Load. This was where the helicopter would fly with large, nylon, net-like device or cargo bag, attached to the bottom of the chopper. The First Sergeant’s Convoy had to cover almost eight city blocks to get to their Drop Zone (DZ), where the helicopter crew would “drop” their resupply. There were supposed to be forces there to seize and retain the area for the bird, however the First Sergeant was not confident that would happen. He could see these forces on his computer screen, and they were farther away from the DZ than their convoy was. The last reports from intelligence

showed a minor concentration of protesters around the Al-Kindy Medical School, that appeared to be protesting in support of the Madhi Army's campaign. The First Sergeant prayed that they would be easily spooked if they came upon American Forces that looked like they were a hard target. He instructed the convoy to roll into the DZ full speed and with "guns up". He peered up through the cupola to see Wilson manning her machine gun; appearing to be ready for anything.

The convoy rolled into the DZ and the four tactical vehicles spread out through the area, establishing 360-degree security. The First Sergeant could see several dozen demonstrators that appeared to be unarmed, just a few hundred meters from their position. They looked toward them as they all started to walk toward the DZ. He tapped Wilson on the leg and pointed toward the crowd which she was already oriented toward.

The Blackhawk tore across a tall building overlooking the DZ, with a thunderous noise. It dropped suddenly toward the ground and came to a hover just above the ground. Behind the building the First Sergeant saw a very welcomed sight. Two Attack Helicopter (AH) 64 Apache gunships, patrolling close by. One of the Apache's massive 30-millimeter chain gun appeared to be oriented onto the crowd that was approaching the DZ. The pilot of the Apache contacted the First Sergeant on the radio and asked for an update from the ground. The First Sergeant tried to talk through two hand mics; to his forces and the gunship. Now there were crowds in all directions massing around the DZ. He stepped out of his truck as visibility in the area was now greatly reduced from sand, dust, and debris that the rotor wash of the Blackhawk was kicking up. He saw that the bird had cut sling load (dropped the resupply items) and the ammunition crates fell to the ground, breaking at least two of the wooden crates open.

He looked back toward the crowd that was in front of his vehicle and ascertained from the reports of his other vehicles, that the crowd in front of their vehicle was the smallest. "Waters, Wilson, go get our (he cursed)!" He kept an eye on the crowd as he also watched Wilson and Waters disappear into the dust that was now obscuring just about everything. He still had both mics in his ear to get updates from his troops and communicate with the gunship that hovered above. Even though the Blackhawk had departed the area, one of the two gunships stayed in position flying around the area.

As he looked back to see his two 18-year old Soldiers picking up crates of ammunition he could not help but to feel a sense of anxiety. He wanted to be the one who went out into the large open area to retrieve the ammunition, but he had to stay in position to issue orders to repel the crowds if necessary, and to communicate with the gunship. He swallowed hard as he saw Wilson struggle to lift the nearly 100 pounds of ammunition that she was carrying.

From the right side they began to take small arms fire. The two Soldiers seemed to panic a bit, but quickly regained their composure. The First Sergeant looked back and forth to see where the fire was coming from, but he could not see anything or anyone. He left the microphones fall and grasped his M4 rifle trying to identify where the muzzle flashes (fire that exits the end of the barrel of a weapon when

a round is fired). The vehicle to their right engaged a short-walled area that the First Sergeant could not see behind and the fire seemed to stop.

Upon their return to the vehicle the First Sergeant breathed a sigh of relief. They had made it back safely! He was so proud of them; of the Soldiers that they had become. He knew that they were hungry. He knew that they were exhausted. He knew that they were afraid, but they were not going to let that stop them from completing this mission. These two young, 18 year old, American Soldiers had proven their metal. They had made their families and their nation proud. 'Those are my Soldiers!', he thought as they piled back into the vehicle and prepared to move out. He cracked open and handed a fresh can of 7.62 millimeter ammunition up to Wilson, to reload her machine gun, and then tapped her on the leg with a wink of his eye. She smiled at him, and without hesitation, opened the feed tray cover her gun clearing the few pieces of ammunition that were left in the weapon.

The convoy pulled back onto Thawra street and moved toward Al-Kah Hal Street which was just about two hundred meters (600 feet) from the DZ. The First Sergeant looked through his dust covered windshield and saw the convoy that they had been ordered to pick up along the side of the ramp coming off Al-Kah Hal Street. Their vehicles were smoking, and it appeared that they had taken heavy damage. He opened the two-hundred-pound door on his armored vehicle standing up and waving his arms back and forth to signal to the convoy. The lead vehicle almost immediately set in motion with the other vehicles following close behind. The First Sergeant ordered three of his four vehicles to go in front of the convoy and only one vehicle to be the trail & rear security vehicle. They would have to clear four intersections, one of which had a major traffic circle, in order to get the convoy back across the river. He wanted most of his guns up front, to clear the way if need be.

Once all the vehicles were on the road, he ordered Waters to move out. The young Soldier pushed on the gas pedal like he was trying to push it through the floor. The First Sergeant had made radio contact with their convoy commander and relay instructions to them as to how they would travel. He looked up at Wilson, who stood behind her machine gun with a look of total shock. He tapped her on the leg, and she looked down through the gunner's hatch giving him a thumbs up and a fake smile. 'She's okay. She'll make it. They both will.' The First Sergeant thought as he looked at Waters. He was focused on the route ahead, but quickly looked over to his First Sergeant giving a thumbs up.

The convoy had made it all the way through the intersections without incident; however, they faced their toughest obstacle along the route. They had to secure the Traffic Circle at Thawra and Jumhuriya Street. The First Sergeant looked out to see gunships flying above the city no doubt covering coalition forces that were advancing. He wondered after they made it across the river and dropped their convoy, where they would be returning to in Sadr City. He shook his head bringing himself back to the mission at hand.

When the convoy entered the traffic circle, they secured it in textbook fashion. He pulled his vehicle into the oncoming traffic lane at the top of the circle, establishing a blockage where civilian vehicles



could not enter. Wilson oriented her machine gun down upon the approaching traffic, which was coming to a screeching halt. Two vehicles impacted with one another, then a third. The second vehicle had blocked traffic at the bottom of the circle in the same manner, while the convoy executed a smooth movement through the traffic circle. As soon as his last vehicle came through the circle his vehicle pulled in behind the convoy. He had already issued instructions to the new lead vehicle, for them to continue on to the CCP, once they reached the bridge that would take them back across the Tigris River. Wilson oriented her gun to the rear of the vehicle covering the convoys “escape” from Sadr City. The young, female, Military Police Officer looked across the city where multiple plums of smoke bellowed into the sky and helicopters were racing back and forth.

The First Sergeant looked out into the green, algae infested water of the Tigris and was never quite so happy to see it, as they crossed the bridge. Upon their arrival at the CCP they dropped the convoy off and positioned their vehicles on the far side of the point, orienting their machine guns toward Sadr City. They all piled out of their vehicles taking off their helmets and rejoicing with high fives and hugs. The First Sergeant did not join in the festivities, of fist bumps and jovial celebration. He stayed by the radio, awaiting orders to go back across the bridge into the fight. He looked through his binoculars to the far side of the river still being very aware that there was fighting going on. Secretly, even after all that had happened at IP Station # 103 and over the corresponding 48 hour period, he wanted to go back across the river. Selfishly, he liked being in the fight. The exhilaration that came from knowing that he was going somewhere that he might not return from. Then he turned to look back at his Soldiers. He felt ashamed of himself. The arrogance and selfishness that he felt inside himself was the sin of PRIDE. The pride in himself that he was a Soldier and he lived to do the mission of a Soldier. If it were just him going into harms way it would be different, but he had the lives of other Soldiers to consider. He turned back toward the river and thought, ‘What will the next mission be?’...

“But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” Luke 12:48



Daily Reading

As Christian Soldiers we face some of the same challenges that the First Sergeant and his convoy faced before they could cross the river. We’ve all been hungry and tired, and sometimes just don’t want to fight anymore, but we know that we must. Just as the First Sergeant and his *family* faced the struggles of combat together, so must we and our families face combat in the Great War together.

Satan wants our souls, but what he delights in even more than ensnaring just one soul, is to be able to take captive multiple souls, in a package deal. Satan wants to destroy our families! His vile and wicked ways can creep into the strongest of families, through its members, and wreak untold havoc on them before the damage may even be realized. There are few things worse than having an entire family of Christian Warriors that have been captured and made POWs in their own home.

Some general points that we should consider about the Christian family before we address the specifics of Satan building strongholds within them are:

- The Christian family = 1 man + 1 woman (Adam and Eve is the example of this in the book of Genesis)
- The essence of civilized society + hope for the future = a healthy Christian Family
- The Family structure is the basic (lowest level) “fighting unit” in God’s Army, just as a squad is the lowest level fight unit in the US Army.
- Families are created to do God’s “Good Work” and for His Purpose.
- God Created the family through His power.
- Family must operate by God’s Word. The Word of the Lord must be THE objective standard of truth within a Christian Home.

Within our homes there are three areas where Satan will try to tear our families apart by building strongholds:

1. Marriage. The God blessed institution where a man and woman are joined to one another. The following are some major (but not all) avenues of approach Satan will try to use to break apart marriages:

Parent Child Relationship. In this I’m not referring to the relationship between us and our children, but to the relationship between us, our wives or husbands, and our parents. Our parents are a true blessing from God, even in the years that we have them while we are adults. Satan however can use the relationship between our parents and us to create strongholds within our marriages. Scripture is clear on what must happen and how these relationships *must* change after we are married. “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” _Genesis 2:24.

“Enmity” between the man and woman. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” Genesis 3:15. This was the curses put between men and women (specifically husbands and wives) as a result of the Fall of Man. Enmity is defined as “the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). This state of feeling is exactly how the Devil will worm his way into our marriages. It’s how he will get between us and our spouse to where this active opposition becomes a natural thing.



Domestic Abuse. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, domestic violence is: "the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also: a repeated or habitual pattern of such behavior." Domestic violence may include verbal, emotional, economic, physical, and sexual abuse. All forms of domestic abuse have one purpose: to *gain and maintain control* over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exert power over their spouse or partner: dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial, and blame. Domestic violence is a way for Satan to brutally rip a family apart by dehumanizing the rights of us or our spouses.

Adultery and Sexual Immorality. This is such a common problem in America today that's it's almost overlooked within society as being an acceptable standard, but not to God. Hebrews 13:4 records it like this, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Adultery comes in many forms, not just having affairs or viewing pornography. The sexual immorality that is found within marriages today is staggering, and it's not hard to see why the Devil is so keen on using this as a weapon. This can lead to a host of other problems once it is exposed in a marriage and then with those additional problems the Devil can capitalize on to build strongholds from.

Debt and Financial Hardship. The Devil can turn money into a noose that can strangle a relationship to death! He uses four methods to breed debt into our lives: ignorance of God's Law, the sin of Greed, poor financial planning and budgeting, catastrophic events that cause us to incur debt (such as hospital bills). He can also churn a lack of faith in God's ability to provide financial security. Psalm 37:21 "The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously;

Separation and Divorce. If the enemy can force a husband to leave his wife then he has won a great victory. If he cannot cause the husband to leave then he pursues the wife and tries to break the family apart through her.

2. Children.

The presence of mental, physical and emotional abuse. "Child abuse reports involved 7.5 million children" (American Society for the Positive Care of Children, 2017). With numbers like these, we can see where Satan is on the move in American Homes. This category of family stronghold can have catastrophic effects on the family that can ripple out into the church and society.

Behavioral problems. These problems sometimes come from abuse in the home, but they can be caused by other strongholds within a child's mind as well. These problems in some cases can be fostered by liberal and progressive disciplinary standards, which do not tell children "NO", when that word clearly needs to be said. Candy coating or the lack of strong biblical discipline within the home can in fact lead to more or greater disciplinary problems. Satan will use behavioral problems at home, church, or school to cause greater problems within the family, church, or society.



Poor self image. In today's culture Satan uses the image of what a "perfect" man or woman needs to look like. This carries over to what our children see in the media and on other avenues of approach that he uses to influence the way they see themselves. When he can speak into a child's ear and make them feel like they are less than perfect, then a stronghold can exist that he can twist and turn within them to crush their spirit.

Issues with school performance. These issues can be wide ranging and hard to diagnose why the child is having problems. Problems with learning can be a stronghold that Satan builds into children's minds, then he can use it to tear them down. In addition to tearing the child down, he can use it to tear us down as well. He can make us feel or think that we are doing something wrong, in our approach to teaching or mentoring our children.

Aggression, anxiety and depression. These are common problems among the youth of America today, because they see some of these things first hand in the examples from us! When we allow anger to become a stronghold in our minds, then it will reflect out through our words and actions and our children will see this. A child might think, 'Dad gets upset when things don't go right, so I can too.' These can become life dominating strongholds that Satan can use to render our children ineffective in their youth and on into adulthood.

Broken homes. Through separation and divorce Satan can create an environment within a child's life which can bring great confusion. When children must transfer from home to home there are far ranging psychological effects on the child. Different routines, rules, patterns of behavior, disciplinary functions, and styles of parenting are all examples of what Satan can spawn through broken homes.

3. Communication. This is the most common of all the strongholds that Satan uses to break families apart. He fosters a failure to communicate. Satan can use lies between family members, loss of self control and anger, criticism and condemnation, words and actions that tear family members down, gossip and rumors, and the inability or unwillingness to forgive to insert strongholds to undermine families.

One other thing that we also need to consider is that our sins and strongholds can have adverse consequences against not only us, but to those around us. Sin can hurt the ones we love! Pastor Travis Penn in his sermon on "The Valley of Trouble" points this out in Joshua Chapter 6 and 7. "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel." In chapter 6:16-19 it tells us:

¹⁶ The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!" ¹⁷ **The city and all that is in it are to be devoted** to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸ But **keep away from the devoted things**, so that

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds

you will not **bring about your own destruction by taking any of them**. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹ All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

The Israelis were told do not take “plunder” for themselves, because it ALL belonged to God. But then look what happens when Achan confesses the sin that he committed in Joshua 7:21:

“When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.”

Achan in his greed, took the things listed in verse 21 and as a consequence, “the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel”, as we are told in verse 19. Our actions have consequences and other people suffer for our sin...



Kid Friendly Ideas



Day 34: Identifying & Overcoming Family Strongholds (Part 2)

Saturday, November 2nd

“Even during the worst hardships, when the other things in our lives seem to fall apart, we can still find peace in the eternal love of God.”

Armstrong Williams, 2014, American Journalist



Today's Challenge: Pray for the Children of Crosslife

There was no follow-on mission. The First Sergeant and his convoy, after nearly 48-hours of sustained combat operations, rolled through the gate of Victory Base Complex (VBC). They stopped just passed the Entry Control Point (ECP) and all dismounted. They went to the all too familiar berm of dirt along the sides of the ECPs. There were cut down, 55-gallon, metal drums sticking out of the berm, where they would clear their weapons to ensure that they were safe to travel on the base.

Once they had all cleared and safed their weapons they got back into their vehicles. The First Sergeant had an intense sense of emotion fall over him. He looked up through the gunner's hatch to see Wilson crying with her hands on her cheeks. She broke down and her legs gave way to the fatigue of the last 48 hours. She sank into the gunner's sling with a thud, hitting the back of her helmets against the vehicles armored shroud that protected the gunner to the rear. Tears streaked her face and she tried to wipe them away, almost like she was ashamed. The First Sergeant wondered what was running through 18-year old woman's mind. She had done what Soldiers in war sometimes have to do on multiple occasions over the last two days. He was sure that the fact of knowing that she had participated in such violent acts was weighing heavily on her. He knew that it was because it weighed heavily on his mind, and his heart.

“Shirley, it's gonna be okay.” The First Sergeant said caressing her leg with his left arm and hand. She reached down with her dirty, glove covered hand and placed it onto his left shoulder. She nodded her head as she grimaced and then sobbed. He looked toward James Waters who had tears in his eyes as well. This young Soldier had driven halfway around Sadr City over the last 48 hours and the fatigue was clearly showing on his face. “Jim, it's all good. You guys did what you had to do, and I am so (he cursed)

proud of you both that I can't even put it into words." He reassured them, grasping Water's right shoulder. Waters touched the First Sergeant's hand and nodded as tears streaked down his face. He nodded to Waters and throw up a knife hand to move out. Waters acknowledged with a simple "Hooah, First Sergeant!", pressing into the vehicle's accelerator.

Sometime later, after The First Sergeant had seen that his troops had been fed and cared for, he walked down the street with only his M4 Rifle and M9 Pistol. He wore his "boonie hat" to keep the blazing sun off his head. It felt so good to give his aching muscles a break. Not having his helmet and 70 pounds of body armor on was such a relief. He paused to look at the beauty of the sun setting over the horizon. The sunsets in Iraq were often beautiful, even though he never really took much time to look at them. But today was different. His troops were safe. They had other leaders watching over them for the moment and in this rare moment, the First Sergeant had some time for himself. He needed it.

He walked through the main entrance of the VBC Chapel building hoping that no one would be there. There was a rack just inside the door where Soldiers had the option of placing their weapons while they entered the chapel. "Empty. That's Good", he thought. Maybe if there were no weapons in the rack, he could have some time to reflect. For the moment he seemed to be the only one there.

He looked around the building seeing not only the Christian Cross but other articles of the different faiths that this chapel provide services to. It disturbed him more than a bit to see some of these articles. He looked in the corner of the chapel to see prayer rugs and a copy of the Quran. The very religion that sparked the War on Terror. A deep and powerful hatred fell over him. He thought about the insurgents that were just on the other side of the base's perimeter and the way that they had radicalized by this horrible religion.

He approached the front of the chapel, still clutching his M4 Rifle. He sat in a steel folding chair, directly in front of the darkly, stained wooden cross and just held his rifle at the ready, as if he were guarding himself from the cross. He just looked at the wooden cross and a deep sense of shame and regret replaced his feelings of hate. He bowed his head, but not to pray. He could not pray. Not after what he had done. He clutched his rifle even tighter as thought about what had happened at IP Station # 103. The images ran through his mind. The terror. The horror. The inhumanity. "You can put your weapon in the rack by the door if you want." A voice said from beside him.

The First Sergeant looked up to see a Captain. On the left side of his collar he wore a brown, embroidered, Christian Cross. He was a US Army Chaplain. '(Curse) now he's going to want to talk to me,' the First Sergeant thought as he eased the grip on his rifle. "I'd rather keep it, sir." He replied. "Is there any way that I can serve you?" The Chaplin asked setting down beside the First Sergeant. He didn't want to talk to anyone. He just wanted to be alone. "Sometimes if you talk about it, it helps." The Chaplin persisted to press him.

The First Sergeant cleared his throat and looked back toward the cross with his usual hard stare. Then he looked back toward the Chaplin who sat a few feet away from him. “Sir, I don’t know what to say. I don’t know where to start.” He explained trying to figure out how to express the pain that he felt in his heart. “Try starting at the beginning.” The Chaplin quietly and calmly replied.

The First Sergeant gave one of his usual smirks and chuckled. “Sir, I just have so much inside me. I don’t know how to get it out. God has to be so ashamed of me right now. I don’t think that he can forgive what I have done.” The First Sergeant explain in a detached and unemotional tone. The Chaplin sat quietly nodding his head. “Are you a Christian?” The Chaplin pried. “Yes sir, I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I received Salvation the day after the Towers fell (September 12, 2001). I just don’t think He can forgive me.” The distraught First Sergeant echoed through the building. “Do you believe in repentance of sin?” The Chaplin again pried. The First Sergeant nodded his head as his eyes began to tear.

“Have you asked Him for forgiveness for whatever you have done?” The Chaplin sat quietly waiting for the First Sergeant to answer. The images of so much that the First Sergeant had seen flashed through his mind, like a camera that was flashing images at a high rate of speed. He shook his head and crossed his arms around his rifle. “Sir, I don’t think that I can. Not yet anyway. I want to but – But what? If you repent Jesus WILL hear you. It’s clear that you have an earnestness, an indignation, a fear, a longing, a zeal, an avenging of wrong, 2 Corinthians 7:9-12.” The Chaplin reminded him of the verses that talk about Godly Repentance. It says in verse 13 that, “For this reason we have been comforted.” Seek Him and He will deliver you.” The Chaplin interrupted. “If you want, I can pray with you.” The Captain offered motioning toward the Cross. “Can you pray for me, sir?” he asked being struck by what the Chaplin had quoted.

The Chaplin nodded his head and agreed to pray for him. The two men joined hands and sat in fellowship before God. Through the Chaplin’s prayer The First Sergeant continued to see the images that were plaguing his mind. By the time his prayer was finished. Tears streaked down the First Sergeant’s face. “Sir, I think I’d like to be alone now. I need to speak to God.” The Chaplin nodded his head and said, “Take all the time you need.” He stood up and waved to the First Sergeant saying, “Come by anytime First Sergeant. We’re always here.”

The First Sergeant took his weapon off and laid it across the metal chairs. He got down on one aching knee and bowed his head. This time it was to pray. So many feelings ran through him, but he had seen so many things in his time in Iraq. So many terrors, but also so many miracles. Things that he could only explain as being blessings from God. He did believe that Jesus could forgive him again. A smile filled out his scarred, tear streaked face. He breathed in and went to the Lord in prayer, knowing that the Lord would be waiting to hear from him...

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33



Daily Reading

The First Sergeant had a crisis of faith. We can all have moments in our lives that can make us question our beliefs. Even those beliefs that we hold most dear or sacred. Let’s look at some ways to overcome family strongholds to increase our faith.

Parent Child Relationship:

Ephesians 5:28-31 says,

“²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Clearly we can see from this passage when a man and woman are married there is a directive for the relationship to change between the. With this change requires another change. A change in the relationship between us and our parents. Before marriage (even as adults) the relationship with our parents is different than after we have been joined to a spouse. Before marriage, our parents might have been the most intimate relationship that we were involved in. After marriage that relationship must be with our spouse. Our paradigm must change so that we make our spouse the most important human relationship. When a husband and wife share in this vision of being “one flesh” Satan will have a much harder time at being able to drive a wedge between them in the area of relationships.

Enmity. When we consider this “conflict” that was put between the man and woman consider the following verses:

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5;21

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” Ephesians 5:22

“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” Ephesians 5:33

If we can do what these verses say then enmity should be less for married couples. Now there are a thousand other ways that Satan can try to foster conflict between husbands and wives. We must realize that the competition that Satan tries to breed within a home is unnecessary. If husbands are fulfilling their God given role as Spiritual Leader (not tyrannical dictator) and wives fulfilling their role as supporters the ministry of the home (not competing with their husbands to “wear the pants in the family”); the home can work as God intended it. If we do these things will there ever be conflict between husbands and wives? Of course there will be! We can not let those conflicts rob us of our joy, ruin our homes and families, or lead to separation and divorce.

Domestic Abuse. We all must consider these verses when conflict escalates to the point of abuse, or abuse is even being contemplated:

“²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,” Ephesians 5:25-26

“In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” Ephesians 5:28

²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27

Sometimes enmity within a marriage reaches a boiling point. Before we allow Satan to make us do something that we WILL regret, take a time out! Abuse of any nature degrades our humanity. Usually (but not always) abuse is not one sided. Before we lash out in anger, stop, breathe, and think! Anger robs us of our ability for rational thought. When anger is acted upon it becomes wrath. Wrath will end up hurting both of you. That’s exactly what Satan wants. Let cooler heads prevail and allow thought to override emotion. That is the only way we can avoid this terrible weapon that Satan will use against our marriages warriors.

Debt and Financial Hardship. We must invest by paying our taxes to the state to receive community benefits, protection, and so we won’t incur additional taxes. We must also pay the Lord’s tithes to receive blessings (Matthew 15:15-22; Mark 12:17). We cannot rob from God and expect blessings (Malachi 3:8-10), If we honor God He will help us when we need it (Psalm 50:14-15)). We must also prioritize our spending (Proverbs 27:23)! We must remember that everything financially that is given to us is really not ours, but God’s (2 Peter 1:3). If we practice these things and especially remember the last point with our finances, he will be a harder target for the Devil in this area.

Adultery and Sexual Immorality. On day 30 we read 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own



body.” As we said with the sin of Lust, it takes a mighty force to be able to overcome one of Satan’s most enticing weapons. This may require us to enter into accountability with same-sex church members or in accountability groups. Whatever the method or methods that the Spirit leads us to in order to deal with this stronghold, we must humble ourselves enough to follow its lead. As with breaking through any stronghold we must be willing to lean on God’s Power not our own; however, we must be willing to resist the Devil (James 4:7).

Separation and Divorce. These two ugly words can never even be given access within a Christian Home. The reason why divorces did not happen the alarming rate that they are today in the past was due to, Family pressure, cultural pressure, pulpits preached against it, and divorce was not made easy, as with the “no fault” divorces that we have today. These destructive patterns and in many cases, forcible changes to family situations, disrupt more than the fabric of the lives of the husband and wife. The second, third, fourth, eighteenth, and forty-seventh order effects can be wide reaching throughout families, churches, and all of society. In America divorce is an epidemic, as sure as substance abuse and abortion. Again husbands and wives that are even contemplating either of these actions must seek assistance from the correct resources. Be advised however Satan can use the wrong resources against you. These are complex issues and must be handled by the leading of the Spirit.

Children.

“Fathers, do not *exasperate* (or *provoke*, ESV) your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”_ Ephesians 6:4. This verse can speak volumes to us about mental, physical and emotional abuse. It is our responsibility to raise our children. This does include disciplining them (Hebrews 12:4-12). This discipline should not be excessive, but just enough to ensure that the biblical lesson of wrongdoing or sinning is understood. If we focus on the “training and instruction of the Lord” we are less likely to abuse. If our focus is on this Godly upbringing we don’t give Satan a crack through which he can advance.

Behavioral problems. Negative behavior must be corrected. At the same time this behavior often times has an underlying meaning. It is important to understand the underlying meaning in order to be able to render loving discipline. Even though we have to say “NO” from time to time, we must also say “I love you” in spite of children’s negative behaviors. Once we determine the exact causes for behavioral issues we can pray for heavenly responses to these issues. This response will cause Satan to have to rethink his methods and lead to one more stronghold falling in God’s perfect way and time.

Poor self image. This is where we must build our children’s image of themselves. We must teach them that life is more than just the material and fashionable. In doing this we will need to teach them to be able to take the punches that will come along with that way of thinking. Satan will send people that he has deceived into believing that image is everything, to hinder this process. We must be vigilant in modeling this for our children, in deed not just words. When our children realize that they are children

of the most high God and that God loves us just the way that He made us, it should become easier for them to fight Satan on this deception.

Issues with school performance. We must look objectively at these issues. If we are doing all that we can to support our children and they are legitimately trying their best, then there are other forces at work. If there are learning disabilities that exist within our children, schools have special programs to help the management of learning for these disorders. These programs combined with a focused prayer strategy to overcome this stronghold can assist in denying Satan access into our children thoughts in this area.

Aggression, anxiety and depression. These all too common problems can be solved with the correct amount of prayer, faith, and caring. These issues most likely will not receive an overnight fix; however, with God's Divine Power, Grace, and Healing, an instant fix is certainly possible. We must remember with these issues, like any others, in some cases, God allows afflictions in order to bring about change or influence needs within our lives. If we deal with these strongholds effectively we can eradicate them before they become life dominating sins in our children's lives.

Communication: First, We must tell the truth, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body." Lying is a false view of reality. Truth corresponds to reality. Lying was the first sin ever judged. It creates hard feelings, resentment, and can lead to much greater things. Secondly, losing self control or exhibiting anger in our communication does nothing to resolve problems. In Ephesians 4:26-27, it says "don't let the sun go down on your anger". When we do this, we give Satan the perfect opportunity to gain access to our thoughts. We must do what is necessary to resolve issues as they arise, even if we have to take a break to "cool off" before proceeding. We must be angry for the right reasons, at the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, and in the right way. Anger can be a legitimate emotion and is not necessarily a sin until we allow ourselves to get angry over an illegitimate wrong (like breaking a preference - don't let preferences become sinful expectations). thirdly, we must offer solutions not criticisms. Solutions can help fix things instead of continuing to stir the pot. We cannot allow condemnation without hope. This always always crushes people. Fourthly, we must build each other up and not tearing down (1 Thessalonians 5:11). We must guard our words (James 5:3) or watch what we say. When profanity enters a conversation or when we are venting anger, it degrades the other person. We must be careful to try to be direct and use words that accomplish what you are trying to say. "Use the right words for the moment that it will lend Grace to those who may hear." (Evans, 2007)

I hope that these suggestions as to how to deal with family strongholds has given us all a bit more confidence in confronting them. Tomorrow we will look at some basic principles of healing from personal and family strongholds...

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds



Kid Friendly Ideas



Day 35: Healing Personal and Family Strongholds

Sunday, November 3rd

“It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle.”

Norman Schwarzkopf, 1991



Today's Challenge: Romans Road 10:9-10. Memorize the next part of the Romans Road (you're almost to the end of the Road!) 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

The theatre on LSA Anaconda, where the First Sergeant had attended so many Final Salute Ceremonies, was arranged for a very different occasion today. Nearly two months after Operation Lightning had concluded, the Soldiers of his unit were assembled to be honored for their part in that critical operation. The Provost Marshal, the Commander and the First Sergeant all stood in front of the formation awaiting the arrival of the Post Commander.

The First Sergeant looked at his Human Resources NCO who tightly and confidently clutched the bright green and gold unit flag, referred to as a Guidon. He did not know why but he was nervous. As he looked out over his Soldiers, who were all clad in desert camouflage, he felt a great sense of pride well up inside him. Each and every one of them had performed admirably during one of the most critical operations to date of the Iraq War. He took a deep breath as the Post Commanders arrival was announced. The First Sergeant turned from his Soldiers and faced front to see the Commanding General enter with the Post Command Sergeant Major (CSM)(the most senior Sergeant on post).

This awards ceremony had not been without its hiccups. Many of the awards that the unit had put their Soldiers in for had been downgraded (the awards had been reduced to a lower award of importance than the ones requested). The First Sergeant had requested that all of the Soldiers that had accompanied him during Operation Lightning, receive Army Commendation Medals (ARCOMs) with “V” Devices (a pin that attaches to a US Military Medal, which signifies that the award was given for

“Valorous Action” during a time of war). Even the First Sergeant’s award had been requested with a “V” device and had been downgraded without the device. He didn’t care much about his own reward but he felt greatly cheated for his Soldiers. ‘They earned those (curse word) awards!’ he thought as the General neared him.

The General stepped in front of the First Sergeant and then turned to the CSM who handed him a red, white and blue medal which was formed in the shape of a star. The Master of Ceremonies read the citation, which had been changed significantly from the original citation, that might have warranted an even higher award. The General pinned the Bronze Star Medal onto the First Sergeant’s Collar and shook his hand. “We haven’t *handed* too many of these out to NCOs in this war First Sergeant. You should be proud of your accomplishment.” the arrogant General pontificated as though the First Sergeant was not deserving of the Bronze Star.

When the General stepped aside the CSM stepped in front of the First Sergeant and took his hand. Once the General had drawn away from hearshot the CSM quietly whispered, “I went to bat for your medal to be upgraded to the Silver Star, but the higher ups wouldn’t have it.” The First Sergeant acknowledged the CSMs attempt to save face with a nod, but no words. They had been involved in some of the heaviest fighting during Operation Iraqi Freedom since the invasion in 2003, but when they went home their medals and narratives would not even reflect it. This caused him great discomfort inside, especially when he thought about all that his Soldiers had done...

“Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.” Psalm 144:1-2



Daily Reading

Just as the First Sergeant felt as though his Soldiers had been slighted by the chain of command on their awards, many times we can feel the same way about things in our lives. Sometimes we feel as though our rights have been violated. Sometimes they are violated. In fact, sometimes life is downright *unfair*. At least to us. Today we are going to talk about how to heal from the strongholds within our personal and family lives.

Once strongholds have been identified and dealt with, there must be a healing process from those violations. This devotional cannot possibly cover all of the means that are available to help us with these issues. Entire books and book series have been written on the subject of healing from

strongholds which have been overcome in our lives. I will offer a couple simple things that we as Christian Warriors can do to at least initiate the healing process. Additional methods and means may be necessary in order for us to become totally healed from any stronghold that existed within us or our families.

First, as with any process within Christian life, we must pray. Prayers for healing come in as many different shapes and sizes as the hurts and strongholds that they are designed to heal us from. There is no one size fits all prayer for anything and healing is no exception to that rule. After identifying what strongholds held us captive and overcome them, we should have some idea of what we need to ask for healing from. Sometimes even after we have shed these strongholds we may still not be fully aware of all of the implications which these strongholds had in our lives or brought up on our families lives. Carefully and prayerfully allowing the Spirit to lead you in this area will be an essential part of identifying exactly what to pray for in the area of healing. It might be necessary to even develop a Prayer Strategy for healing as part of your battle plan, if healing will be a lengthy process, as it often is.

Second, in addition to prayers for healing, I'd like to offer a suggestion on how we might go about healing especially with regards to our family. In Ephesians 4:2-6, Paul writes in what is entitled, "Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ" in some New International Version translations, how we are to act within the Body of Christ. As the Body of Christ, is now considered to be the church, why shouldn't we try to pattern ourselves and our families after this? In the scripture we are told,

"² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Now you might say, Seitz that's a tall order to fill, and it is! But if Paul thought it important enough to write those words, being guided by the Holy Spirit to do so, we should heed them as we do any scripture found in God's Word. When I read through that scripture I found myself longing for things to always be that way within my family and within me. We of course know that will not always be the case, but as with everything in the life of a Christian Warrior; we must fight to make it that way. Never give up trying to reach that level of where God wants for us to be. In this striving I think that we and/or our families can be healed through the Power of Jesus!

Thirdly, did anyone catch that the verse of the day is the same verse that it was on Day 31? Did I just make a mistake and use the same verse twice? No it's no mistake. Today's study is about healing from personal and family strongholds. What more appropriate verse than one that sums up our healing process in the area of strongholds. It says in Psalm 144:1-2,

THE CROSSLIFE WARRIOR CHALLENGE

Weekly Theme: Fighting the War by Destroying Personal and Family Strongholds

“Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, **my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge,** who subdues peoples under me.”

In the parts that I bolded we see the term strongholds used much differently than it has been. This time, in this usage, the Lord is our stronghold! Not some lie or perversion that Satan has enticed into our minds. When we see the Lord as our stronghold then no stronghold, inspired by Hell, can keep a hold of us...



Kid Friendly Ideas