



Introduction

Every day we struggle against three things that conspire to push us away from truth. Understanding how the world, the flesh and the devil work will enable us to renew our minds and stand firm.

SESSION 6: Demolishing Strongholds

Focus verse: *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

Objective: To understand what 'strongholds' are and where they come from so that we can dismantle them by renewing our minds.

Focus Truth:

All of us have mental strongholds, ways of thinking that are not in line with God's truth.

Strongholds are part of the flesh.

* Illustration: balloon getting bigger & bigger then burst by a pin.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

* We need God's Word to 'pop' the balloons of our strongholds - applying the Word to thoughts and attitudes that are not true and so live in the freedom of Christ. (See *Galatians 5:1*)

* Mental strongholds prevent us making a real connection with truth that we can base our lives on. In our early years we learned to live independently of God and developed false beliefs and coping mechanisms and these remained even when we became brand new creations in Christ-. All of us tend to act on false information, on lies.

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WHAT IS A 'STRONGHOLD'?

"A mind-set impregnated with hopelessness that causes us to accept as unchangeable situations that we know are contrary to the will of God." (Ed Silvos)

"Mental habit patterns of thought that are not consistent with God's Word." (Neil Anderson)

i.e. things you feel you should do but can't seem to be able to or things you should be able to stop doing but you don't feel you can stop.

The truth: God loves us and wouldn't ask us to do what we cannot

The lie: we feel that the opposite is true.

The results * give up * that's just me; I can't change * inferiority complex

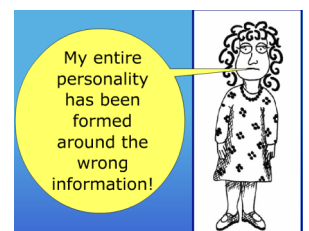
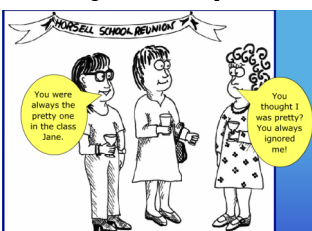
e.g. You were always the pretty one in class, Jane.

You though I was pretty? You always ignored me.

We weren't ignoring you. We were just too intimidated to speak to you

I've spent 50 years struggling with low-esteem because I thought you were ignoring me.

My entire personality has been formed around wrong information.



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HOW STRONGHOLDS ARE ESTABLISHED

* **Our Environment:** we pick up values/ways of behaving from family, community, schools, friends etc

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* **Traumatic Experiences:** the intensity burns into our experience. It's not the experience itself that produces the stronghold but the lie we believe as a result of it. i.e. the lie is the problem.

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If what you believe does not reflect the truth, then what you feel will not reflect reality.

* Giving In To Temptation

- * Temptation: An attempt to get us to live independently of God.
- * The basis of temptation is, often, our legitimate need for significance, security & acceptance.
- * How do we meet the needs? Through the world, the flesh and the devil? Or by God, who promises to meet all our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus? (*Philippians 4:19*)
- * Satan knows where we are vulnerable & attacks there.
- * BUT: See *1 Corinthians 10:13*: * we do not **have** to give in to temptation.
 - * God always provides a way of escape.

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e.g.

<p>I'll take a drive but won't go near the supermarket</p> 	<p>I'll drive past the supermarket but won't go in</p> 	<p>I'll go into the supermarket but won't go to the biscuits</p> 	<p>I'll look but not touch</p> 
<p>I'll touch but not buy</p> 	<p>I'll buy but not open</p> 	<p>Open, but not smell. Smell but not touch. Touch, but not taste. Taste but not eat.</p> 	<p>EAT</p> 

- * "Threshold thinking." Where is the way of escape? When the tempting thought first comes.
- * Your opportunity to 'take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ'. (*2 Corinthians 10:5*)
- * Beware of rationalising choices to give in to temptation.
- * Satan's 1-2 punch: tempter & accuser.
- * Answer = to reject the thought as soon as it comes and act accordingly.

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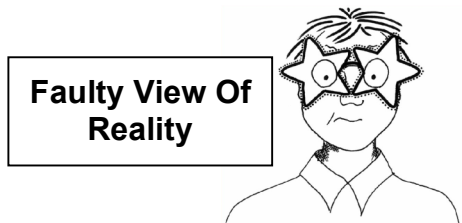
- * We have complete control over our mind.
- * We give permission to which thoughts land.
- * When a thought is on approach it's harder to stop it landing.
- * Must start to turn it back right at the outset.
- * **This requires effort & a constant commitment to truth.**



**If a tempting thought isn't dealt with straight away it will lead on to an action.
If you repeat that action over a period of time it will result in a habit.
If you exercise that habit long enough you end up with a stronghold.**

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EFFECTS OF STRONGHOLDS



- * Strongholds have a major effect on our ability to look at the circumstances in our life to see them as they really are.
- * Are we going to trust God enough to do things His way & to look at things the way He says they are or are we going to go with what feels true to us?
- * *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:9)
- Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. . " (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- * God knows infinitely more than we do. Our ability to work things out is limited. We are dependent on God to show us.
- * We are always tempted to 'lean on our own understanding' - to try to work things out for ourselves, to manage independently of God.
- * Strongholds prevent us seeing what is really true because of how they make us feel. e.g. Do I really believe/know/feel that God loves me? I am special to God!
- * Freedom is continuing to realize the lies and live in the truth.

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- * To live a truly free life in Christ we have to know, and **choose** to believe, what God says.
- * Easier said than done because of the strongholds and patterns of thought we have lived by.
- * Strongholds lead us to make bad choices because they are based on wrong information.



- * A stronghold will predispose us to ignore the "Danger" signs God has posted; make us feel that we know best. how we can feel significant, secure & accepted.
- * Attitude of 'leaning on our own understanding' will grow in our lives when we continually entertain thoughts that are contrary to the truth



- * God's way will grow in our life and we will make consistently better choices when we choose to commit ourselves to believing the truth..
- * We are not helpless in this struggle! In Christ we have everything we need.
- * We have the choice & ability to 'renew our mind' by choosing God's way instead of our own understanding.

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DEMOLISHING STRONGHOLDS

Do we have to put up with strongholds? No!

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) (Note: How much is about thinking!)

Check For Viruses

- * Uncover and deal with any footholds the enemy may have in our life (Remember the toggle illustration?) There will be opportunity to do this when you go through The Steps To Freedom In Christ, based on James 4:7 (**Saturday 21st May**).
- * When you've done this a stronghold is nothing more than a habitual way of thinking and behaving

Reprogram Your Mind

- * e.g. Driving in ruts: Eventually the vehicle follows the ruts; you don't have to steer. Change of course meets resistance.
- * But You can steer out of the 'ruts' of habitual faulty thinking. You can re-learn.
- * It needs sustained effort. You have to want to. You have to choose to.
- * Believe!: It is possible for you to be *"transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2)

Take Every Thought Captive

- * Guard our mind.
- * Practice 'threshold thinking'.

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A WHOLE ANSWER

We are not just up against this world (the system we were brought up in) and we are not just struggling with the flesh (those pre-programmed, learned habits and patterns of thought). We are up against the world, the flesh and the devil.

If we want a whole answer, we need to understand all three. In the next session we will look at the role of the devil. But in that session don't forget what we have already learned. Of the three issues, the influence of the devil is actually the easiest to resolve, but is generally the one that is understood the least and dealt with the least.

In The Coming Week

Meditate on these passages: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 8:35-39; Philippians 4:12-13

Big Question (to consider before the next session)

How has Satan deceived you in the past? How is he deceiving you right now?