

How to Tear Down Strongholds

What is a stronghold and how do you tear it down? A stronghold is a fortification, such as a fortified city. In many places in Scripture God is called our strength (Psalm 46:1, 28:7-8, 118:14; Hab. 3:19), our strong tower (Ps. 61:3; Prov. 18:10) and the place we run to when we need help (Ps. 31:1).

However, there is another meaning of stronghold and that is something that takes root in our lives as a pretense, which is a fancy word for a lie. It's something we believe, but it is just plain wrong.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

These pretensions or lies develop in many ways, but one way is through things that happen to us in our childhood that we cannot process correctly. It happens when our needs do not get met—needs like provision, protection, identity, comfort, teaching, companionship and communication. God will meet these needs, but as children we don't understand that. All we understand are the people nearest us—our family or those we consider our family.

Family's Role

Our father's role is protector, provider and the one who sets our identity. Just think of all the times we take a jar to dad to open. Why? Because he has the strength in the family. We know Dad is the one who is usually the most concerned about providing income for the family. And all it takes is one pat on the back from Dad and it surpasses 1,000 good jobs from

Mom.

Our mother's job is to comfort and teach us. Hugs and loving touches give us fond memories of our mother. Anger, screaming and beating sets up an adverse reaction. We learn basic things from our mother about how to cook, wash, clean, wear the right clothes for the right weather and much more.

Our siblings are our first companions and the ones we communicate with. When my brother was little, no one could understand him. I am 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years older and I could understand him perfectly. So I was his interpreter. I remember clearly my parents asking, "What did he say?" And I'd answer and he'd shake his head yes. The point is our siblings get us because they are more our age.

God's Role

The interesting thing is that all of these roles also relate to Father God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus. If we had good relationships with our biological family, it will transfer well over to our relationship to God.

Father God is our provider, protector and setter of our identity. The Holy Spirit provides comfort and teaching. And Jesus provides companionship and communication.

So for instance, say our father was weak and not a very good protector. Perhaps he was afraid. Perhaps you wanted him to protect you in a way he didn't. It might be that he was a great dad, but there was one time you as a child perceived he didn't protect you. That got stuck in your mind and heart.

At an early age, we learn to have fear if we feel no one is protecting us or if we feel we have to protect ourselves from someone who is abusing us and we can't tell anyone for some reason. When we begin to develop our concept of Father God, we cannot seem to believe He will protect us and so we self-

protect. Perhaps we do that with anger, control, overeating, overachieving, drinking or drugs.

False Protections Become Strongholds

Whatever we choose as a false protection we allow to become a stronghold in our life. It makes us feel protected for a short time period. For instance, if a father figure in our life sexually abused us, we may turn to food, thinking if we are larger we can protect ourselves better.

Remember this is the emotional reaction of the child who is us. As we grow up we understand this isn't the truth, however the little girl is still with us because she is us. So she still wants protection.

This sets up the juxtapose behavior within ourselves that we can't understand. Why can't I lose weight? I want to, but I just can't seem to stick with it. That's because the fear has been stuffed with food and the little girl is crying to be heard. Her emotional needs are crying louder than your adult cognitive needs.

This same thing can happen if a wonderful, loving mother or grandmother feeds us delicious high-calorie food. It doesn't matter that it was only given on special occasions or when we visited, it still begins to set up that comfort equals those foods. And when we aren't around those people and want comfort, we go to those foods.

It happens before we realize it. Certain foods or extreme overeating has become a stronghold in our lives. It gives us a physical feeling of fullness that we equate with the comfort or protection we crave. It really isn't the food we are craving, it's what only God can provide for us –protection and comfort.

I know this to be true, because I allowed comfort foods to become a stronghold in my life. I paid it homage and allowed

it to set up a solid fortification around me. Of course, the Holy Spirit's role is Comforter and Teacher, but I never got there completely until in the last few years. Though, had you asked me, I would have felt I had a good relationship with the Holy Spirit. In reality, it was sadly lacking.

Tearing Down Strongholds

The dismantling of strongholds comes in various ways, but in the final analysis we must get to the root issue and allow God to replace the lies or pretenses the little child within us believes and then allow the God to become our strength and pour His truth into our hearts.

God always trades up. I gave Him my desire for comfort foods made with processed sugar and flour, and He gave me His comfort and protection. As I have asked Him questions about next steps on this journey, He teaches me. There's so much more communication with Him these days. I have questions and He has answers. We are a perfect combination.

This is just the tip of the iceberg on this subject. I will write more on this subject. Until then let me say, if you KNOW you have allowed a stronghold in your life, name it, renounce it, hand to God and ask Him, "What do you give me in exchange?"

Will you do that and tell me your results? And ask your questions. They may become the subject of my next blog post on this subject.

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