



# breakthroughs

---

**finding freedom and true  
fulfillment in jesus**

## Lesson 7: Strongholds, Part 1

When we begin to step into truth, we will begin to experience change in our lives. Those changes begin within our hearts and minds. As our hearts and minds begin to embrace truth, it will change the course of our lives because we will begin to make daily choices based on truth. Those daily choices will result in changed lives.

The material in this week's lesson requires us to do some serious thinking. The topic of Strongholds could take an entire workbook to unpack, but we are tackling this topic in just two weeks. To begin our lesson, we need a solid definition of a stronghold from the Bible so that we can understand why this is such a critical part of our healing and freedom.

**Definition:** A Stronghold is a “fortress” or a “refuge.” God tells us in the Bible that He is our stronghold, meaning that He is our refuge and we can go to Him in times of trouble and we are safe. We will experience healing and freedom when we make God our refuge (stronghold).

There are many places in the Bible where God describes Himself as being our Stronghold. However, there is one place in the Bible that a stronghold is presented in a very different manner. In fact, in this particular place in the Bible we are taught how to tear down a stronghold.

Based on what you've learned about the enemy and how he works in our lives, what do you think God is referring to when He speaks of tearing down strongholds? Just take a guess at this.

---

---

When God refers to tearing down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) He is speaking of strongholds that the enemy built. The enemy knows that we desperately need a

refuge. The enemy knows we are desperate for this place of refuge in our lives because life is harsh, painful and stressful, so he builds his own strongholds. The enemy builds strongholds with hopes that we will find refuge in them instead of God; however, God is the only Stronghold with the power to save us.

**EXAMPLE:** We learned that ‘little gods’ are things that we turn to for help instead of asking God for help. For instance, food can be a ‘little god.’ When we are lonely, hurting or stressed, then we may find comfort in eating. Most of us find comfort in food from time to time but when we begin to turn to food when we are hurting or afraid, then food has become a place of refuge. Each time we run to food for comfort the enemy piles on another brick around the fortress that he is building. Of course, the material that the enemy is using to build the fortress is based on lies. If food is the stronghold then lies surrounding the stronghold will be things such as “This food will make me feel so much better,” “I need this food,” “I love this food too much and it’s not doing any harm.” Instead of food, we might turn to alcohol, drugs, pornography, shopping, working, people pleasing or any other thing that pulls us away from God.

Before we move forward into this lesson please write down what you’ve learned so far about strongholds.

---

---

---

Please read the following verse:

***“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”***

*(Romans 12:2 ESV)*

What is God saying to us about our lives in Romans 12:2?

---

---

---

What is God saying to us about our minds in Romans 12:2?

---

---

---

The word “**transformed**” in Romans 12:2 is derived from the Greek word “metamorphoo.” The word means to be transformed, transfigured, and changed in form. We get the word “metamorphosis” from this word which describes the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. A butterfly flies around showing off its beauty. A caterpillar crawls around hoping not to get stepped on. When looking at a beautiful butterfly it’s hard to imagine that it was once an ugly caterpillar.

Romans 12:2 tells us that God’s Word has the power to transform us from one form to another form. We can look and feel like a caterpillar and be transformed into what looks and feels like a butterfly, simply yet profoundly, by the Word of God.

What are some things that you have tried to change about yourself (not physical)?

---

---

---

---

## Lesson 7: Strongholds, Part 1

Circle any of the following that you would like to change about yourself.

- My temper
- My negative outlook
- The way I see myself
- The way I see God
- The way I see other people
- My addiction to alcohol
- My addiction to drugs (including prescription medication)
- My addiction to gambling
- My feelings of insecurity
- My pride
- My constant need for approval from others
- My struggle with pornography
- My struggle with overeating
- My critical attitude towards other people
- My lack of self-control
- My gossiping
- My lying
- My procrastination

What other things come to mind that you would like to change about yourself?

---

---

---

What are some things you've done to try and make changes in your life?

---

---

---

God gives certain people wisdom and knowledge to help other people make changes in their lives. There are a lot of good programs and information in our society to help individuals make changes in their lives. However, there is not a program or method that has the power to transform a life the way the Word of God transforms a life. God's Word doesn't just help a person change something about them or get rid of a negative habit. **God's Word has the power to change a person from one form to another form.** The change that is happening through God's Word is causing the person to think, act, believe and look more like Christ.

The change in form can be immediate, but it is often a gradual process. As a person begins to read and to think about God's Word (markers), change begins to take place. The person begins to see things through a different set of lenses. The old lenses had lies, pain and a worldly view that caused the person's vision to be distorted. God's Word gives us the ability to see things correctly. When we look at our lives, ourselves and others, the way that God looks at our lives, ourselves and others literally changes our hearts and causes us to live lives in such a way that we don't look like the same person.

***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”***  
*(2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV).*

#### EXAMPLE

I have known Christ for over 40 years and still have much to learn about Him. I have areas in my heart and life that have been transformed through God's Word and areas in my heart and life that desperately need transforming. However, there was a point along my journey with Christ that the way I was living my life, the way I viewed myself, others and Him, had led me to a dark pit. I tried all kinds of ways to get out of the pit but nothing worked. I sat in the dark pit with two markers. One marker would keep me in the pit and the other marker told me to take God's hand so that He could pull me out of the pit. For many years, I chose to believe the marker that kept me in the pit. God never gave up on me and eventually I decided to believe His marker. I stopped trying to pull myself out of the pit and asked God to help me. One of the first places that God took me was to His Word. As I began to read God's Word, the Lord began to change my vision. I began to see myself, my life, others, and God in a different way. The lies from the enemy were crushed every time that I read or listened to God's Word. Because my mind and heart had been filled with lies from the enemy, the process of transformation was gradual and is ongoing. I no longer believe

## Lesson 7: Strongholds, Part 1

the lies of the enemy, but I must daily choose to focus my thoughts on God's Word or I become an easy target for old thought patterns to direct me back into a dark pit.

How does it make you feel when you consider that God's Word (Truth) has the power to change your life?

---

---

What have you learned so far in this lesson about being transformed through God's Word?

---

---

---

Hopefully you are gaining an understanding of how important God's Word is in order for us to experience healing and freedom in our lives. It literally has the power to transform our lives.

## DECEPTION

Deception is defined as:

- 1) The practice of misleading somebody
- 2) Something intended to mislead somebody.

2 Corinthians 11:3 tells us, “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

The enemy is the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and is the one behind the deception in our lives. We know that the enemy deceived Eve in the Garden with lies, but notice in 2 Corinthians 11:3 that we are warned not to be led astray from Christ through our thoughts.

The enemy is not all-knowing and he cannot read our minds, but he can influence our thoughts. The enemy lies to us and we experience those lies in our thoughts. The enemy speaks to us in our minds with the intent of leading us astray from Christ. The enemy has a purpose in the lies he tells us and it is to hurt us, but that’s not enough for him. The enemy wants to lead us away from Jesus. The enemy does not want us to have a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. He knows he can’t steal our salvation, so he goes after our relationship with Christ. If the enemy can get us to doubt God’s love for us, cause us to believe we aren’t really desperate for Jesus, and can live life apart from Him, then we will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to God. Our hearts will soon be divided and we will not be living the lives we were created to live.

The enemy does not wait until we experience pain to tell us lies. The enemy does not take a break in his mission to lead us away from Christ. He is at work in our lives daily to deceive us with the purpose of influencing our relationship with God. The enemy lies to us about God, about ourselves and about other people. Recognizing lies from the enemy and learning to reject his lies is absolutely necessary for us to live in freedom.

When we experience pain in our lives, we are especially vulnerable to the enemy. The enemy sees our pain as an opportune time to lie to us. The enemy targets the pain in our hearts and tells us lies that lead us away from God. The enemy knows that Jesus has the power to heal us and he does not want us to experience the healing power of Jesus Christ. He will tell us lies that exalt our pain, create doubt about the character of God and direct us to seek healing apart from Jesus. The enemy is deceptive and thrives when our heart turns even the slightest direction away from God.

Jesus is greater. There is not an enemy, a stronghold, a trial, a pain in life that is more powerful than Jesus. Jesus is King of King, Lord of Lords, The Great I AM, The Everlasting Prince of Peace, The Son of the Most High God, Deliverer, Healer, the



Word, The Light of the World, Savior, Redeemer, Living Water, Great High Priest, the Alpha and the Omega, The Beginning and The End.

The best news that we can hear is that Jesus is with us. Jesus came for us, to invade our lives with His presence and to liberate us from the power of the enemy. We are not alone and we do not fight the enemy alone. Jesus is the one at work in us and gave us His weapons to defeat the enemy.

***“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”***

*(2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV)*

As we begin to read and think about God’s Word, the enemy begins to dig in his heels. He knows the power of God’s Word and hates it when one of God’s children begins to experience change in their lives (transformation). The enemy’s plan is for God’s children to believe the lies and then follow the enemy’s markers and chase after ‘little gods.’ He knows that his markers and ‘little gods’ will not only cause us pain, but will keep us from experiencing change in our lives. We will just blend into the rest of the world and not be a threat to him.

Look back at 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. Notice two words that are used in these verses:

**Arguments** – Anything that tells us that God’s Word is not true.

**Pretension** – Something that is lifting itself up and pretending to be something that it is not, or do something that it can’t do.

God’s Word is telling us that “arguments” and “pretensions” are exalting themselves AGAINST God. These arguments and pretensions are waging war against the “knowledge of God,” which is God’s Word. Notice that God is telling us 1) to fight 2) and to make our thoughts obey Christ.

Arguments and pretensions are weapons that the enemy uses to wage war against God’s Word. The enemy will argue against God’s Word by telling us that ‘it’s not true’ and that ‘it is not that important so you don’t need to read it.’ The enemy argues that God’s Word is not significant or life-changing. Instead, the enemy will try to convince

us that a little god will rescue us, heal us and get us out of pits. He will try to convince us that the little gods can do and be something that they are not (pretensions).

**These arguments and pretensions, partner together to build strongholds in our lives.**

**EXAMPLE OF BUILDING A STRONGHOLD:**

We are told that nobody loves us, but God tells us that He delights in us and sings love songs over us (Zephaniah 3:17). The lie that we are not loved is arguing against the truth that God loves us. We believe the lie that we are not loved, so we feel pain. We see something or someone that can ease the pain and we turn to it. We seek comfort (refuge) in that thing or person, rather than God. We believe the lie that a thing or a person has the power to heal our hearts. Each time we believe the lie that we are not loved and turn to the thing or person to heal our hearts, we lay another brick in building the stronghold. The thing or person is actually becoming our place of refuge (stronghold) instead of God. The goal of the enemy, to pull us away from God, is accomplished and each time we choose the thing or person over God, the stronghold becomes stronger and stronger.

What do you recall about ‘little gods?’

---

---

---

**IN SUMMARY**

‘Little gods’ are things (including people) that we consistently turn to instead of turning to God. When we consistently turn to a ‘little god’ instead of God, then we are allowing a stronghold to be built in our lives. As we believe a lie, it points us in a direction to seek relief (refuge) from the pain that the lie causes. As we turn to the ‘little god’ and gain some relief from the pain, we begin to form an unhealthy/ungodly attachment to the person or thing. We begin to see the ‘little god’ as a place of refuge and we run to this place when we feel pain or life feels difficult.

***Each time we run to the ‘little god,’ we are buying into the lie that it has the power to change our lives. We may experience temporary relief but the final destination will be a pit.***

## Lesson 7: Strongholds, Part 1

Can you relate to this in your own life? If so, describe how you see the enemy building a stronghold in your life.

---

---

---

Perhaps you feel at times that you are helplessly being dragged towards a 'little god.' You may have promised yourself to stop turning to food, pornography, people-pleasing, or any other 'little god,' but find it impossible to keep your promise. Somehow you end up doing exactly what you sincerely promised to give up. When a 'little god' has become a stronghold in our lives it is just as the word suggests. The stronghold has such a strong hold or tight grip around us that it feels impossible to break free. Thank God that He has the power to set us free IF we choose to make Him our stronghold. However, we must surrender control to God and stop trying to heal and free ourselves. We need to choose to trust God and believe His Word... regardless of how we feel.

Please write in the space provided a prayer to God. Ask God to help you understand what strongholds are, how they are built and how they work in your life.

---

---

---

---

Next, ask God to help you identify the strongholds in your life. Write down what God reveals to you about strongholds and 'little gods' that are in your life.

---

---

---

---

---

## Trusting God

A stronghold is all about trust. This is why what we *know and believe* about God and His love for us matters so much. If we believe that God loves us, and can rescue us from darkness, heal our hearts, and set us free, then we will run to Him. He will become our stronghold.

Please read the following words about God:

***“The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9 NIV)***

***“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 NIV)***

***“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in who I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Psalm 18:2 ESV)***

***“For You have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall.” (Isaiah 25:4 ESV)***

***“O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble.” (Jeremiah 16:19a)***

In closing this week’s lesson, ask God to help you make Him the only stronghold in your life. Ask God to help you trust him. Ask God to help you believe that He is the only stronghold that will heal your heart and set you free. Ask God to set you free from all other strongholds in your life.

Prayer to God:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



