



breakthroughs

**finding freedom and true
fulfillment in jesus**

Lesson 11: Destroying Strongholds

We have actually been stepping into freedom for weeks, as we've looked to God to help us out of the darkness in our lives. However, this week, we take very intentional steps into freedom by asking God to destroy all of the strongholds in our lives.

It is important to understand that it took time for strongholds to be built in our lives and it takes time for strongholds to be completely torn down in our lives. Certainly, the Lord can demolish a stronghold in an instant. However, I have found that it takes time for strongholds to be completely destroyed. God works in our hearts and in our relationship with Him through the process of setting us free from strongholds. He actually reveals Himself in beautiful and powerful ways as He is freeing us and He knows exactly what we need in order to grow our faith and trust in Him during this process.

Let's take a moment to pray and surrender the process of destroying stronghold to the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, thank you that you love me. Thank you that you are all-knowing and all-powerful. I trust you and submit my path to freedom to you. I believe that you have the power to destroy every stronghold in my life and that you will direct my healing and freedom according to your perfect plan for my life. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Our focus the last two weeks has been on God's forgiveness and forgiving others. To help us begin this week's lesson on destroying strongholds, let's have a quick review.

What is a stronghold?

How are strongholds built in our lives?

How do strongholds keep us in darkness and bondage?

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Strongholds are a place we seek refuge. We identified three different types of strongholds that can be built in our lives that separate us from God. We can have a 'little god' become a stronghold, expressed in an addiction. Next are emotional strongholds, like fear. And lastly the stronghold known as the 'fear of man,' expressed in people pleasing. When we continually follow 'little gods' and their markers, or arrows, from the enemy, strongholds are built in our lives. We know that God's plan is for Him to be our only stronghold. When we follow God and His markers (His Word) then He becomes our stronghold.

We asked God to show us the strongholds in our lives a few weeks ago. Do you remember what God showed you? Please list the strongholds that you have in your life.

When you look at what the strongholds are in your life, how does it make you feel?

What did we learn earlier in the workbook about our emotions and how they can affect the choices we make?

If we are having a good day and feeling positive about things, our strongholds will not look so intimidating. However, if we are not having a good day, and we are struggling with negative emotions, our strongholds will intimidate us. It will be easy for the enemy to convince us that we will never be able to overcome the strongholds in our lives. He will tell us to give up trying and we will give up... if we believe him. Our feelings matter, and when the enemy is telling us that we can't overcome the strongholds in our lives, we find ourselves at a crossroad. This crossroad is very important and there is one thing that can help us believe God over the enemy. **The Cross.** The Cross is where God poured out His love to us, forgiveness was complete, grace won.

In your own words, what does the Cross (and what took place there) mean to you?

THE ENEMY'S PERSPECTIVE

How we view our strongholds will impact our decision to run to take shelter in them or allow God to tear them down.

Based on what you've learned, describe how the enemy wants you to view the strongholds in your life.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Based on what you've learned, describe how God wants you to view the strongholds in your life.

Thinking about God's love for us, His power over sin and darkness, and His passion to set us free, will change the way we view our strongholds. We will begin to see that God is stronger than any stronghold and that He has the power to demolish every stronghold. It is crucial that we view strongholds from God's perspective, because

there is a huge battle that takes place within our minds when we look at strongholds. The enemy will do his best to exalt the stronghold. He will pull out every lie, remind you of every failure, and you will feel like you are being dragged into darkness. For us to overcome the forces of the enemy, God gives us specific weapons to use in these battles. These weapons are the same weapons used in destroying the strongholds in our lives.

THE WEAPONS

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have Divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

1 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

The following are the weapons that God gives us to use to destroy strongholds:

1) FAITH

Faith is ***“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”*** (*Hebrews 11:1*). Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. When we are walking on a foundation that is firmly built on God’s Word, we can walk through the toughest storms in life. We may feel the harsh winds blow, but we can stand because of what is beneath our feet. ***Faith is believing that God is Who His Word says He is, and that He is faithful to His Word.*** Remember that the enemy attacked Adam and Eve by tempting them to doubt God and His Word. The enemy attacked their faith.

It’s fitting that God uses faith as a weapon to defeat the enemy’s arrows. God tells us in *Ephesians 6:16 (NIV)*, ***“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”***

Based on what you know about the enemy's arrows, why do you think faith is such an important weapon used in destroying strongholds?

2) PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. We cannot depend on God, make Him our stronghold, seek forgiveness, extend forgiveness and experience a deep and personal relationship with God without communicating with Him. When it comes to fighting spiritual battles and destroying strongholds, prayer is one of our greatest weapons. All other weapons we use depend upon prayer to make them effective on the battlefield.

The following is a story in the Bible that clearly teaches us what happens when we pray.

It is about two men (Paul and Silas) who were followers of Christ and put in prison. As we follow Christ, the enemy has the same plans for our lives that he did for Paul and Silas. **The enemy wants to imprison us.** Strongholds are a huge way in which the enemy imprisons us. The way that God set Paul and Silas free from their prison is the same way God sets us free from our prisons – through prayer.

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open and everybody's chains came loose.”
Acts 16:25-26 (NIV)

What were Paul and Silas doing in prison?

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Paul and Silas had just been severely beaten and flogged and then their feet were fastened in stocks. How do you think Paul and Silas were thinking and feeling at this point? What do you think Paul and Silas's perspective was on their current situation?

What did Paul and Silas choose to do instead of following the obvious emotions that a man would feel after being beaten, flogged and thrown into prison?

This may sound repetitive but what can we learn from Paul and Silas's example?

3) THE NAME OF JESUS

The next weapon that we use on the battlefield and in tearing down strongholds is simply, yet powerfully, calling on the name of Jesus. That may sound odd to call on the name of Jesus, but God's Word teaches us that there is power in the name of Jesus. Please take the time to read the following verses to gain an understanding of the name of Jesus.

"Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-10 (ESV)

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:13 (NIV)

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Colossians 3:17 (NIV)

“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” Luke 10:17 (NIV)

What are these verses from God’s Word teaching us about the name of Jesus?

When we wake up from the fear that grips us in the middle of the night, we can call on the name of Jesus. When we feel the presence of the enemy, we need to call on the name of Jesus. When we feel like giving up on life, we need to call on the name of Jesus. When the battle is fierce and we feel like giving up the fight, we need to call on the name of Jesus.

Take a moment and write a prayer to God. Ask God to help you grasp the significance of using the name of Jesus in the battle and out of the battle. Ask God to help you learn to call on the name of Jesus when you need to be saved from the enemy. Ask God to help you learn to pray using the name of Jesus.

4) GOD'S WORD

We learned that the enemy writes markers and places them along our path to point us in a direction that leads us to darkness. Those markers are lies which stand in opposition to God's Word. We also learned that God has markers that He wants us to follow, that are true and lead us to Him. Those markers are His Word. Look back at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. The enemy's markers argue against God's Word. The enemy's markers pretend to be real but they oppose and "set themselves up against" God's Word.

God's Word is a sword (Ephesians 6:17). It has the power to demolish, which means completely destroy, lies from the enemy. The magnitude of the force of God's Word against a lie from the enemy is hard to put into human words. The best way to help you begin to grasp the power of the sword is by seeing it in God's Word.

Speaking of the final battle when our enemies meet Christ:

"From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." Revelation 19:15 (ESV)

Jesus will one day completely wipe out the existence of evil and He will do it with the sharp sword which is His very words. If you have any doubt about the authority and power of God's Word, then think back to the creation of the world. The world was created by the spoken Word of God.

We will spend the remainder of this week's lesson taking the steps that will begin the process of tearing down the strongholds in our lives.

Please give yourself at least one hour to complete the following lesson. If you don't have the time to do that now, then come back to the lesson when you won't feel rushed.

CHANGING OUR MINDS

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of you mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2 (ESV)

Hopefully you remember Romans 12:2 from a previous lesson. We learned that we are

changed beyond recognition and transformed when we change the way that we see ourselves, our lives, others and God. *We are going to learn a very strategic way of changing our minds, which will cause the strongholds in our lives to come crumbling down.* This strategy is essential to experiencing healing and freedom from strongholds as well as pain and pits along our journey. It is also a strategy that we need to use often to maintain our freedom and healing.

STEPS TO FREEDOM

Please follow the steps that are outlined below. Please do not attempt to rush through this outline. God will use this in your life today if you prayerfully seek Him through these steps.

Step 1: Begin your time in prayer. Ask God to help you learn how to renew your mind. Ask God to speak to your heart and mind. Ask God to help you trust Him to tear down the strongholds in your life.

Step 2: Ask God to show you one stronghold that He wants to tear down in your life. We will work on one stronghold at a time so start with the one that seems most pressing to you. Write down the stronghold in the space provided

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Step 3: Next ask God to reveal to you the lies that you have been told about the stronghold. What has the enemy told you, the arrows, and the markers? Write down everything that God reveals to you. It could be one lie or a long list of lies. Just write what whatever comes to your mind about the stronghold.

Step 4: Confess each lie to God. Tell God that you chose to believe the lies from the enemy and ask His forgiveness. There are times when the enemy tells us things and we don't believe his lies. It is not a sin when this happens, but it becomes a sin when we choose to believe the lie. God's Word is truth so when we choose to believe the enemy's lies, we are going against God's Word. God is exposing these lies so that He can heal you and set you free from the power they have in your life. Write your prayer to God in the space provided. Then thank God for His forgiveness.

My Prayer:

Step 5: Ask God to destroy the lies that you believe – IN JESUS NAME. For example, if you believed that "God doesn't really love you," then your prayer would be "Lord, I ask you to destroy the lie that you don't really love me. I ask that you destroy the lie in the name of Jesus." Pray in this way for each lie that you wrote down.

Note: It is important to pray through these lies out loud. When we say things aloud we are exposing them. The enemy can't read our minds so when we call on the name of Jesus then our enemy hears this and he must flee.

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Step 6: Once you have confessed the lies that you believed about the stronghold and asked God to destroy those lies, then we will pray about the stronghold. Ask God to forgive you for making the stronghold a refuge in your life. Ask God to forgive you for making the stronghold an idol in your life that you turned to, instead of turning to Him. Ask God to forgive you for worshipping the stronghold instead of worshipping Him. After you confess this to God, ask God to forgive you and to break the power of the stronghold off of your life. Ask God to free you of any hold that the enemy has on you because of this stronghold. Ask God to completely break the sin and powers of the sins of this stronghold off of your life. Ask God to break all ties to this stronghold off of you and set you completely free to worship Him. Thank God for setting you free from this stronghold and ask Him to heal and restore you from all that wounded you as a result of seeking refuge in that stronghold. Pray all of this in the name of Jesus.

* Don't forget to pray out loud.

Step 7: Replace the lie with God's Word.

Now that you have asked God to expose the lie, to forgive you of believing the lie, and to destroy the lie, then it is time to replace the lie with truth. This step is putting Romans 12:2 to work in your life. Let's use the lie "God doesn't really love me" as our example. To replace the lie with truth we need a verse that tells us the truth about God's love for us. *If you need help in finding a verse, then go to Appendix II.*

"For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave." Psalm 86:13

Once you choose a verse to replace the lie, then you need to begin memorizing the verse. Every time a lie about God's love is fired, you pick up the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit – the Word of God. You tell yourself that God's Word says that His love for you is great and that He has given you eternal life (delivered you from the depths of the grave).

This may seem like a lot of work and it can be. But it is not the type of work that leaves us feeling tired and weary. It is also not burdensome work that is boring and routine. When we read God's Word, listen to God's Word through sermons or devotionals or Christian books, we are getting to know God. We are getting to know our Creator, the all-powerful and all-knowing God of this universe. We are getting to know the One who defeated sin, death, and darkness and has called us to live in His light, experience freedom, healing, and abundant life. We are getting to know the One who we were created to love and worship for all of eternity. This sounds more like an adventure than a homework assignment. ***Don't let the enemy fool you into***

thinking that getting to know God through His Word is anything less than extraordinary and life-changing.

OTHER STRONGHOLDS

We focused on one stronghold today. When you feel God directing you to work on another stronghold then go back to this week's lesson. Go through the same steps that you did today in praying through the stronghold.

NOTE: We have included a couple of prayers in the back of the workbook (Appendix VII and VIII) that are extremely helpful in praying through 1) sexual strongholds 2) habitual sins. In addition to the steps you prayed through today, I encourage you to look at these prayers to see if they apply to your particular strongholds.

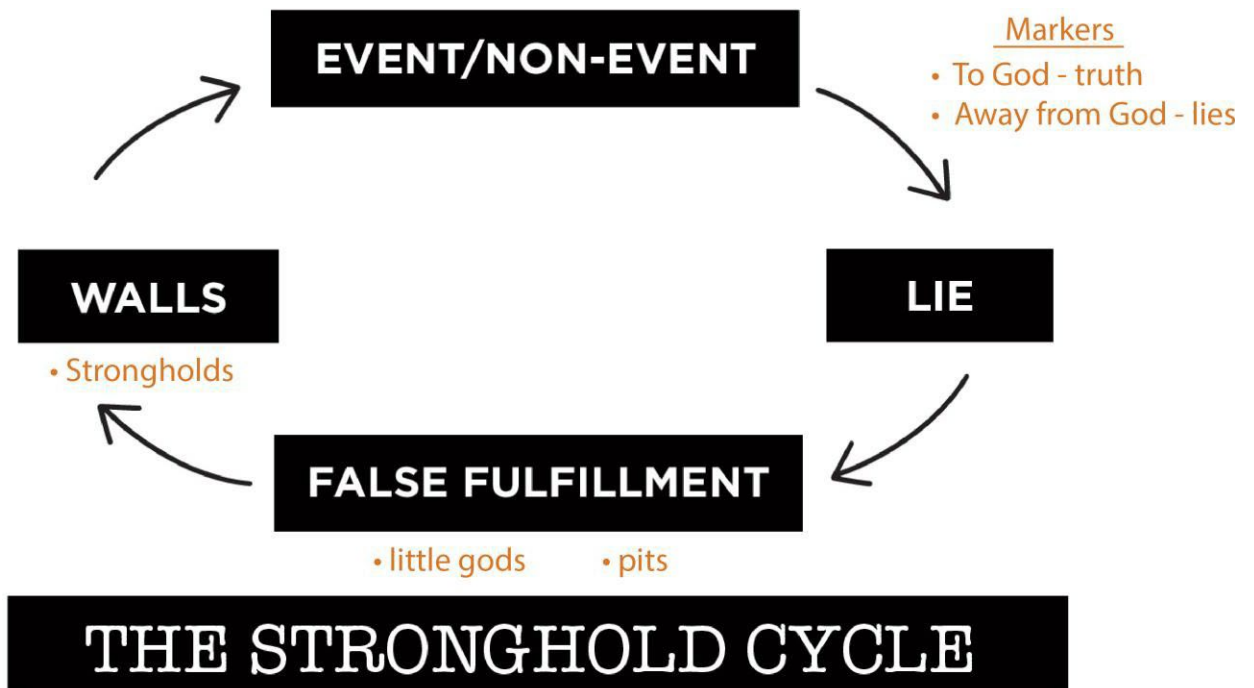
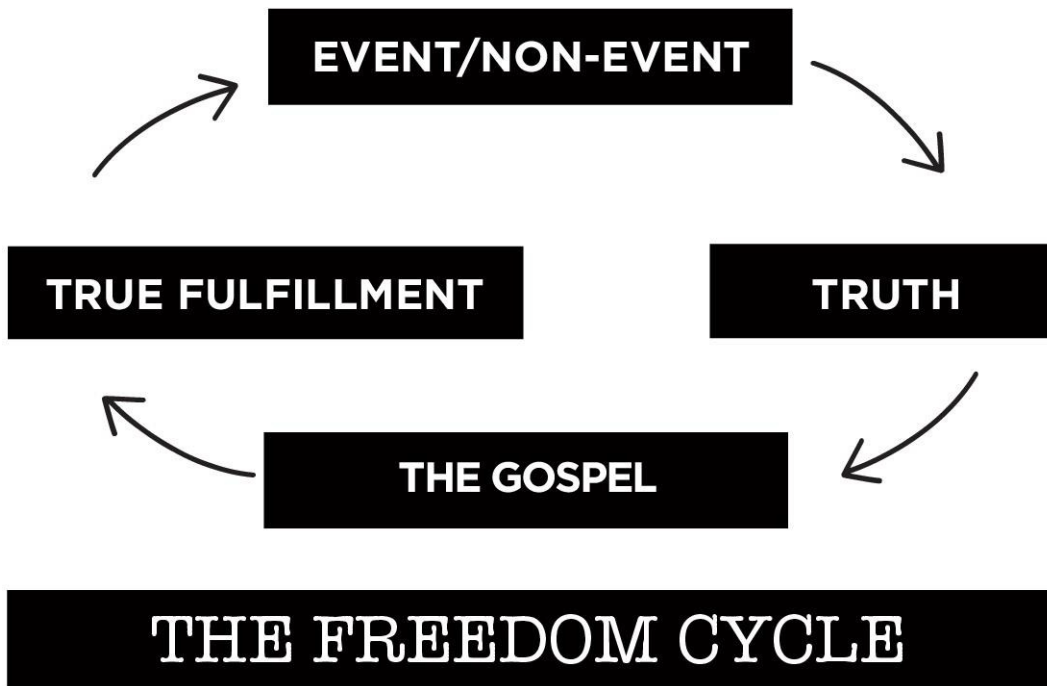
The enemy will attempt to gain back ground in your mind that he once held captive. It is a battle but one that will become easier to fight as your feelings begin to line up with God's Word. In other words, as you begin to believe God's Word your heart will experience truth. The truth will become more comfortable in time until the truth of God's Word feels at home in your heart. Before long the lies will feel out of place in your heart. They won't be easily welcomed into your heart. You will become an experienced warrior on the battlefield of your own mind and victory will be a new way of life for you.

Daily Prayer

Father, I declare that You are a good and faithful God, so today I choose to place my hope and my confidence in You. I receive and welcome Your presence, and I thank You for promising that You will never leave me nor forsake me. Your promises are always true. So even when I feel alone, I will choose to believe in Your constant, abiding presence. I am not alone. Thank You for holding me close to You.

Thank You for the freedom You have given me in Jesus. You have washed me clean and filled me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me to keep my heart open and turned to You. Help me to abide in You, confident in Your promise I will bear much fruit. Because You have loved me, forgiven me, and saved me, I reject and renounce wicked and shameful ways. I will run in the path of Your commands, for You have set my heart free. I will look to You alone as my source for truth, and I reject every lie from the enemy. You alone are my comforter, my strength, and my shield. I renounce all of my efforts to comfort or protect myself. My life is now hidden in Christ, and I trust that You will finish the good work You have begun in me.

Lord, I realize my struggle is not against flesh and blood, so I choose to put on the full armor of God. I will stand against the devil's schemes knowing that the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world. Lord Jesus, thank You for Your promise that nothing and no one can snatch me from Your hand. I offer myself to You as a living sacrifice, and I ask You to transform me by renewing my mind. Thank You for loving me and setting me free. I love You, and I praise You. In the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.



A Prayer for Sexual Healing

Healing for your sexuality is available; this is a very hopeful truth! But you must realize that your sexuality is deep and core to your nature as a human being. Therefore, sexual brokenness can be one of the deepest types of brokenness a person might experience. You must take your healing and restoration seriously. This guided prayer will help immensely. You may find you need to pray through it a few times in order to experience a lasting freedom.

A bit of explanation on the reasons for the prayer: first, when we misuse our sexuality through sin, we give Satan an open door to oppress us in our sexuality. A man who uses pornography will find himself in a very deep struggle with lust; a woman who was sexually promiscuous before marriage may find herself wrestling with sexual temptation years afterward. So it is important to bring our sexuality under the lordship (and therefore protection) of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek his cleansing of our sexual sins.

Second, sexual brokenness—whether through abuse of our sexuality by our own actions or by the actions of others—can create sexual difficulties and also opens the door for the enemy to oppress us. Quite often forgiveness is needed—both the confidence that we are forgiven by the Lord and the choice we make to forgive others. This will prove immensely freeing.

Let us begin by bringing our lives and sexuality under the lordship of Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess here and now that you are my Creator (John 1:3) and therefore the creator of my sexuality. I confess that you are also my Savior, that you have ransomed me with your blood (1 Corinthians 15:3, Matthew 20:28). I have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ; my life and my body belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Jesus, I present myself to you now to be made whole and holy in every way, including in my sexuality. You ask us to present our bodies to you as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) and the parts of our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). I do this now. I present my body, my sexuality [“as a man” or “as a woman”] and I present my sexual nature to you. I consecrate my sexuality to Jesus Christ.

Next, you need to renounce the ways you have misused your sexuality. The more specific you can be, the more helpful this will be. God created your sexuality for pleasure and joy within the context of the marriage covenant. Sexual activity outside of marriage can be very damaging to a person and to their relationships (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). What you want to do in this part of the prayer is confess and renounce all sexual sin—for example, sexual intimacy outside of marriage: not only

intercourse, but other forms of sexual intimacy such as mutual masturbation or oral sex. Many people assume these “don’t really count as sin” because they didn’t result in actual intercourse; however, there was sexual stimulation and intimacy outside marriage. Keep in mind there is the “spirit of the law” and the “letter of the law.” What matters are issues of heart and mind as well as body. Other examples of sins to renounce would be extramarital affairs, the use of pornography, and sexual fantasies. You may know exactly what you need to confess and renounce; you may need to ask God’s help to remember. Take your time here. As memories and events come to mind, confess and renounce them. For example: “Lord Jesus I ask your forgiveness for my sins of masturbation and using pornography. I renounce those sins in your name.” After you have confessed your sins, go on with the rest of the prayer.

Jesus, I ask your Holy Spirit to help me now remember, confess, and renounce my sexual sins. [Pause. Listen. Remember. Confess and renounce.] Lord Jesus, I ask your forgiveness for every act of sexual sin. You promised that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). I ask you to cleanse me of my sexual sins now; cleanse my body, soul, and spirit, cleanse my heart and mind and will, cleanse my sexuality. Thank you for forgiving me and cleansing me. I receive your forgiveness and cleansing. I renounce every claim I have given Satan to my life or sexuality through my sexual sins. Those claims are now broken by the cross and blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:13– 15).

Next comes forgiveness. It is vital that you forgive both yourself and those who have harmed you sexually. LISTEN CAREFULLY: forgiveness is a choice; we often have to make the decision to forgive long before we feel forgiving. We realize this can be difficult, but the freedom you will find will be worth it! Forgiveness is not saying, “It didn’t hurt me.” Forgiveness is not saying, “It didn’t matter.” Forgiveness is the act whereby we pardon the person, we release them from all bitterness and judgment. We give them to God to deal with.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for offering me total and complete forgiveness. I receive that forgiveness now. I choose to forgive myself for all of my sexual wrongdoing. I also choose to forgive those who have harmed me sexually. [Be specific here; name those people and forgive them.] I release them to you. I release all my anger and judgment toward them. Come, Lord Jesus, into the pain they caused me, and heal me with your love.

This next step involves breaking the unhealthy emotional and spiritual bonds formed with other people through sexual sin. One of the reasons the Bible takes sexual sin so seriously is because of the damage it does. Another reason is because

of the bonds it forms with people, bonds meant to be formed only between husband and wife (see 1 Corinthians 6:15–20). One of the marvelous effects of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is that it breaks these unhealthy bonds. “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

I now bring the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ between me and every person with whom I have been sexually intimate. [Name them specifically whenever possible. Also name those who have abused you sexually.] I break all sexual, emotional, and spiritual bonds with [name if possible, or just “that girl in high school” if you can’t remember her name]. I keep the cross of Christ between us.

Many people experience negative consequences through the misuse of their sexuality. Those consequences might be lingering guilt (even after confession) or repeated sexual temptation.

Consequences might also be the inability to enjoy sex with their spouse. It will help to bring the work of Christ here as well. Many people end up making unhealthy “agreements” about sex or themselves, about men or women or intimacy, because of the damage they have experienced through sexual sin (their sin, or the sin of someone against them). You will want to ask Christ what those agreements are and break them!

Lord Jesus, I ask you to reveal to me every “agreement” I have made about my sexuality or this specific struggle. [An example would be “I will always struggle with this” or “I can never get free” or “I don’t deserve to enjoy sex now” or “My sexuality is dirty.” Pause and let Jesus reveal those agreements to you. Then break them.] I break this agreement [name it] in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, and I renounce every claim I have given it in my life. I renounce [name what the struggle is—“the inability to have an orgasm” or “this lingering shame” or “the hatred of my body”]. I bring the cross and blood of Jesus Christ against this [guilt or shame, every negative consequence]. I banish my enemy from my sexuality in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I invite the healing presence of Jesus Christ to cleanse me and restore me as a sexual being in fullness of joy and wholeness. I ask you, Jesus, to fill my sexuality with your holiness, to strengthen me and restore me in your name.

Finally, it will prove helpful to consecrate your sexuality to Jesus Christ once more.

Lord Jesus, I now consecrate my sexuality to you in every way. I consecrate my sexual intimacy with my spouse to you. I ask you to cleanse and heal my sexuality and our sexual intimacy in every way. I ask your healing grace to come and free me from all consequences of sexual sin. I ask you to fill my sexuality with your healing love and

goodness. Restore my sexuality in wholeness. Let my spouse and me experience all of the intimacy and pleasure you intended a man and woman to enjoy in marriage. I invite the Spirit of God to fill our marriage bed. I pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen!!

We could report many, many stories of stunning redemption that have come as a result of individuals and couples praying through this type of prayer. Now remember—sometimes the wounds and consequences take time to heal. You might want to revisit this prayer several times over if lasting healing has not yet taken place. You may recall actions that need confession later; return to this prayer and confess those as well. Some of you will also benefit from seeing a good Christian counselor. Hold fast to these truths:

You, your body, and your sexuality belong to Jesus Christ. He has completely forgiven you. He created your sexuality to be whole and holy. He created your sexuality to be a source of intimacy and joy. Jesus Christ came to seek and save “what was lost” (Luke 19:10), including all that was lost in the blessings he intended through our sexuality!

Prayer for Freedom from Habitual Sins

(from *The Utter Relief of Holiness*)

Renouncing the Sin

Freedom comes only as we bring these unsanctified and unholy places under the rule of Jesus Christ, so that he can possess these very places deeply and truly. Therefore, part of this first step involves sanctifying to Christ the place of bondage. If it's sexual, you sanctify your sexuality to Christ; if it's emotional (as with rage, or fear, or even grief), you sanctify your emotions; if it involves addiction, you sanctify your appetite, your obsession, and your body. At the retreats we do, we walk through this process in prayer, and many people are shocked to realize that they have never taken the first, simple step of sanctifying their sexuality (or emotions, or appetites) to Jesus Christ. But if you want to be free in this place, it must come under the total, intimate, ongoing rule of God.

Lord Jesus, forgive me. I confess I have been offering myself over to sin, and now I am its slave. I renounce it; I renounce my sins. [Be very specific here. For example, "I renounce the ways I have presented my sexuality to sin; I renounce my sexual sins. I present my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I present the members of my body and my sexuality as instruments of righteousness. I renounce the ways I have presented my appetite and my drinking to sin; I renounce my sins with alcohol. I present my appetite and my drinking to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my body to Jesus Christ."] I renounce every way I have given myself over to sin. I dedicate and I consecrate my life [and this specific area] once more to the rule of Jesus Christ, to be his and his alone. May your atoning blood cover my sins and cleanse me. May your holiness possess me totally and completely.

You will also find it helpful to renounce the "sins of your fathers." Often in these places of lasting bondage you will find that a father (or mother, or brother, or grandparent) struggled with the same issue. The scriptures present to us the reality that sin is often passed down within a family line, and the effects of those sins are also passed down generation to generation (see Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Leviticus 26:39-42, Nehemiah 9:2).

Lord Jesus, I also renounce the sins of my fathers here [or my mother, my grandmother, what have you]. I renounce their sins of [be specific, as in, "their rage, their sexual sins, their alcoholism."] I utterly renounce and break with the sins of my family line. I plead the blood of Christ over those sins, so that they may not have a hold on me. I renounce them and break with them utterly.

Breaking the Stronghold

We begin to break the enemy's hold on us through the presence of "agreements." By this I mean places in our own hearts that have made a deep agreement with a feeling, a thought, a sentence. If you have struggled with something for years now, there are probably agreements along the lines of: "I'll never get free of this," "I am such a \$%#@," "Who cares anyway?" "It's too late," and a host of others. Those are agreements, and they serve as a kind of permission for the enemy to keep you in bondage. So you must break them. In addition to these, there are the agreements with the sin itself: "I am filled with rage," "I am a drunk," "I am gay." They can even "feel" biblical but, friends, you do not want to be making agreements with your sin. You are dead to sin and alive to God. You are the dwelling place of Jesus Christ. You are forgiven and dearly loved. So you must break the agreements you've been making here, in this area. Some will be obvious to you; others require the presence of the Holy Spirit to reveal them.

Spirit of God, search me, know me, reveal to me the agreements I have been making in this area. I renounce those agreements now. [Be very specific.] I renounce the agreement that [What is it? "I'll never get free?" "Rage is just a part of me?" "It's too late?"] I break these agreements in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. I renounce them. I renounce every claim they have given the enemy in my life. Jesus, my Deliverer, come and break these strongholds. Set me free in this very place.

Lord Jesus, show me every companion agreement operating here. I renounce the agreement that I'm alone, that no one will protect me. I renounce the agreement that I am dirty and disgusting. I renounce every agreement with shame. I renounce the agreement that I can never be forgiven. Spirit, show me what to pray, reveal these agreements.

This is how we undo that dynamic about letting the sun go down on these things and the enemy getting a foothold (Ephesians 4:26-27). Bit by bit you are recovering parts of your heart. You are taking them back from when you gave them away. This erodes the claim that you gave the enemy in your heart. Yes, terrible things may have happened to us, but we are the ones who made these agreements, these resolutions, these vows, and we're not going to see victory in that area until we renounce them.

I will be honest—if you've given your heart over to something many times over, you've given it a good stronghold, and if it is also tangled up in issues of wounds and sin, it's going to take some time to untangle and heal this, but it is worth the work. Don't just bury it. It's worth going into those dark places and those murky waters

and working through it. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of everything. Everything.

Having broken the agreements and renounced the sin, we often find that we have to be quite intentional in commanding the enemy to leave. “Submit therefore to God,” wrote James the brother of Jesus, “resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Much of what we have been doing up to this point is submitting to God, bringing these specific issues under the rule of Jesus by renouncing the sins, breaking the agreements, sanctifying these places back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now comes part two of this verse: resist.

I bring the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ right here, in this very place. I renounce every claim I gave the evil one to my life right here, in this very place. And I bring the blood of Christ now against the strongholds and against the spirits operating here. [Sometimes you will need to be firm and specific: I bring the blood of Jesus against all spirits of addiction, of alcoholism, all spirits of rage, of homosexuality, and so on]. I banish these enemies from my life now—from my body, my soul, and my spirit. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). I resist the devil here and now and I command these spirits to flee in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Ask the Spirit to guide you. If you will stick with this and let the Holy Spirit guide you, you can be free.

Lord, forgive me for giving place in my heart to resentment, to lust, to anger, to alcohol. Forgive me for giving place in my life to resignation and self-reproach and shame, to fear and doubt and control. I renounce it now. Come, Jesus Christ, and take your rightful place in my heart and in my life here. Come and set me free here, in these very places. I plead your blood over these sins, and I break every hold I gave my enemy here, in the name of Jesus Christ.

As you do this, you erode your enemy’s claims to keep you in bondage. By the way, your enemy is not going to like the fact that you are about to get free. He will try to discourage you from praying like this. He will try to distract you (the phone will ring, you’ll suddenly be hungry, you’ll feel like doing it tomorrow). He’ll try to make you feel like, *this is so stupid, I can’t believe I’m doing this out loud*. He’s going to make you feel like *this isn’t working* or *this isn’t going to work; now I’m becoming one of those nuts*. Just push through all of that.

I bring the work of Jesus Christ once more against you [shame, rage, fear, sexual sin, resignation, etc.] and I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to go to the throne of Jesus Christ in his mighty name. “It is for freedom that Christ has set you free” (Galatians 5:1). I claim my freedom now in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus, I ask you to sanctify me through and through. May my whole spirit, soul, and body be kept

blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). Sanctify me through and through, in this place, in this issue.

Healing the Brokenness

Now for the best part: the healing. God wants to make you whole and holy. He promises to heal the brokenhearted. So now you invite Jesus in to heal the wound, to love you in this place, to restore your soul, to heal this memory. You invite him into your past.

Lord Jesus, I invite you into my wounds and my brokenness. [Again, don't be vague and general; be very specific.] Jesus, I invite you into the day I was abused. Come into my shattered heart, my shame, come into that moment in my life. I ask you to cleanse me here, to heal my broken heart and make me whole.

Linger in this place in prayer. Listen. Pay attention. Often Jesus will bring up something necessary to your healing. For example, suddenly you feel the anger toward your abuser—Jesus is showing you that you need to forgive.

Jesus, I forgive my brother for abusing me. I release him from my rage and I give him over to you.

Sometimes you'll feel the shame and self-rejection.

Lord Jesus, come into this shame. I renounce self-rejection. I renounce despising myself because of all that has happened. I forgive myself as well. Come and heal me.

Sometimes you will feel the young places in your heart crying out for love or for protection.

Lord Jesus, gather the young and frightened place in my heart into your loving arms. Come and find me here, in these very places. Gather my heart into your love and make me whole.

As you are inviting Jesus into your wounds, what is so very beautiful is the fact that quite often—not every time, but more than you'll expect—Jesus will show you what he is doing; you will see him come. Call it seeing with your mind's eye or Christ using your imagination or seeing with the eyes of your heart or your spirit—however you want to describe it. Often you will see Christ come back into your past. He may take you by the hand and lead you out of that room. You might see him step between you and the one who wounded you, or he might simply tell you, "You are forgiven, you are safe, I love you."

Healing doesn't necessarily have to be dramatic. Oftentimes it is very quiet. Jesus simply comes as we invite him to, and though we may not "see" him or "hear" him, he comes, and we sense a new peace or quietness in our soul. Our heart feels better somehow. The important thing is for us to give him permission to these wounded places, invite his healing love, and wait in prayer for him to come. Do this with each memory of wounding, with each event (ask the Holy Spirit to guide you). Often I will pray Isaiah 61 as I do this:

Lord Jesus, you have come to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. Come and heal my brokenness right here, Lord; free me from this captivity, release me from all darkness, bring your favor here in my soul and bring your vengeance here against my enemies. Lord, you came to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. I ask you to do this in me—comfort me where I am hurting; bestow on me a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Come in this memory, in this wound. I receive you here.

Many times Jesus simply says, "Let me love you." We need to open our hearts up to his love. As we do, it allows him to come to this very place. Linger there and listen; ask for the healing grace of Jesus Christ over and over again. He comes, dear friends, he comes.