

# SPIRITUAL: STRONGHOLDS

## LifeGroup PARTICIPANT Notes

### 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

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*One who is wise can go up against the city of the mighty and pull down the stronghold in which they trust.* (Proverbs 21:22)

We, as Christians, tirelessly seek to cut ties with the *kingdom of darkness* as committed citizens of Christ's *Kingdom of Light*.

**\*Next Level\*** - Throughout the notes you will see "Next Level." This indicates that it is time to read your group and determine if this is an area your group is ready to dig deeper into together or better suited for personal reflection..

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### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Finish one of the following sentences:
  - a. My take away from Sunday's sermon was . . .
  - b. Last week I did the Ephesians 6 challenge (two Sundays ago) and it was . . .
  - c. I had a God moment this past week . . .
2. **Read Proverbs 21:22.** We've moved from discussing the reality of spiritual warfare to focusing specifically on attacking spiritual strongholds. Discuss this quote from Sunday's sermon "*apathy towards the Light leads to empathy with the dark and becoming a sympathizer in the anti-God war.*"
3. **Read 2 Cor 10:1-6** together in three different translations.
4. *For though we live in this world* (NIV) can also be translated *For though we walk in the flesh* (ESV). Paul recognized that, though we are spiritual beings, we are also physical beings. Like us, Paul and the Corinthians struggled with the challenges (for ex: pride, selfishness) and temptations (lust, greed) that come from living our lives in a world of flesh.
  - a. Paul made it clear that, though he walked in the flesh, he **did not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (v3-4).** What are the carnal weapons we might default to in 2019?
  - b. What weapons does God want us to use instead? (cf: **Ephesians 6:8-10**).
  - c. **\*Next Level\*** The weapons God calls us to use (i.e.: His grace, forgiveness, truth, promises, faith, the Word) are infused with *divine power*.

- i. Are there spiritual battles in our lives that we tend to fight with worldly weapons (such as denial, alcohol, manipulation, intimidation, gossip)?
  - ii. Why is it easier at times to default to the fleshly weapons?
  
5. Read this paragraph together: The Corinthian Christians relied on fleshly, worldly “weapons” in their day to day lives and struggles. Reading through 1st & 2nd Corinthians it’s clear that instead of the belt of truth they defaulted to the wisdom of the day and judging by appearances (1 Cor 1:18ff, 2 Cor 10:7ff). Instead of the breastplate of righteousness they turned to sexual immorality and pride (1 Cor 4:18-5:2, 6:12ff). Instead of the shoes of the gospel of peace they choose slandering and suing one another (1 Cor 6). Instead of the shield of faith they preferred partisan politics and reputation (1 Cor 1:10-17). Instead of the helmet of salvation they welcomed false teachers (2 Cor 10-11). Instead of the sword of the Spirit they fought with greed and manipulation (1 Cor 7, 13, 2 Cor 9).
  - a. **\*Next Level\*** If you are the type of group that would like to go deeper in this comparison, find your own connections, or dive into the passages-- look up, read, and discuss all the above passages together!
  
6. This past Sunday, Ryan mentioned: “The Corinthian saga is the story of failing to cut ties with the darkness. It’s also a chronicle of our failure, as Christians, to realize the battle is not somewhere out there, it is right here! The battle of darkness vs. light is within our congregations, families, friendships, and especially within our very hearts and minds.” Paul wasn’t talking about the strongholds found in the unbelieving world but those found in the Church (the Corinth congregation)!
  - a. What kind of strongholds do you see in the church today and what can be done to combat them?
  
7. On Sunday we got specific about the types of spiritual strongholds we battle.
  - a. Try to describe from memory (as much as possible) the three types of strongholds outlined in the sermon on Sunday.
  - b. What strongholds did you have to confront (successfully or not) in coming to faith in Christ?
  - c. Everyone take a moment and ask yourself: What strongholds have you battled in the past, or are still a present struggle today?
  
8. **Reread 2 Cor. 10:6.** Excerpt from sermon: Say what?! Simply put, Paul was ready to confront the Corinthian Christians, and to pull down the strongholds among them if they would not do it themselves. Keep in mind that Paul was a Roman citizen and that the Corinthians lived in a Roman world. So Paul was not afraid to use the Roman military as an example (cf: Eph 6) and word picture that people would have readily understood. In this case Paul was saying, “we’re all soldiers together in this battle, and I am ready to bring in some troop discipline if necessary.”
  - a. Have you ever been on the giving or receiving end of a constructive criticism, rebuke, or discipline that--though hard to hear at the time--in the end produced healthy/positive results?

- b. What does this battle imagery tell us about the seriousness of spiritual battles/strongholds and the role of the church?
  - c. **\*Next Level\*** Does the church can have authority to speak hard truth--even taking disciplinary action--into the lives of a church family?
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## PRAYER

Read or refer to Ephesians 6:18. Prayer is a big part of how we fight spiritual battles. Neil Anderson has developed prayers for spiritual deliverance.

- Slowly read over the prayers below (Appendix B).
  - Pen and paper in hand, personally journal a response to the prayers. Think of your journal writing as a letter addressed to God.
  - After a few minutes, discuss any or all of the question below.
    - In what ways are these prayers like or unlike your day to day prayers?
    - How do you feel about pre-written prayers?
    - Of the prayers, which one do you like most and why?
    - Which prayer, or part of a prayer would you have the hardest time praying and why?
  - **\*Next Level\*** Do you dare open up and discuss your strongholds, something you wrote while journaling, or how the prayers impacted you?
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## APPENDIX A - Types of Strongholds (Taken from Sermon Notes)



Strongholds are areas of strong sympathy with the kingdom of darkness; they are the ways in which Satan gets a foot in the door into our lives and churches. I like to think of them like the Dark Tower from Lord of the Rings. Where might we find strongholds? Well Paul gives us a few suggestions in 2 Corinthians 10:5.

- D. Intellectual arguments | **Sin Ruts** | We might have false beliefs about God, ourselves, and others. We might have intellectual doubts which lapse us into apathy. We might believe false teaching from the Bible - or there might be false teachers in our churches and communities. It might even be patterns & addictions; grooves and ruts into which we find ourselves as individuals and church families. Bitterness? Pornography? Gossip?
- E. Rationalizing and justifying disobedience to God | “*Every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God*” | **Speculations & Sophistatrics** | These are all the ways we try to justify our sin and actions of darkness. The ways we try to explain away what the Bible says, justify our participation in evil systems, rationalize our actions.
- F. **Lying Self-talk** | We’re often concerned about lying to others or having them lie to us, but do we ever worry about lying to ourselves? Self-talk is not just a psychological buzzword; it’s the reality of our day-to-day lives. Does your self-talk exalt truth and live for the kingdom of Light, or is it still trapped and chained to darkness?
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## APPENDIX B - Prayers for Freedom

### Steps To Freedom In Christ

#### Bondage Breaker

##### **Prayer 1 (Steps to Freedom)**

Dear Heavenly Father,

*I know that You want me to know the truth, believe the truth, speak the truth and live in accordance with the truth. Thank You that it is the truth that will set me free. In many ways I have been deceived by Satan, the father of lies, and I have deceived myself as well.*

*Father, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of His shed blood and resurrection, asking You to rebuke all of Satan’s demons that are deceiving me.*

*I have trusted in Jesus alone to save me, and so I am Your forgiven child. Therefore, since You accept me just as I am in Christ, I can be free to face my sin and not try to hide. I ask the Holy Spirit to guide me into all truth. I ask You to “search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23, 24) In the name of Jesus, Who is the Truth, I pray. Amen.*

##### **Prayer 2 (Bondage Breaker)**

*Dear heavenly Father, You have told us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (Romans 13:14). I acknowledge that I have given in*

*to fleshly lusts which wage war against my soul (1 Peter 2:11). I thank You that in Christ my sins are forgiven, but I have transgressed Your holy law and given the enemy an opportunity to wage war in my members (Ephesians 4:27; James 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8). I come before Your presence to acknowledge these sins and to seek Your cleansing (1 John 1:9) that I may be freed from the bondage of sin (Galatians 5:1). I now ask You to reveal to my mind the ways that I have transgressed Your moral law and grieved the Holy Spirit.*

### **Prayer 3 (Bondage Breaker)**

*Dear heavenly Father, I come to You as Your child, purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and who sits with Him in heavenly places, I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. I now command every familiar spirit and every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in or around me to flee my presence and never to return. I now ask You, heavenly Father, to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I submit my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, that I may glorify You in my body. All this I do in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### **Prayer 4 (Steps to Freedom)**

*Dear Heavenly Father, I praise You and honor You as my Lord. You are in control of all things. I thank You that You are always with me and will never leave me nor forsake me. You are the only all-powerful and only wise God. You are kind and loving in all Your ways. I love You and thank You that I am united with Christ and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world or the things of the world, and I crucify the flesh and all its passions.*

*Thank You for the life I now have in Christ. I ask You to fill me with the Holy Spirit so I may say no to sin and yes to You. I declare my total dependence upon You and I take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth of God's Word despite what my feelings may say. I refuse to be discouraged because You are the God of all hope. Nothing is too difficult for You. I am confident that You will supply all my needs as I seek to live according to Your Word. I thank You that I can be content and live a responsible life through Christ who strengthens me.*

*I now take my stand against Satan and command him and all his evil spirits to depart from me. I choose to put on the full armor of God so I may be able to stand firm against all the devil's schemes. I submit my body as a living and holy sacrifice to God and I choose to renew my mind by the living Word of God. By so doing I will be able to prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect for me. In the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

### **Prayer 5 (Steps to Freedom)**

*Dear Heavenly Father, You have told me to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and not to think about how to gratify my sinful desires (see Romans 13:14). I confess that I have given in to sinful desires which wage war against my soul (see I Peter 2:11). I thank You that in Christ my sins are already forgiven, but I have broken Your holy law and given the devil a chance to wage war in my body (see Romans 6:12, 13; James 4:1; I Peter 5:8). I come to You now to confess and renounce these sins of the flesh (see Proverbs 28:13; 2 Corinthians 4:2) so that I might be cleansed and set free from the bondage of sin. Please reveal to my mind now all the sins of the flesh I have committed and the ways I have grieved the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.*