**“WOW” Class 6**

**“STRONGHOLDS and REPENTANCE”**

**Friday, September 28, 2018**

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**INTRODUCTION TO THE STEPS**

 Most of us are here because we want to learn to help others. This class is different than some training classes. If you want to become a Doctor, you don’t have to be sick before you can learn to make others well. But for those of us who want to help set others free, must become free ourselves first.

Matthew 7:3-5 And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? **4**Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? **5**Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

I learned this lesson from the Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18:9-14… We may be blind to our own bondage, but if we will humble ourselves and ask, the Holy Spirit is always faithful to show us those things that keep us from an intimate relationship with Him, which is what strongholds do.

**STRONGHOLDS:**

Understanding strongholds is such a vital key in being overcomers in God’s Kingdom that we are going to build on what Connie shared last week.

**1. A stronghold is a place of refuge or safety, a means of protection or defense. Strongholds can be godly or ungodly.**

 **Godly Strongholds:** God desires to be our stronghold. Psalm 9:9-10 says, “The Lord also will be a refuge[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm9&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-14031c)] for the oppressed, A refuge in times of trouble.”

The Hebrew word for “refuge” is Misgab (H4869), a *stronghold, defense, retreat, a high place*. He wants us to turn to him in times of need, to allow Him to be our place of safety, and to trust Him to be our defender and shield of protection.

As Connie pointed out last week, the Hebrew word for stronghold, *Misgab,* translates as "chaos, destroy, pride, and division of house." As we seek God and trust in Him, we will recognize the ungodly strongholds, cause the enemy chaos, and divide his house as we tear down and destroy the things that he uses to divide and separate us from our Heavenly Father. Then we can rebuild on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, our true stronghold. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil (1 John 3:8).

 **Ungodly Strongholds:** When we choose to rely on something other than God, we create our own strongholds or defenses. These are the things that we run to for protection or comfort when we feel threatened, placing false hope and false security in something other than God, and with these strongholds, there will always be chaos, destruction, pride, and division.

There are different open doors for strongholds, yet all are built on lies or a false belief system fed by the deception of the enemy about God, others, or self. It may be **sin** (our own or other's sin against us), **lineage** (generationally passed down sin or traits), **ignorance** (deception, spiritual blindness), **broken heartedness** (emotional pain, fear, guilt, shame, worthlessness…), **unforgiveness, soul ties** (ungodly relationships, sexual immorality) **word curses,** or **involvement in false religions or the occult.**

When we listen to the lies of the enemy and agree with the demonic forces that are suggesting things to us, we come under their influence and they gain a stronghold. Strongholds are legal rights, permission, a license or contract, that give the devil the ability to gain a place, a stronghold or foothold, into our lives (Ephesians 4:27 “nor give [[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29300g)]place to the devil”).

But here’s the good news! **Repentance cancels and breaks that agreement, Satan’s legal right, and destroys the stronghold.**

**2. There are different levels of strongholds.**  There are those that are strictly mental and can be overcome with a realization and application of the truth. Then there are those in which demons have become so entrenched and that require spiritual warfare born out of repentance, that breaks ungodly soul ties, dismantles the strongholds and kicks out the enemy; then fills the previously occupied place with the Holy Spirit.

**3. Demonic strongholds are like snares intended to separate and hold us back from intimate relationship with God. We are enticed by something that Satan tempts us with, or it may be a belief based on lies. But either way, when we hold onto that thing, in the end, it holds onto us.**

 **Alluring Snares:** Satan tempts us with things that we are open to considering because they interest or entice us, appealing to our fleshly desires. We enter this alluring snare believing that we can control it, and then too late realize that it controls us and has interfered in our relationship with Christ as all sin does.

 **Hidden** **Snares** are not as obvious. They creep in as thoughts or feelings that we deceptively believe are our own and we accept them as such, not realizing that Satan has placed them in our minds. Often, Satan uses other people’s sins against us to capture us in his hidden snares. Through abuse, abandonment and rejection he whispers lies of self condemnation and worthlessness; hatred, anger and unforgiveness appear to be justifiable; ungodly soul ties cause us to struggle with problems and issues that are not our own. When we accept, believe or embrace these things, Satan gains a stronghold.

 Since we act upon what we believe and Satan’s goal is to hinder us from accomplishing God’s will, these thoughts (false beliefs) will take us away from God’s plans, even though they may seem right at the time. It is easy to minimize or justify snares and we are often blind to them as they entrap us in the bondage of the stronghold.

**Strongholds are like bungee cords or yoyos. We may move away from them, but if the cord is not cut, we will be yanked right back into the very thing we thought we had left behind and may find ourselves in a “sin-confess, sin confess” cycle.**

***Illustration:*** Peter Horrobin’s (Ellel Discipleship Ministries) illustration of body, soul and spirit.

**4. Repentance is the key to overcoming strongholds. Repentance begins with humility and involves:**

1. **Recognition** of the stronghold, the open doors the lies and the sin

2. **Confess** rebellion, lies and sin

3. **Renounce** the lie, the sin, and the enemy that attached to that, and proclaim that you want no part of that sin or its perks any longer.

4. **Break ungodly soul ties**,take authority over the demons who have been given rights through the sin and tell them to go.

5. **Replace** the lies with the truthand commit to believe and act on the truth regardless of the feelings

6. **Forgive**

7. **Ask God** for healing and restoration

8. **Practice** the new habit, living as an overcomer no matter how you feel.

9. **Remember** Romans 8:37 “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Sin opens the door for the devil to gain a place. Repentance kicks out the devil and shuts the door. It invites the Holy Spirit to heal broken, hurting parts of us. It begins the process of overcoming and conquering, not just surviving; of being conformed into Christ’s image and character.

**STEP 1 is about identifying the open doors in our lives that have allowed the enemy to gain strongholds, and then closing them.**

The “Review of your Life” questions on page 5 of “The Steps To FREEDOM IN CHRIST” are meant to help identify potential or possible open doors and strongholds.

**2 Chronicles 34; 2 Kings 23** **KING JOSIAH BREAKS STRONGHOLDS:**

**2 Chronicles 34:1-3** Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. **2**And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. **3**For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, **he began to seek the God of his father David**; and in the twelfth year **he began to purge** Judah and Jerusalem…

***Seeking God always leads us into recognizing sin and its strongholds, which leads to repentance, the key to overcoming.***

***Matthew 9:13 says,*** *“For I [Jesus] did not come to call the righteous, but sinners,[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+9&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-23393b)*to repentance.”* ***Jesus came to call us to repentance because repentance is the key to breaking strongholds.***

**2 Kings 23:1-15:**  Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. **2**The king went up to the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20-23) which had been found in the house of the Lord.

**3**Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all *his* heart and all *his* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant. **4**And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10170a)]Asherah, and for all [[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10170b)]the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron (like a large cemetery), and carried their ashes to Bethel. **5**Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10171c)]constellations, and to all the host of heaven. **6**And he brought out the wooden[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10172d)] image from the house of the Lord, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground *it* to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. **7**Then he tore down the *ritual*[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10173e)]booths of the [[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10173f)]perverted persons that *were* in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. **8**And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which *were* at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* to the left of the city gate. **9**Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

**10**And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the Valley of the [[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10176g)]Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. **11**Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had [[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10177h)]dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who *was* in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. **12**The altars that *were* on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. **13**Then the king defiled the [[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10179i)]high places that *were* east of Jerusalem, which *were* on the [[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10179j)]south of [[k](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10179k)]the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. **14**And he broke in pieces the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

**15**Moreover the altar that *was* at Bethel, *and* the [[l](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Kings+23&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-10181l)]high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place *and* crushed *it* to powder, and burned the wooden image.

**STEPS 2-7 continue the process of tearing down ungodly strongholds and begin the process of restoration, repairing and rebuilding with Kingdom keys, tools and weapons.**

**2 Chronicles 34: 8**In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the [[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+34&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-11942c)]temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, **to repair** **the house of the Lord his God.**

**When the Word of God, Truth, was discovered, King Josiah was devastated because He was desperate for God and His righteousness! So he humbled himself in repentance. Humility always proceeds true repentance for it is the opposite of pride, of self, of sin.**

**19**Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes….**26…** ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “*Concerning* the words which you have heard— **27**because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you,*” says the Lord.

**Josiah’s repentance is evident in his actions. He made a covenant with God to follow Him and His ways with all of His heart and soul. He rebuilt his kingdom on God’s the solid foundation of God’s Kingdom and made those in his kingdom serve the Lord as well. Jeremiah 29:13-14 says*,***  *“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.****14****I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity…”*

**31**Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. **32**And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. **33**Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that *belonged* to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel [[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+34&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-11967h)]diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of their fathers.

**2 Kings 23:21-25:** Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the Covenant.” **22**Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. **23**But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the Lord in Jerusalem. **24**Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. **25**Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him.

**IDENTIFYING STRONGHOLDS:** 2 Corinthians 10:4 says, “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+10&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-28976a)]carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.” “Stronghold” here is *ochyroma* (G3794), a castle, fortress, stronghold, fastness; anything on which one relies.

What are those things we trust in, rely and cling to? If you don’t know, then consider fasting what you care most about. If it is difficult to think about going without a certain thing, then that could be an idle, an open door.

It was not easy for Josiah or the people to radically tear down, destroy and demolish their gods, their places of worship, their ways of worship. These are the things that they had trusted in and relied on!

It will not be easy for us either because ***every stronghold has its perks and gives us something that we want or value;*** something that appeals to our flesh or sense of pride. It may be power, comfort, riches, feeling important, loved or connected with others…

 Consider Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). When God called him to follow Elijah, he used his plow as fuel and burned his oxen. Yes it was a sacrifice, but it also was a destruction of his old way of life. He could never return to it.

 When we recognize strongholds of the enemy, we must be willing to destroy them so that we cannot return to them. Are we willing to demolish these things we have depended on, are comfortable with, and maybe even love?

**Strongholds can be mental, emotional, spiritual and/or physical, and can affect our soul (mind, will, emotions), spirit and body. They affect behavior.**

 **Illustration:** Draw aTriangle: Body, Soul and Spirit strongholds with 2 Thessalonians 5:23-24

 **Mental strongholds** are lies, false premises or beliefs that can be broken through the power of the truth as we recognize the lies, confess them and choose to believe the truth.

 **Emotional strongholds:** Emotional pain, such as fear, anger, disappointment,abandonment, rejection, guilt, shame, etc., is an open door for emotional strongholds. They involve mental strongholds, but affect us at a deeper level of our being. Sometimes we know the truth with our minds but can’t seem to walk in it because of the emotional strongholds. I have heard it said that when there is a war between the mind and the heart, the heart usually wins.

 Emotional pain causes us to be weak, vulnerable and distracted. Satan gains entry as we embrace his whispered lies during this vulnerable time. Because we hate pain, we try to escape from it. We try to ignore it, cover it up with anger, control it, minimize it, blame shift it, anything but deal with it. The truth is that we have to feel the pain because it is there. Denying it is deception, enemy territory, and until we deal with it, we are already dealing with things such as depression, anger, overwhelming and hopeless feelings, all symptoms of the underlying pain. But once we allow ourselves to experience it and deal with it God’s way, we will be free from the power of the pain, the stronghold of the enemy.

 In **spiritual strongholds** Satanbelieves that he has some right to claim influence through an agreement we made with him either knowingly or unknowingly. Emotional or physical pain, trauma, accidents, abuse, unconfessed sin, generational sin, pride, unforgiveness and even curses can be the open door for spiritual strongholds.

There may be a demon attached to the feelings who believes he has the right to be there. In this case, when Jesus reveals the specific demon, we renounce it along with all the rights he was claiming, and command him to leave us and to go to the feet of Jesus to await His judgment. Once the door has been shut on him, we need to ask Jesus to fill that space previously occupied by the demon with Holy Spirit's presence and His love.

 **Physical strongholds** are more difficult to identify because often a demon will cause symptoms that mimic a real physical problem. In Matt. 9:32-34 a man who could not speak was healed when Jesus cast out a demon.

Spiritual discernment is so important because while we don’t want to give credit to Satan inappropriately, too often we wield power to him by assuming that all is a natural, physical consequence, when in fact Satan may be behind it.

Demonic strongholds can hinder us in several ways. They can slow or stop spiritual growth and they can affect our ability to be obedient to God.

Recognizing hindrances can be an important identifying factor between physical problems and strongholds mimicking them. When we are hindered from doing what we believe God has told us to do, the first step is to seek God’s heart and mind, making sure that ours lines up with His.

 Many Christians and non-Christians in mental health facilities, hospitals and churches are bound by Satan’s strongholds. Too often we accept physical, mental, emotional and spiritual problems because we either don’t believe that Satan can affect Christians in that way, or we have been blinded to his influence and ignorant of his plans to kill, steal and destroy God’s kingdom and His people.

**Conclusions About Ungodly Strongholds:**

1. Every stronghold hinders our relationship with Jesus, other people, and our spiritual growth.

2. Every stronghold affects our ability to be obedient to God.

3. Every stronghold is related to something we have exalted to a higher position than God in our lives, something we have trusted in and relied on.

4. Every stronghold has its perks and pretends to give us something we feel we must have. However, every stronghold ultimately leads to bondage, defeat and death.

5. Every stronghold can be broken and freedom gained through repentance and forgiveness.