**Session 1**

**RESTORING FREEDOM**

Many men are STUCK. They want to move forward spiritually but keep struggling with the same patterns of defeat year after year. The unseen spiritual chains that keep us stuck are called “Strongholds”.

**A. What is a stronghold?**

A stronghold is a fortified place or a fortress. A place of resistance in someone’s life. It is a system of **WRONG THINKING** that leads to compulsive behavior difficult for us to break.

Stronghold definition: 1. a well-fortified place; fortress. 2. a place that serves as the center of a faction or of any group sharing certain opinions or attitudes.

*“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.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5*

It is not our past that holds us in bondage but the lies we believe about our self and God as a result of our experience that hold us in bondage.

Strongholds are like lines that have been memorized and played over and over in our heads. They are not your lines, but we have learned them adapted them as your own.

**B. How are strongholds built?**

Strongholds are built upon **LIES** that were planted in us through bad life experiences and have become deeply rooted in our thinking and personality.

“Sow a thought; reap an action. Sow an action; reap a habit. Sow an habit; reap character. Sow character; reap a destiny.”

*“…the devil…was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44*

*“In your anger do not sin, Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27*

Strongholds lead to ongoing failure in our spiritual lives. Habitual failure can lead to:

Inhibiting our God given personality

Doubting our salvation

Hardening of our hearts

Acceptance of many lies

Shame and condemnation

Losing our joy

Living double lives

Neglecting our spiritual gifts

**C. How do we tear down strongholds?**

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 we are told that we have divine power to demolish strongholds with the weapons that God has provided. We also have the capacity to take lies that turn into thoughts and make them obedient to Christ.

Some people are hopeless because they think it is impossible to change. Whether a lie comes from the world, the flesh, the devil, or a mixture of all... the key to resisting the lies is to identify the lie and embrace the truth.

**1. IDENTIFY the lies and patterns that have kept you spiritually stuck**

*“Search me, 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*

We cannot heal what we conceal.

**2. EXPOSE the lie and sinful pattern to the light of God through confession and repentance.**

Confess To God:

*“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.” Proverbs 28:13-14*

Confess to Others:

*“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16*

**3. RENEW your mind to maintain your place of freedom**

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:22*

Renewing your mind with who God is, what he has done for us through Christ, and our identity in Christ leads to changed behavior. You are called to walk in freedom!

Submit the stronghold area to God’s divine authority. Ask yourself “what does God want me to do?”

*“Submit yourselves, then to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7*

Our real authority (power to accomplish what God has called us to) comes via our submission to God and his established authority.

**Group Discussion**

Give the group a short summary of your spiritual history:

1. What is your religious background?

2. Who influenced you most growing up?

3. When and how did you come to God?

4. What positive changes have you seen in your life?

5. What strongholds still need to be destroyed in your life? (Be as specific and honest as possible).

**Before tomorrow, take time alone to thoughtfully and honestly complete your Personal Spiritual Profile located on page 21.**

**Session 2**

**BREAKING CYCLES**

**A. Understanding Generational Cycles**

Just as your family’s physical history tells us a lot about your physical tendencies, so your family’s spiritual history tells us a lot about your spiritual tendencies.

*“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” Exodus 20:5*

*“Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the father’s sins into the laps of their children after them.” Jeremiah 32:18*

Four Generations

Great-Grandparents -> Grandparents -> Parents -> Children

You are not **RESPONSIBLE** for your ancestors’

sins, but you are **AFFECTED** by them.

The Example of Abraham

Genesis 20:1-6:12 Abraham / Sarah Partial lie

Genesis 26:7 Isaac / Rebekah Full lie

Genesis 27:18-29 Jacob / Isaac Lie and thief

Genesis 37:19-33 10 Sons / Joseph Lie and slavery

**B. Three Steps To Breaking Generational Cycles**

**1. RECOGNIZE Admit and confess any binding cycles in you and your family.**

What are the binding tendencies in my life?

Is there a pattern in my family’s past?

Do my siblings or children struggle with the same tendencies?

*“Oh Lord, we acknowledge our wickedness and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you.”*

*Jeremiah 14:20*

**2. RENOUNCE Be willing to repent and renounce binding patterns in you and your family.**

*“Therefore say to the people of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!” Ezekiel 14:6*

Repentance: A willingness to acknowledge my sin, turn away from it, and embrace God’s way.

Renounce: Severing ties and declaring something to no longer be a part of your life.

You are not responsible for Adam’s sin but you have been affected by it.

*“When I heard these things I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven… I confess the sins we Israelites, including my Father’s house and myself have committed against you.” Nehemiah 1:6-7*

*“But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers – their treachery against me and their hostility towards me…” Leviticus 26:39-41*

**3. REVERSE Take bold steps of obedience to create a new culture and break the existing pattern.**

*“Before we start a new cycle we must renounce the old cycle and be willing to build an altar to God on our family’s old cycle.” Judges 6:25-27*

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17*

God wants to turn your past weakness into a testimony to his glory and build your strength on your weakness.

**C. Breaking Unhealthy Generational Cycles**

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

*“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.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5*

 a. Repentance of present sin

 b. Renunciation of past sin

 c. Repossession of what had been lost

 d. Replacement of lies with truth

Set in motion a life giving cycle. Become a Cycle Breaker and a Legacy Maker.

**Breaking Cycles Worksheet**

Take the next 10 minutes to reflect and answer the following questions. Share your bold step with your group.

1. What are the top three generational weaknesses in my family line?

2. How have I been affected by them?

3. What new cycle do I want to see in motion?

4. What bold steps will it take for me to reverse these generational cycles?

**Take a look at the Bold Steps Worksheet on page 20 and begin to identify your bold step from this retreat.**

**Session 3**

**UNLOCKING FORGIVENESS**

**A. How do I know if I hold unforgiveness in my life?**

A sense of disconnect with God’s forgiveness and love. (Matt. 6:14-15)

When thinking about a certain person stirs negative feelings inside of you.

Feeling like this person owes you something. (Mark 11:25)

Experiencing conviction of the Holy Spirit about your attitude and actions toward this certain person.

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:30-32*

*“If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven – if there was anything to forgive – I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” 2 Corinthians 2:10-11*

Unforgiveness = Satan’s WEB of BONDAGE

**B. How can I overcome unforgiveness?**

First you must receive God’s forgiveness.

To forgive is to clear the record of wrong doing and sin.

To cover sin and not count it against someone.

*“Blessed is he whose transgression are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.” Psalm 32:1-2*

To place sins behind your back

*“In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.” Isaiah 38:17b*

To choose not to remember sin.

*“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” Isaiah 43:23*

In the Old Testament, forgiveness cost a high price—the life blood of a lamb.

*“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” Leviticus 17:11*

In the New Testament, forgiveness cost an even higher price—the life blood of Jesus Christ.

*“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Ephesians 1:7*

*“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood…” Revelation 1:5*

Forgive others as God (through Jesus) has forgiven you.

Extending forgiveness is a worship response to being forgiven by Jesus. Extending forgiveness is a faith decision, not a feeling. Extending forgiveness is obedience to Jesus, not an option. Walking in forgiveness results in relationships of freedom and love.

**C. What are the steps to forgiveness and releasing?**

**1. Confess and REPENT . (I John 1:9)**

Recognize your sin of unforgiveness

Stop excusing it

Agree with God about it – that it falls short of His glory, dishonors the cross of Christ

**2. Choose to forgive and RELEASE the person completely.**

State the wrongs in writing or verbally that you have held against them.

Declare that by God’s grace and in obedience to Him you release the person from debtor’s prison. You forgive them.

Remember your forgiveness does not erase their sin; it erases the debt you hold against them.

**3. Ask God for the GRACE to persevere in forgiveness. (I John 1:7)**

If needed, let the person know you’ve forgiven and released them.

Stop bringing up the record of their past wrongdoing. (Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 43:25)

Trust God to work all things for His good as you walk in faith (Romans 8:28-30)

**Prayer of Forgiveness**

*Dear God, because You have forgiven me by the blood of Jesus Christ, I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. By faith, I now to forgive the wrong of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ done to me. This sin is behind me, this person is released from any debt. Please give me Your grace to free and love others.*

**Session 4**

**THE DAUGHTER FACTOR**

Many women are unable to give love and affection because they struggle in receiving it from their heavenly Father.Women unable to experience the love of the Father tend to struggle with:

• A lack of inner joy

• Insecurity in their relationships

• The tendency to feel inadequate

• Inability to express love to others freely

• Unexplained feelings of rejection

• A distorted self image

Why can’t women experience the Father’s love?

**1. BAD LIFE EXPERIENCES that have allowed lies to be planted in our view of ourselves and God.**

**2. Rejection, abuse, or neglect that has opened the door to lack of TRUST.**

**3. SPIRITUAL oppression that has created a barrier to the love of God.**

**4. Father, husband or male authority figure that has betrayed or disappointed us, thereby creating fear of INTIMACY.**

*And pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. (Ephesians 3:16-20)*

**Spirit of Sonship vs. Spirit of Slavery (Romans 8:14-16)**

*Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*

*(Romans 8:14-16)*

**Spirit of Slavery**

Shame based, fear driven and fear empowered.

**Spirit of Sonship**

Grace based, love driven and Holy Spirit empowered.

*I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.*

*(2 Corinthians 6:18 NKJV)*

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

*(1 John 3:1 NKJV)*