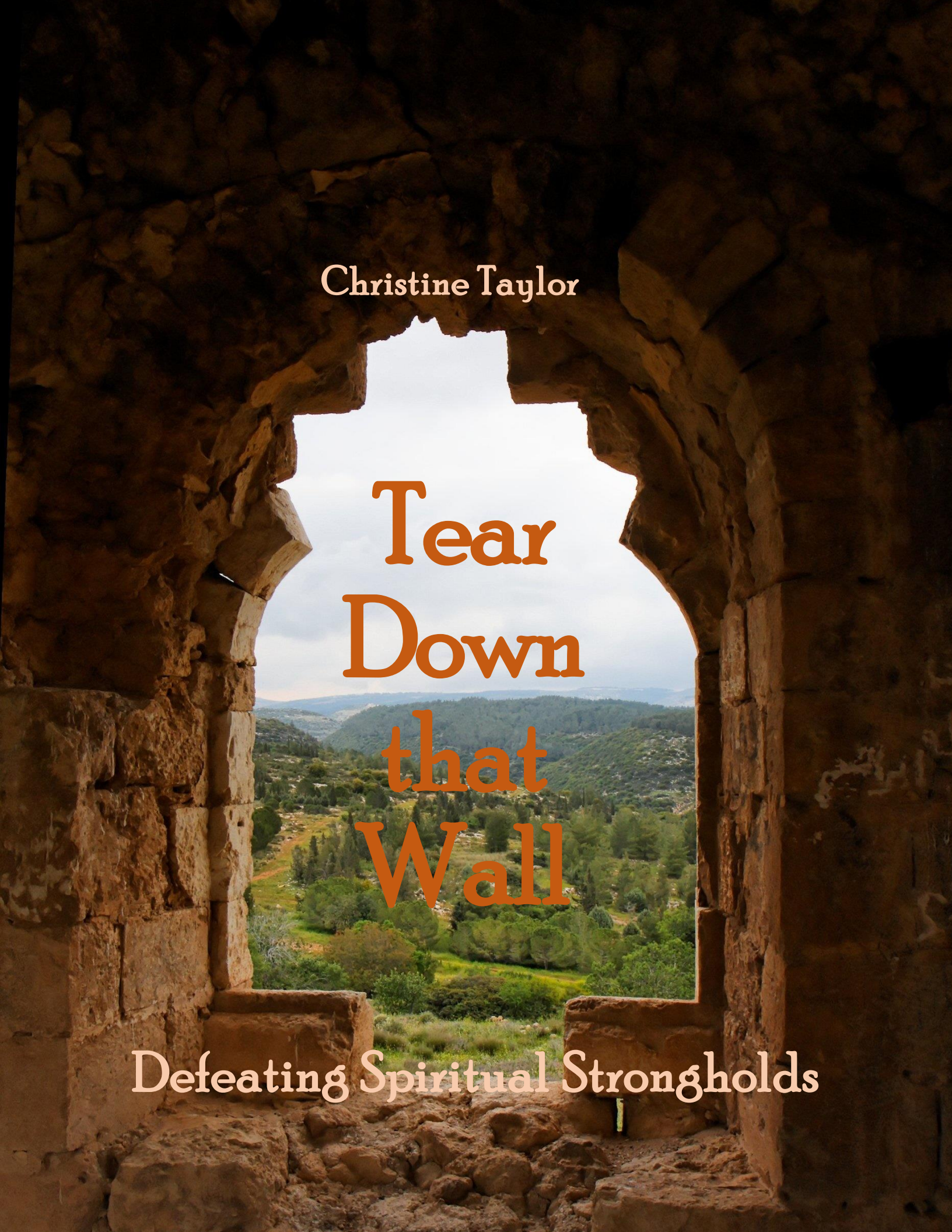

Christine Taylor
Tear Down that Wall
Defeating Spiritual Strongholds



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What Is a Stronghold?

Have you ever prayed about a bad habit that you just can't seem to break? Have you ever wondered why God isn't helping you stop a habit or sin?

When you allow yourself to fall into negative thought patterns – anger, bitterness, fear, greed, lack of trust – there is more going on here than just a bad habit. It's a pattern of negativity that molds itself into your thoughts and decisions. We call this tangled nest of negative and sinful thoughts a stronghold, and they are serious: they affect our feelings and tempt us to respond badly to situations in our lives.

When you are a believer, then the enemy of your soul wants like heck to ride in on those weaknesses and sins, and build them up into a defense against God in your life.

Now, strongholds aren't by nature bad; they can be very good things too. In the physical world, a stronghold is a defensive structure. It's usually built in a high place to see the movement of the enemy, and to make it much harder for the enemy to attack coming up. A stronghold isn't good or evil by itself; it can be filled with good guys or bad guys!

However, as Paul said, **"We are all sinners and have fallen short of the glory of God."** It's very likely that most of us also have a stronghold or two that is unhealthy, sinful, weak, and set against God.

When we talk about "tearing down strongholds," that's the kind we're talking about – not the stronghold of God and the Holy Spirit in our lives, but demonic strongholds of habitual sin and weakness.

[3] For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. [4] The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. [5] 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)

How do you do that? How do you recognize your strongholds, know which one to start with, and get to work to tear that thing down? We'll talk about that next.

How to Recognize Your Strongholds

If you don't know what one of your strongholds are, then ask. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. When a series of strange events happen it's possible it's a spiritual attack --- but it's also perfectly possible that it's God trying to tell you something.

Identifying Your Strongholds

Go through the below list and check any that you know are a problem. For example, from time to time most of us let slip something we shouldn't. But if you get delight out of gossip and try to rationalize it, and have done it for a while, then you probably have a stronghold of gossip.

Be very aware that when you have such a stronghold, the enemy does not want you to break it! He will likely tell you that is not that important, or it's not that bad, or you have every right to feel the way you do. You would like to agree.

This does not impress God. If you feel bitter or unforgiving because of what someone did to you long ago, then God is gentle with your pain but he's not very understanding about your lack of forgiveness. Bitterness is a stronghold no matter how much we rationalize it.

- ✓ Criticism
- ✓ Complaining
- ✓ Taking offense easily
- ✓ Unforgiveness
- ✓ Bitterness
- ✓ Pride
- ✓ Gossip
- ✓ Love of money and material things
- ✓ Procrastination
- ✓ Perfectionism
- ✓ Pornography
- ✓ Placing family, job, or church above God

- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Hatred

What Stronghold Is God Revealing to Me Now?

This is the harder question then "What is my stronghold?" For example, I struggled for months against a major stronghold that I did not even know I had. I was going through a very difficult financial time when God revealed to me the truth: that I loved money. Since I never had a lot of money, it never occurred to me that I could love it. But one can love or lust after what one does not have. I realized that I did not trust God to provide for me. That I only felt good when I had money, and felt anxious when I did not.

Now that was a sneaky one. Not all of them are that layered or hard to see. You may know very well for example that you have a pornography stronghold. Or an anger stronghold. Sometimes they are perfectly obvious.

Also, since we are sinners living in a sinful world, we almost certainly have more than one. Now don't class any sinful thought that you have ever had as a stronghold. It's a sin and you want to confess it, but you only create a stronghold when you have a negative pattern of sinful thoughts or weaknesses, and have had it for some time.

Pray. Read John 15 and James 1, and ask God to reveal to you the stronghold that he wants to tear down. He will.

How to Tear Down a Stronghold

Tearing down spiritual strongholds follows the Biblical story of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 1-6. Let me be very clear that when I say "stories," I meet true stories from the Bible. I believe that Joshua existed. I believe that God directly commanded the Hebrews to conquer Canaan. I believe that he told them exactly how to start with Jericho.

I also believe that God can help us to use actual events in his word to carry out his will and our lives right now. Not only did the historic attack on Jericho happen, we can learn from the same events to help us to tear down the enemy strongholds in our own lives. God's own word teaches us how to tear down the strongholds that frustrate our godly purpose.

We'll be talking about prayer, Bible study, action, and courage. Don't be afraid! Or in the Lord's words to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous."

The Seven Steps

There are seven steps to taking down spiritual strongholds in the power of Christ Jesus:

1. Trust: Be strong and courageous
2. Discern: Spy out Jericho
3. Confess: Be Rahab
4. Commit: Cross the Jordan
5. Listen: Listen to the angel
6. Act: March
7. Victory: Tear down those walls

Step 1: Trust. Be Strong and Courageous

Now that you know one of your strongholds and are ready to tear it down, let's walk with Joshua and Israel as they prepare to enter the promised land and take down the walled city of Jericho.

Moses was 120 years old when he climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab. There the Lord showed him the Promised Land, the whole of it looking west to the Mediterranean, and from the north to the south. The LORD said, "This is the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their descendants. You will not cross over into it, but I have let you see it with your own eyes." And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab within sight of the Promised Land.

Don't feel too bad for Moses. The Bible tells us that no prophet like him arose in Israel, for this was Moses whom the Lord knew face to face. And a thousand years later, he would stand on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah and Jesus. But for now, his journey was done.

The Israelites grieved for their great leader on the plains of Moab for 30 days. But God did not leave them leaderless. Before Moses left for Nebo, at God's command he laid his hands on his assistant Joshua, and Joshua was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD commanded.

And the Lord spoke directly to Joshua. He said, "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and these people will cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give you all. No one will stand against you."

Then God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous." He said three times to Joshua in this chapter alone, and the fourth time came for the people themselves.

Repeating the same command four times in the same small section is a pretty good indication that it's important that we be strong and courageous. Each time the words resound in this chapter, they have a different meaning:

- ✓ Claiming the promises of God
- ✓ Obeying God
- ✓ Having courage in God
- ✓ Taking authority over strongholds

Four Dimensions of Being Strong and Courageous

Claim the Promises of God.

God said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.” (v. 6)

Our prayer does not force God fulfill his promises, and we certainly don’t have to remind him about the promises He made. When we claim the promises of God, we acknowledge that we are helpless to achieve these things on our own. We also remind ourselves that if God has requested action from us to fulfill the promise, then we must act.

Obey God.

God said to Joshua, “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.” (v. 7)

Be obedient to God even when it’s hard. He will give you the power if you have the will. God promised the Israelites who left Egypt that they would enter the promised land. And so they did—and fearfully turned back. It took 40 years to try again. This time they were strong and courageous. And the promise was fulfilled.

Have Courage in God.

God said to Joshua, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (v. 9)

When you’re following God, God is with you wherever you go -- even behind enemy lines. Don’t be afraid. Stand on the promises of God to tear down strongholds. And trust him that he will tell you how.

Take Authority over Strongholds

The people said to Joshua, “Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!” (v. 18)

Take authority over the enemy strongholds in your life. They can be hard battles, but you are a warrior, and the enemy stronghold cannot stand against you and Jesus Christ.

Act

- **Jericho Model: "Be strong and courageous."**
- **Action: Study verses on the power of God and know that you can trust him.**

Print out these verses, or handwrite them on cards, or keep them open on your computer. There are seven of them: study and memorize one of them every day. There is power in the Word, and the more that we take the word of his power into ourselves, the more the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to the power and faithfulness of God. The more your trust will grow, and the stronger and more courageous you will be.

Day	The Power of God
Sunday	Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love. (Psalm 62:11)
Monday	By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. (1 Cor. 6:14)
Tuesday	[Jesus said] "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Luke 11:20)
Wednesday	With a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever. (Psalm 136:12)
Thursday	Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the eternal Rock. (Isaiah 26:4)
Friday	Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26)
Saturday	Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (Eph. 6:10)

Step 2: Discern. Spy Out Jericho

40 years earlier, Moses had sent in spies to the promised land. When they came back out again each one of them talked about the little how amazing the land was no big the fruit was and how credible it all was. But only two of them said let's go in. These were Joshua and Caleb. The other spies said you can't go in there, there are Giants in the land! We look like grasshoppers to them; they're going to kill us!" Moses and Aaron threw themselves down to the dirt facedown to beg forgiveness from God for what the spies it said. But the people believed the frightened spies and they refused to go in.

God punished them by driving them back into the desert, where for 40 years they wandered. The entire adult generation who had arrived at the promised land for the first time died in the desert. But their children and children's children lived to become a warrior race whose reputation was feared throughout the region.

Now it was time for Israel to take the promised land once again. Joshua sent in two spies to spy out the land, especially the walled city of Jericho. The two men went in, got through the gates of Jericho, and eventually ended up taking shelter at the house of a prostitute whose name is Rahab.

Their identity did not seem to be much of a surprise to anyone. Every kingdom had heard about the coming of the force from the desert. The kings of Bashan and Heshbon east of the Jordan had already fallen to the Israelite's army. Now the Israelites were poised to take all of Canaan, and starting with Jericho.

Don't go into battle against strongholds with fear, but don't go in with all guns blazing, ready to take this sucker down! Even though the Israelites were one tough fighting machine, God wanted them to take some steps first. God can get really, creative when He is working with us. Be strong and courageous – and smart, and prepared. At this point you do not yet know how God plans to deal with your stronghold.

How to Discern a Stronghold

You already read the list of common strongholds. The one that God wants you to work on may be perfectly obvious. If it isn't, then pray over it. Look at the list and just ask God to help you identify those negative thoughts that sit between you and God, and the abundant life he has for you to live.

If the answer doesn't come, then take your time. Keep praying and thinking. Repeat this verse: Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just,

whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy–meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

It sounds non-intuitive to think about negative thought patterns by thinking about good thoughts! But it's not. Think about your common thought habits and reactions, and compare them against verse 8. If they don't line up with just, pure, lovely, or good – then pounce on them. There is your stronghold.

Act

- **Jericho Model: The spies enter Jericho.**
- **Action: Pray and journal.**

You have identified your spiritual stronghold, but you may not understand it in detail, especially if it's an old and sneaky one. You don't need to completely understand it to tear it down, but you do need to recognize the negative thoughts so you can pray about them and keep them from going underground.

Don't stop praying. Pray specifically against the stronghold and ask God for help. Is going to sound strange to you at first, keep going.

I also advise you to journal your progress and prayers. A lot of Christians go running for the hills when we talk about journaling. I don't know why. All journaling is, is recording how God is working with you in your life. When it comes to strongholds it's very helpful to have a written record of what you think and pray, and of your progress.

Journals can be anything. You can pick up a blank book and use a pen. You can type in your computer. You can use dictation software to speak it into your computer. You can draw it. It doesn't matter, only that it is a written record of your thoughts and prayers and God's revelations about your stronghold.

Step 3. Confess: Be Rahab

Some people must have seen suspicious characters enter the city and go into the local prostitute's house, because the king sent a message to Rahab to bring out the spies.

But Rahab had no intention of doing that. Just like everyone else in Jericho, she had heard the stories of how powerful these people's God was, and how they had completely destroyed King Og and King Sihon. Jericho was doomed and she wanted to save herself and her family. So she lied to the soldiers about seeing them, and as soon as the men left to follow her fake directions, she went up to her roof where the two spies were hiding.

She told them, "I know that your God dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and that the LORD your God has given you this land, I am not against you and your God. So please. Please swear to me by the LORD that you will spare me and my family, because I have been kind to you. Give me a sign that you will spare my mother and father, my sisters, and brothers, and all their families."

And the men answered, "Our lives for your lives! If you don't betray us, we'll treat you well when the LORD gives us the city. But we can't run around the city to get your family, so bring them all here and tie a red cord to the window. No one will attack this house, and everyone inside will be safe."

She agreed, they left, and she tied the scarlet cord in the window. And went to alert her family to come to her house in secret, and to come quickly.

The spies stayed in the hills for three days until Jericho soldiers gave up on searching the road and went back to the city. They returned, got over the Jordan River, and reported to Joshua. They said, "The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

When you are tearing down your stronghold, this is the part where you confess your sin to God for allowing that stronghold to be built. Satan can do nothing to a person by himself. That person sins, entertains weaknesses, and even with Christians Satan rides in our own vulnerabilities and makes a nice little stronghold for himself a fear, or anxiety, or debt, or any other type of stronghold that we suffer with.

Understand that you are your own Jericho. Seek out your own sin just as the spies entered Jericho to understand what waited for them. Understand your stronghold, prepare to seek God's help to conquer it, be Rahab and acknowledged the power and authority of God over the wicked city of your own sin. Collect yourself, wait for the attack— and for your deliverance.

Confessing Your Part

Most strongholds develop from emotional hurt. Anger and irritation are protective barriers, bitterness arises out of betrayal, procrastination defends one's self from external control. But it's on us when we build anti-God strongholds out of our emotional reactions – many of them stemming from childhood!

Stop making agreements with the enemy. "No one will ever really love me." "No, it doesn't matter that I actually want to do this project. You can't make me." "He doesn't deserve to be forgiven." "She makes me so mad."

We all occasionally do and say dumb stuff, but when the above kinds of statements are affecting your life then stop it! Confess your sin and ask God to help you live a new life.

Act

- **Jericho Model: Rahab**
- **Action: Confess your sins to God.**

The negative thoughts that created this stronghold are sins. God loves us and understands us; he knows our weaknesses and loves us. But we must confess our sins to him and be forgiven.

Tell him about the negative thought patterns. Tell him art how sorry you are that you wasted so much time thinking this way. Tell him that you need his help to overcome them and thank him for forgiving you right now, at this moment, and for giving you all the strength you need and more to take the stronghold down.

Step 4. Commit: Cross the Jordan

When the people drew close to the wetlands that drowned the shore of flooding Jordan River, Joshua and his officers commanded the Israelites to stop where they were. They were to camp for three days before crossing. When the officers saw the Ark and the priests carrying it starting to move, they would know it was time to follow it. But they were to keep a ½ mile distance between them and the Ark. The last thing Joshua wanted is for the soldiers in their excitement to run down the Ark and jump ahead – just like we do when we act -- and God isn't ready for us to do it yet!

But they weren't just sitting around at camp. Joshua said that they were to consecrate themselves, for the Lord will do amazing things among them!

On the third day, Joshua ordered the priests to move up the front of the line and wait.

Joshua said to the Israelites, "Listen to the word of God! You will know the living God is among you because you will drive out the peoples of this land. As soon as the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord set foot in the Jordan, it's waters will stop flowing and will stand up in a heap upstream!"

Then the people broke camp, and Joshua commanded the priests carrying the Ark to walk until they reached the edge of the Jordan's waters, and to stand in the river. This was not as easy as it might seem. The Jordan was flooding, and the wetlands were hard to cross. The priests had to watch their feet, the Ark, and each other as they approached the shore of the fast-running river. And they did it.

Joshua and the people waited until the priests had gone about ½ mile ahead before they began to move. And as soon as the priest's feet hit that river, it stopped flowing! It heaped upstream in a town called Adam. Yes, Adam.

The priests walked on the now-dry riverbed until they reached the middle of the river, then they stopped as all of Israel walked around them, careful not to jostle or upset the Ark. The whole nation crossed over.

Israel took four steps to cross the River Jordan. Take the same steps to cross your river that lies between you and freedom from strongholds.

Four Steps to Cross the River

The Israelites physically stood in front of the Jordan and did four things: they followed him, they listened to what he said, they did what God told them, and they saw the victory.

You stand in front of a spiritual river, but do the same four things when God is bringing you into the Promised Land.

1. They followed Him.

God guided the Israelites throughout the wilderness. Even when he thrust them back into the desert after they first rejected the Promised Land, he did not abandon them. He led them.

He is leading you too. You stand at the river of change. You don't have any guarantee beyond the fact that God is giving you this land. You don't know all the details. But he is guiding you into freedom, and you have believed him, and you are following.

2. They listened to what He said.

The Israelites listened to God through Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and now Joshua.

Today as Christians, we listen to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. We listen to the Bible, against which we check all other words. God talks about spiritual strongholds there, and so you are here. Because you listened.

3. They did what God told them to do.

When Joshua told them to strike camp, they did. When he told them to follow the Ark of the Covenant but keep a half-mile behind, they did. When he told them to march up behind the priests and go around them on the dry riverbed, they did. The Israelites did not obey God by hanging out in the park and having picnics. There's nothing wrong with the park and picnics, I love them. But "easy" did not define their lives. They were soldiers on a campaign.

So are you. Develop the habit of obedience. When God tells you what to do to take down your spiritual stronghold -- reading the Bible, praying, fasting, journaling-- then do it.

4. They saw the victory.

The Israelites followed him. They heard him. They obeyed him. And they walked across the dry riverbed into Canaan.

You too will tear down your spiritual strongholds in the power of the Holy Spirit. You will not be perfect. Don't put that on yourself. But you will be well.

"When the Israelites were on the verge of entering the promised land, God commanded the priests to step into the river… I don't know about you, but I don't particularly like getting my feet wet. I'd much rather have God part the river, and then I'll step into the miracle. That way I

don’t get my feet wet, but if we aren’t willing to get our feet wet, will never walk through parted rivers on dry ground.” (Mark Batterson, Draw *the Circle: the 40 Day Prayer Challenge*)

Act

- **Jericho Model: Crossing the Jordan**
- **Action: Commit your way to the Lord.**

You can’t go halfway when you’re tearing down spiritual strongholds. And that’s a good thing. If you’ve been thinking a certain negative way for so long that it has become a go-to pattern, then it’s going to take intense effort to break it.

The great news is that you have the power to break it in Christ. You’re acting in the power of God, who is stronger than any stronghold. But you must commit yourself to the effort. Commit yourself, pick up the Ark, walk into the river and watch God prepare your way so nothing can hold you back. You are taking back the land of peace and plenty that was promised you.

Step 5. Listen: Listen to the Angel

Israel had crossed over and set up a military camp near Jericho. The great gates of the trading city were closed and barred against them. They believed God when he said he was going to give Jericho into their hands. But they did not know how he was going to do it. Were they going to besiege it for months? Where the soldiers of Jericho going to come out to the gates and attack, they did not know.

Joshua looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. He was no Israelite, but he did not look like a soldier of Jericho either. Joshua must have drawn his own sword, because he approached him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," the man said, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have come." Joshua recognized heavenly power when he saw it, because he fell facedown and asked from the ground, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

Then the commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. Doesn't this remind you of a similar event of thousand years earlier when God told Moses to remove his sandals at the burning bush.

Now the commander gave Joshua explicit instructions about the attack. And it must've been the very last thing that Joshua expected. The commander told him that the Lord had delivered Jericho into his hands. The Israelites were to march around the city once with all its soldiers. And by the way, that was a lot of soldiers: tens of thousands or more. And the Ark would go with them: 4 priests to carry and 7 priests in front of the Ark carrying ram's horn trumpets.

The priests were to blow those trumpets as they marched around the city; those great horns with the strange wailing notes. But the army was to stay silent. No shouts, no yells, no taunts. Only the blowing horns and the thunder of marching feet.

They were to do this for six days. Then on the seventh day, the soldiers were to march around the city seven times, and then the priests should blow the trumpets. When the soldiers heard the long blast on the trumpets, every soldier should give a loud shout – and the wall of the city will collapse, and the army will go straight in.

Sometimes what God tells us to do to take down the stronghold may sound odd. We must always check what we hear from the Holy Spirit against the Bible, but if the act is not sinful -- and if we have practiced listening and obeying God—then chances are that whatever the Holy Spirit told you to do, is what you are to do. Do it – and wait for the miracle on the 7th day.

How to Listen to God

How do you listen? God is speaking, but we don't always slow down enough to hear the still, small voice. How can you hear God talking to you about your spiritual stronghold?

- **The Word.** First, he speaks to us through the Bible, his Word. Anytime we hear from him any other way — directly, through nature, in dreams and vision, through others — we must always put up those words against the Word. Through Bible study and meditative reading, the Holy Spirit reveals God's love and plan for our lives. When you regularly read and study your Bible, verses about your stronghold will leap off the page!

- **The Holy Spirit.** Many Christians will hear an impression or even a voice directing them. Always check this voice against the Bible! God will never tell you anything contrary to His word. But when you are agitating over what stronghold you're supposed to pray about, then stop and listen. You may hear God perfectly clearly, just because you listened.

- **Imaging Prayer.** Many Christians have somehow lost God's gift of the creative imagination. When the Holy Spirit directs us, we can use our imagination to carry us into a compelling and intimate form of speaking with God: imaging prayer. Imagine that Jesus Christ is actually sitting in a chair and talking with you. Since the Holy Spirit is already present, you are not far wrong. Imagine what he is saying to you about your spiritual stronghold.

- **Nature.** "The firmament declares the glory of God." Creator God thunders through the beauty of His creation and only the spiritually blind can't see it. Learn to hear God in the roar of the ocean, the majesty of a mountain, the delicate veining of a leaf. If you're having trouble hearing God's directions, then take a walk.

- **Creativity.** We are co-creators with God. When you create or enjoy someone else's creation, you can see the Holy Spirit working powerfully through the act of bringing beauty and meaning into the world. If you are having trouble listening, then create something – painting, writing, woodwork, whatever. The act of creation often opens our otherwise closed mind to God.

- **Listen to Other Believers.** Listening to other Christians includes talking to people, listening to talks and sermons, and reading books. God often speaks through His people — including you!

Act

- **Jericho Model: An angel talks to Joshua**

- **Action: Listen to the Holy Spirit**

How can you listen to God? It takes some practice at the beginning. When you're taking down spiritual strongholds, learn to listen to what God is telling you. He will tell you what's going on, what the stronghold is, what to do about it, and where to go from here.

The first place to go when you were listening to God is the Bible. Read the Bible slowly and prayerfully and the Holy Spirit will speak to you from its pages. Other places where God can speak to you is through other Christians, circumstances, dreams, and direct impressions from the Holy Spirit. Whenever you hear something from God that always check it against the Bible, because God is not going to tell you something that is opposite to what he has already said his word. But he will talk to you in all these ways if you learn to listen.

Listen – and wait for the miracle on the 7th day.

Step 6. Act: March

And Joshua and the soldiers and priests of Israel did exactly what the Lord told them to do. The soldiers, and the priests bearing the Ark, and the seven priests with the Rams trumpets marched into position and circled Jericho.

The soldiers of the walls of Jericho were already nervous. The reputation of this great army chilled of their blood. And now they heard nothing save those strange, wild horns and the thunder of thousands of marching feet. And they were afraid.

And the powers of darkness are also afraid when you start to march. You trust in God. You have discerned your stronghold. You have confessed your sin, you won't listen to God, and you are acting. You are praying, reading the Bible, listening to God, confessing. You are hard at work -- but it is not your power that is in play. It's God's!

How to Take Systematic Action

We've gone through these steps one by one, now let's put them together.

Step 1. Be strong and courageous. Tearing down strongholds starts with the decision to stick with God and this journey, no matter what it takes.

Step 2. Discern your stronghold. Ask God to reveal to you what your first stronghold is. There are probably several, so don't get crazy – one at a time is plenty. Pray, read the Bible, walk, and listen – he'll tell you what to work on.

Step 3. Confess your sin. You got yourself into the mess. Now you and God will get you out – but you must take responsibility for your choices, and ask God to forgive your sinful and weak patterns of thought.

Step 4. Commit to the process. Tearing down a stronghold takes time and energy. Commit yourself to reading the Bible praying, journaling, and whatever else you need to do to tear that blasted thing down.

Step 5. Listen to God. Learn how to listen to what God is telling you, and to obey. By the way, learning how to listen will change your life.

Step 6. Act on what God says. You know to read your Bible and pray. God may also put certain books or websites into your life to deal with your stronghold. He may put people there too. Be open to opportunities to deal with your stronghold, and take quick advantage of them.

Step 7. Praise God for his salvation. There will come a day when you know you've turned the corner. Your stronghold is coming down. It's not your go-to reaction anymore; you're

changing, and you know it. There will still be some mopping-up to do and sometimes you'll be tempted to react in the same old ways. But it's lost its power over you. So praise God!

Act

- **Jericho Model: Marching around the city**
- **Action: Keep on and don't stop.**

Now is the time to take those orders and act. Read your Bible intentionally. Talk to God about the stronghold. Read the verses that remind you to trust in him. Confess when you sin, we are under grace. Ask people to pray for you. Visit a Christian counselor, pastor, or spiritual director. Just keep on marching.

Step 7. Victory: Tear Down Those Walls

It was the seventh day. The army of the priests rose at daybreak and marched around the city just like they had before. But after they marched around the city once, they did it again. They circled Jericho seven times. When they completed the seventh and final march, the priests sounded the trumpet blast. And then Joshua shouted, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! Spare only Rahab and her family, the rest belongs to the Lord!"

The *trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and the wall collapsed. The army went straight in. And* Jericho, like Sodom and Gomorrah and Babylon the Great, was never rebuilt.

Praising God for Victory

Praise God for giving you the victory over your strongholds! Just talk to him and tell him how grateful you are, and how glorious he is. One of the best ways to praise God that I know is to praise him using the Word – the Bible.

Just like you did with verses on the power of God, print out these verses or keep the computer document handy. Pray them every morning.

Sunday

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. (Rev 19: 6)

Monday

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; speak of all His wonders. (1 Chron. 16:9)

I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. (Psalm 9:2)

Tuesday

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, that my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever. (Psalm 30:11-12)

Wednesday

In God, whose word I praise -- in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? (Psalm 56:4)

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious. (Psalm 66:1-2)

Thursday

O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. (Psalm 95:1)

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5)

Friday

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. (Psalm 103:1)

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded, and they were created. (Psalm 148:1-5)

Saturday

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. (Rev 5:12)

Act

- **Jericho Model: The city falls**
- **Action: Praise God**

Taking down the spiritual stronghold will be a struggle at first, and the more deeply it's entrenched the bigger the struggle. But stick with it. One day soon— in a week, in a month, in three months— you will realize that the stronghold is slipping. The enemy has lost its grasp. Through the might power of God, you are winning.

At that point, it's a mop-up operation. The walls fell and you run into the city. Stay attuned to the temptation to return. Keep praying, keep confessing, keep reading your Bible, keep journaling. But it will be plain that you've turned the corner, that the wall is down. That you have invaded the city and are taking it even now – to your health and happiness, and to the glory of God!

Taking Canaan

Tearing down strongholds is a war! Don't try to get over the fact. Don't try to over-spiritualize it, or make it nice, or pretend that it is anything other than what it is: a pitched spiritual battle over living your life for God.

Jericho was the beginning for the Israelites' invasion of Canaan. You have made a brilliant start on invading your own strongholds, now keep going.

You will not be taking a physical city, or taking lives! You will be taking out a stronghold manned by very real creatures: the fallen angels who ride in our own sins and weaknesses. Thanks be to God; they can only stay if you are convinced that you are helpless in the face of your own weakness. Sure, we're sinners – but we're sinners under grace, and God turns even our darkness into light!

When God tells you to do something, you do it! He has his reasons – and they are perfect. His way might be surprising. When the Israelites approached Jericho, God could have told them to besiege it. He didn't do it that way. He could have shaken the walls to the ground all by himself or wrenched apart the gates that were closed against them. He didn't.

His orders must have seemed odd to them, but they did it. They marched in faith and simple obedience to God's word. *And God answered.*

You do the same. As God to help you discover a stronghold, and prayer and faith and fasting and Bible study, offer your stronghold to God. Ask him what changes you need to make what actions you need to take to tear down the stronghold… and the walls will come tumbling down.

CHRIS TAYLOR

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I'm Chris Taylor, a Christian storyteller, teacher, preacher and writer who witnesses to the power and love of God in Jesus Christ.

Through speaking and preaching, podcasts and videos, Bible studies and workshops, Christian non-fiction and novels: my high purpose is to glorify God and help other believers know and love God more.

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