

STRONGHOLDS - - -

1. Walter Patrick Bissell (1 December 1957 – 29 December 1987) was an American ballet dancer who became known for his extreme talent of dancing, height and athleticism. He was also good in baseball, basketball, football etc.

2. He was addicted to cocaine since the age of 14 and died at the age of 30 due to cocaine abuse. What led him into such a foolish end?

3. Sources say that Patrick as a child was physically abused by his mother. She never gave him attention, affection and never appreciated him for his achievements as a boy. By the age of 14 Patrick was a broken child. He lost his self esteem. Always thought of himself as a loser regardless of his great achievements.

4. Then he sought after the temporary relief given by cocaine to get rid of the “loser mentality”. He reached adulthood with this addiction. Ultimately it ended his life.

5. This looks like a typical story. But there’s a spiritual side that most of us are not familiar with. Satan manipulated Patrick’s past and falsely convinced him that he is a loser (explain who Satan is and his existence if necessary). It became a stronghold in his life. He abused drugs in order to regain his lost self esteem.

6. Satan is playing the same game with our minds too. In today’s sermon lets learn about spiritual strongholds and find out how to overcome them by God’s grace and power?

1. What is a stronghold?

A. A stronghold is defined by Webster as a place having strong defenses; a fortress.

B. In ancient times kings, nobles and nations built strongholds and took refuge in them from invading armies.

C. These were very strong structures built using thick and solid stones. It made counter attack much easier. The guarding soldiers could rain down arrows on the invading armies.

D. Most of the time they were built on mountain tops or high places. Castle a structure similar to the fortress were built on low ground surrounded by a water filled moat – often inhabited by carnivorous fishes like Piranha.

E. They were highly guarded. No one could enter in or go out without prior permission (Ex: the wall of Jericho, [Joshua 6:1](#))

F. “Sigiriya” is an example of an ancient natural stronghold located in the central Matale district of Sri Lanka. It was used by king Kashyapa to protect himself from invading armies. (Other examples: The great wall of China)

G. Now lets consider the spiritual strongholds.

2. What is a spiritual stronghold?

A. It’s a lie that Satan whispers in to our mind as a simple thought. Then it grows up to a giant that control our will and life against God’s plan.

B. I know a Christian grocer who sells cigarettes. Upon asking why he replied, “if I stop selling cigarettes people will go to the next shop. I can’t afford to loose my customers”. In this case his fear of loosing customers

is a spiritual stronghold which causes him to sin. He prays that God will bless his business – how can God bless him?

C. Satan has lied to him that he will lose customers unless he sell cigarettes.

D. He believes a lie of the devil instead of doing what is right and believing in God for prosperity.

3. How do spiritual strongholds come into existence?

A. A lie of the devil is the foundation of every spiritual stronghold.

B. It took a builder many years to build a physical stronghold. Same with spiritual strongholds. They are not built over night. It takes its own time to slowly build itself up so that you may not know what's happening.

C. We demolish **arguments** and every **pretension**... (NIV) – The definition of the word pretension: A false or unsupported claim, claiming a lie as the truth or vice versa.

D. Ex: The entire world believed it's impossible to defeat the L.T.T.E and many Sri Lankan leaders felt politically and militarily inadequate before their threats, until the SL army under the present government fully defeated this terrorist outfit on 16th May 2009. What's the secret? The present government refused to be controlled by the lie that the L.T.T.E is unstoppable.

E. Arguments (definition: in this case false logic that seeks to underestimate God and his redeeming power. Some translations use the word "speculations")

F. Two examples of logical strongholds common to the Asian mind set. "*meka api laba upan hetu*" (This is our destiny. It can't be changed.) "*meka mage karume*" (my karma decides what happens in my life. I have no control over it)

4. Different types and examples of spiritual strongholds

A. Personal strongholds

Example 1: An unemployed youth might think his life is worthless.

Example 2: A woman involved in an adulterous relationship for the sake of financial support would refuse to stop the relationship even after becoming a Christian for the fear of losing financial support and protection.

B. Strongholds of the mind – Marriage for example. The devil may tell one of the spouses your partner is having an affair. He or she believes it and it continues to trouble you, until you file for divorce, based on a lie.

C. Ideological strongholds

Example 1: A Christian may not tithe thinking he doesn't have a sufficient income. He plans to start tithing as soon as his income level rises. But it never happens, because God can't bless him until he obeys and starts tithing.

Example 2: In Sri Lanka Buddhist and Hindu devotees, hesitate to fully commit to Christ even after experiencing divine love and power – simply because they think doing so is insulting their generational and ancestral beliefs.

D. Social strongholds

- I. Christians working in corporate sector may enjoy social drinking at parties for the fear of being ignored by colleagues.
- II. Teenagers could give into Peer pressure.

5. Why spiritual strongholds are unhealthy?

- A. Spiritual strongholds keep you from believing in God, his power and strength for deliverance from sin and bondage, ([Romans 1:21-22](#)).
- B. Prevents you from repenting for known sins in your life. Rather makes you to compromise.
- C. God is a gentleman. He would not do anything in your life unless your free will permits it. Strongholds manipulate your free will to resist God, his power and love.
- D. Physical strongholds were meant for the protection of its inhabitants. But it also isolated them from the rest of the world. Likewise Spiritual strongholds make us feel comfortable and isolates us from God.

6. How to overcome spiritual strongholds in your life?

A. Through spiritual warfare, ([2 Corinthians 10:4](#))

- I. Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, ([2 Corinthians 6:6-7](#))
 - i. Purity: moral uprightness and singleness of purpose.
 - ii. Understanding: Knowledge of Christian faith and sensitivity to God's will.
 - iii. Pertinence: endurance of everything without anger or frustration.
 - iv. Kindness: Sympathetic disposition that acts in love.

B. Through obedience to Jesus Christ, ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#))

- I. By taking captive of every thought, ([Ephesians 6:17a](#)).
- II. Leave no room for any negative or compromising thoughts.
- III. Make sure your thoughts are in alignment with God's will by comparing them with his word.