

No Longer A Hostage 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Do you ever feel like you're tied up in knots? That your heart, your mind, maybe even your body, are being held captive by anxiety, fear, depression, lust, pride, jealousy, or some addiction?

We all have bad habits and weaknesses we wish we could break. We want to do the right thing, but somehow, we continue to mess up in the same old ways we always have. We wonder why we keep messing up. The truth is, we are being held hostage by these things, and we wonder what it would be like to be free.

The good news is that our ransom was paid on the cross by Jesus Christ—we are free!

You don't have to be a hostage to have guilt or shame. You don't have to be a hostage to have heartbreak. You don't have to be a hostage to be hurt by what people think or say about you. You don't have to be a hostage to your situation or your circumstances any longer. Jesus himself declared, "*He that the son sets free is free indeed!*" John 8:36

Over the next 4 weeks, we will discover together how to truly break away from your captor and live in total freedom. The Bible gives us Biblical principles for overcoming bad habits, weaknesses, and problems, in order to start living a life of victory.

The Stockholm Syndrome first occurred in 1973 at an attempted bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. A man tried to rob a bank, and the police surrounded him. He took three female hostages and one male hostage and held them for 131 hours. During this time, he terrorized them, firing his Russian automatic assault weapon at them and threatening to kill them. He put nooses around their necks and threatened to hang them, but when it was all over, he hadn't harmed any of them. When he finally surrendered, something unusual happened. We expected the hostages to be antagonistic toward the hostage taker. Instead, they said they feared the police more than the hostage taker. They also said they didn't hate the hostage taker. They refused to testify against him. One of the ladies later actually became engaged to him.

The FBI has analyzed thousands of hostage situations since that time. They found this happens frequently. What happened? What causes this?

Stockholm Syndrome has crept into the church and altered many Christians' viewpoints on reality. We've begun to believe a lie. We believe our enemies are actually our friends, and our former friends are our enemies. The loyalty we once gave to God, we now give the world.

Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist, said, "We have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil, but we have three friends: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit."

The Bible says the Devil is real. There is a Devil, just as there is a God. He's the god of this world, but in Ephesians 1, Paul says that when we're saved, "*We are translated out of the kingdom of the world (the kingdom of the Evil One) into the kingdom of God's beloved son.*" Everyone born into this world system and living under it, apart from the redeeming grace of God, is under the sovereignty of Satan.

"The whole world lies in the Wicked One." 1 John 5:19

Jesus said the Devil is disguised like an angel of light. He's deceptive, and he's our enemy. The world is his sphere of sovereignty. He's talking about the world here in the same way Jesus talked about it in John 3:16. Apart from Christ, we are following our own selfish desires and ambitions.

John talks about it as, *“The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life.”* The world changes you from total devotion to Christ to selfish indulgence. This is what changes our desires. It changes our hearts.

We all have bad habits and weaknesses we wish we could break. We want and try to do things right but somehow; we continue to mess up in the same way we always have. There are biblical principles overcoming bad habits, weaknesses, and problems, in order to start living the free life.

“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

We have weapons that “have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

The word “strongholds” are the Greek word “ochuroma” (okh-oo’ro-mah). It means “to fortify a strong castle, a prisoner or a hostage locked by deception. A hostage to lies.”

What lies are holding you hostage? Just think about it. What is it? We could spend the better part of a year talking about what God’s Word says about the collective sum of things that came to all of our brains just now.

One lie that many of us are hostage believe is, “I can’t change.” We think, “As much as I try, I can’t stop losing my temper with my kids. I can’t. I can’t stop taking these pain pills. I can’t stop worrying about finances, about the economy. I can’t control the things that come out of my mouth. I can’t stop looking at porn. I’ve tried, but nothing changes. I’m not good enough. I struggle, and struggle, and struggle. I’ve tried to quit. I’ve failed so many time, so it proves that I cannot change.”

Have you ever found yourself in that horrible cycle of failure and guilt and promises that leave you believing this thought, “This is just the way I am?” If, at any moment or even right now, you find yourself in the season of your life thinking, “I’ve struggled with this for so long, this is just the way I am.” We’ve bought the lie. We’ve bought it, and if this is just the way I am, then surely God can’t change me, because if He could, wouldn’t He have already?

Many times we find ourselves in a place where we struggle with that same thing over and over and over, and we find ourselves thinking, “This is just the way I am. I’ve tried to change. I’m incapable of overcoming this.” And to you, with all respect, I want to say this, “How on earth do you know what you are capable of? You didn’t make you. God made you, and as we just read, He called you His masterpiece that He planned intricately, and He wired you long ago for a specific purpose to accomplish good works. You see, the truth is for those of us that struggle with this thought, “This is just the way I am. I’ll never change. I’ll never conquer this.” If you are in Christ, if you are a follower of Christ, the truth is this: We doubt and wait for some illusive magical switch, where all of our struggling stops. We’re waiting for God to do something that He has, in fact, already done.

Paul says, *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.”* 1 Corinthians 5:17

1. The Power to Capture Wrong Thoughts

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” 2 Corinthians 10:5

“We take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5

Every one of us has battles to fight, but God wants to give us His power for every battle. And this weekend, we're talking about the most important battle that you'll ever face, and that's the battle for your mind. The battle for your mind is the most vicious, intense, and unrelenting battle that you will ever face. It's because your mind is your greatest asset, and our enemy knows that. We're also going to see that God has given us everything we need to win the fight.

How do you take captive every thought? The way you do that is you submit it to Christ. That's what that means to "take captive." You take that thought and you give it to Christ. That is, you don't believe everything you think. You don't just accept it because it came into your mind. You take that thought and place it in the light of God's truth to see if it's true or not, because you don't want to believe a lie from the enemy. In doing so, we take every thought captive.

Maybe you have a negative thought that comes into your mind, and it very well could be the enemy, and it's probably a lie. You want to take that negative thought and you say, "God, I give that thought to you. Help me put it in the light of Your truth to make sure I don't believe this lie." Because that negative self-talk that goes on and on and on throughout our minds all day, we get to the point where we just accept it. We accept that it's true. It's just facts, and we start living our lives based on a lie. We need to take it captive and bring it to God. You may have a gross thought. Well just move on and just think, "That was really gross. I'm not going to dwell on that." Move on. Every time a negative thought comes in your mind, every time a lie comes into your mind, you want to bring it to the light of God's truth and don't believe everything you think. The most destructive thoughts are the lies Satan tells us that, over time, we start to believe, and they get entrenched into our minds. I call them ruts in our brain that begin to develop. And actually, the brain science now tells us that the physiology of your brain actually changes when you focus or concentrate on something, and we're going to talk about that in a moment.

2. The Power To Confess The Truth

You see, every defect, every struggle, every sin, and every flaw that you have, God knows about it more than you do. All of those struggles and defects that you're aware of, God is more aware of them than you are because He not only knows every single one of them, but He knows why you act the way you act. Sometimes we don't understand it totally, but God knows everything about it, and He still loves you completely. That's why we focus on him, and He brings healing.

The enemy's voice is always coming into our minds, telling us lies, but God's voice of truth is also coming into our minds. The problem is that those negative voices sometimes drown out God's voice because we've been listening to them for so long. The more you listen to a voice, the louder it gets. The more you listen for God's voice, that still small voice gets louder and louder in your mind. You begin to recognize God's voice so much quicker. But if you listen to the lies from the enemy, they get louder and louder and louder. They drown out God's voice of truth.

The voice you believe will determine your actions. The voice you listen to will determine the voice you believe, and the voice you believe will determine your actions. In fact, the voice you believe will determine your destiny in some of your believing lies. For many of us, you don't even know that the lie is from the enemy, but it is. You've been believing it for so long, you haven't even questioned it. You just accepted it. Don't believe everything you think. Put it up against the light of God's truth.

There are a lot of lies that become strongholds in our lives. There are a lot of lies that we believe about ourselves that become strongholds in our life, and we don't even question them. We just accept them, and we live based on a lie. There are a lot of lies that we believe about others in our lives that become stronghold lies that we don't even question. We just believe them, and we how we treat others is based on those lies. We are going to know the truth. That's important. We are going to memorize truth. That's important, but that's not what I said. I said we are going to do what?

“The tongue has the power of life and death.” Proverbs 18:21

That’s extreme language. The things that come out of my mouth have the power of life and death, and I think all too often, we speak our way to our own defeat. We say things like, “I’ll always _____. I can’t _____. I’ll never _____. I’m not _____.” In saying those things that are opposed to the truth of what God said about us, we are giving power to a lie, and giving power to a lie leads to a lifestyle of bondage and imprisonment to a lie.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” Revelation 12:11

“Greater is he who lives in me, than he that lives in the world.” 1 John 4:4

WHO GOD SAYS I AM

- I am His masterpiece. (Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

When I feel ugly, I choose say, “I believe I'm a masterpiece created by God, knit together in my mother's womb. God created me. This beautiful child of His that He's chosen and adopted into His family.”

- I am His chosen. (Ephesians 1:3-4 NIV)

When I feel rejected by someone and it starts playing into that people pleasing and that rut that God's filling in my mind, then I just say, "No, I choose to believe the truth that I am chosen by God, and that's all that matters. I'm approved by Him."

- I am righteous and forgiven. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV)

When I feel filthy in my sins, I say, "It doesn't matter because I know the truth that I am righteous and forgiven in Jesus Christ."

- I am completely loved. (1 John 3:1 NIV)

When I feel unlovable, I just choose to believe the truth. I am totally loved by God.

- I am strong and courageous (Philippians 4:13 NIV)

When I feel weak and afraid, I choose to believe the truth that I am strong and courageous in Christ.

- I am more than a conqueror. (Romans 8:37 NIV)

When I feel like a failure, I choose to believe the truth that I'm more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus.

“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 12:2

You have to renew your mind. When you become a Christian, God changes your heart and you have a true self that wants to live for Him, but your mind still has all these ruts and strongholds in it, and the only way you renew that mind is by believing what God's word says, even when you don't feel it.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Philippians 4:8

We want to put God's Word into our minds and hearts. Your assignment this week is download the message notes and then look up all those verses that are listed by who God says you are. Read those and write down some of the things you're learning and then meditate on God's word.

“Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither, and whatever they do prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3

How do you meditate on God's word? You read God's word and think about it. You pray about it. You see how it is truth compared to the lies you're believing, and then you memorize it. If you're not a good memorizer, that's okay. Just keep going back to it, and I'll tell you what it does. It changes the synapses (pathways) in your brain, and you start growing new pathways and new patterns. It fills in those ruts with the truth of God's Word and you literally change your life through the truth of God's Word, because whatever you focus on changes your brain. You begin to meditate and do that with these verses that you're looking up and then you confess the truth.

3. The Power To Keep Going

In American culture, ninety percent of us who struggle with the same thing over and over and over, know exactly what we must do to be free; yet, our pain tolerance, it just isn't there and we quit.

Day after day after day in the normal things that happen in our lives, agreeing with God, and it takes great faith, pain tolerance, and perseverance to do that.

“To this end I labor, struggling with all of the energy of Christ, which so powerfully works in me.” Colossians 1:29

That word “struggling” is where we get our word “agonizes” from. This is not an easy process. It requires incredible determination and faith. You need to know that this word, “to struggle” means “to compete for a prize, to contend with an adversary and to win.”

We are not struggling for struggling's sake. We are struggling so that we can have victory, and it takes pain, tolerance, and it takes will and perseverance. Getting free from what has held you captive will take faith, but, in the end, you will win. You will be free.

“But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13

Have you given up? Have you gotten so imprisoned by the failures of the past that you've stopped straining and struggling and agonizing in the process of becoming like Jesus, becoming the person that He intended you to be? The lies enslave us, but the truth liberates. A lot of us have just forgotten what God says about us, and I want to challenge you. If you're a follower of Christ, and you find yourself in that place of constant failure, constant fear, and not living out who God has created you to be, and you're asking for a fresh touch from Him, for a renewal in your heart about what He says about you. If that's you, I want you to just raise your hand and say, “God, I need You.”