

Freedom From The Strongholds Of Life

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Introduction:

1. A common theme in movies for children is of the poor, defenseless animal (typically a fox, bear, or wolf) that goes after some bait, only to find itself caught in a snare. The animal begins to panic, trying to free itself from the trap. But the more it struggles, the more the snare gets tighter and tighter. Just when it seems that all is lost, in comes the hero of the movie to release the animal from the trap.
2. You may have seen this theme played out in Hollywood before, but even though it makes for good movie-making, it doesn't always represent reality. The animal in real life doesn't always get released by a kind-hearted hero figure.
3. You might be feeling like that animal right now. You were going through life, and before you knew it you found yourself caught in a trap, a situation, or a struggle that you can't seem to get control of, or freedom from.
4. You also may be hoping for that hero to come along and free you from this trap, this situation, or this struggle.
5. Whatever the trap may be - fear, worry, grief, substance abuse, wrong relationships, etc. - you may be feeling hopeless or discouraged.
6. If your situation seems hopeless now, don't despair. The Bible will show you how you can become free from the traps that life brings, no matter how tough they may be.

How can you find freedom from the strongholds of life?

By understanding that you are caught in a trap

1. The first step in getting out of a trap is to first realize that you are caught in a trap.

2. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, there are three types of people mentioned: the person that has put out the trap, the person caught in the trap, and the person desiring to help the trapped person.
3. At this point in time, you may be that person caught in a trap.
4. In verse 26 the word “*snare*” is used to describe the situation you may be in.
 - The word “*snare*” means “a trap (as fastened by a noose or a notch); a trick; or temptation.”
5. No matter what your particular struggle or stronghold, you need to see it for what it is - a trap.
6. The world has many different names or reasons for your struggle, but here in the Bible it is called a “*snare*.” The Bible also calls it a “*stronghold*.”
7. So, if you are caught in a snare, you may be wondering how you got caught in it in the first place.
8. Let’s read 2 Timothy 2:26 again. In this verse you can see that you have become caught in the snare of the devil.
9. You have an enemy out there, and this enemy is actively seeking to trap you.
 - “*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*” **Acts 26:18**
 - “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” **Ephesians 6:11**
10. Now you know a bit more about the enemy that you face in the midst of your struggle. But how did you get caught in his snare? The key to answering this question is found in verse 25 of this lesson’s key passage. Let’s read 2 Timothy 2:25 and find the answer.
11. What did the Bible say about the person needing instruction? The person trapped in the snare opposes himself! Did you catch that? You oppose yourself, and that is how you became trapped.
 - The word “*oppose*” means “to set oneself opposite; to be inclined to dispute.”
12. In other words, you are your own opponent in this struggle, or this stronghold. You may have heard it put this way: “You are your own worst enemy.”

13. Now pay close attention to this, as this is important to grasp if you desire to find freedom from your stronghold: Somewhere along the line you believed a lie and, as a result, you made bad choices based on that lie. This then led to continued wrong thinking until, before you knew it, you fell into the snare set out by your enemy and became trapped in the stronghold.
14. Don't despair though, you are not alone. If we are truly honest with ourselves, we can say that we have all done this at some point. There is hope, and it starts with being honest about your struggle.
15. Now that you know about the enemy and see the trap for what it is, let's look at the next key requirement for finding freedom from your trap.

By truly desiring freedom

1. Knowing that you are caught in a trap is a great first step, but it is not enough to find freedom from the trap.
2. Once you recognize the trap for what it is, you must then have a desire to become free from the trap. If you don't desire to become free, you will never take the steps to find freedom. You will not be eager to seek or accept help with your struggle either.
3. Look at 2 Timothy 2:26. Do you see the key phrase in this verse? The verse states that you are caught in a trap and must recover "*yourself*."
4. According to the Bible, it is up to you to recover yourself from the trap. So how are you supposed to do that?
 - "*Recover*" means "to become sober again; to regain one's own senses."
 - It conveys the idea of being able to think clearly again, and to make good, sound decisions.
5. So it is up to you to change the way you think about your situation. It is up to you to stop making wrong decisions based on faulty information, and start living your life according to sound and true principles.
6. These principles are only found in the Bible, and it is up to you to make the choice to start applying them in your life. You must make a conscious effort to change. No one else can make that choice for you.

7. Do you remember the illustration at the beginning of the lesson about the animal caught in the trap? The hero came along and rescued the animal, but if it never learned from its experience to avoid the bait, it will find itself back in a snare. The same situation can happen to you. You could team yourself with a great accountability partner, but if you never change your thinking away from your old thoughts and start living according to biblical truth, you will find yourself struggling again with your stronghold.
8. Only by recognizing the trap that you are in, and having a desire to become free from the trap, will you find freedom. What is another requirement for finding freedom?

By accepting that God is the only source of freedom

1. When it comes to struggles and strongholds, there is not a lack of material or programs out there claiming to offer the right way to deal with your struggles and strongholds.
2. Take a walk through your local bookstore's self-help section and you will be bombarded with all sorts of ways to "improve" your life and to find freedom from the struggles you face.
3. The issue here is not a lack of information, but the kind of information that is offered, and how trustworthy it is.
4. Keep in mind that a half-truth is still a lie. There is a great amount of material out there, but if it isn't based on the Bible rightly divided, then it will more than likely lead you in the wrong direction.
5. In verse 25 of the key passage, you can see that God is the focal point of true recovery and the only source of truth.
 - *"In hope of eternal life, which God, **that cannot lie**, promised before the world began." Titus 1:2*
6. God cannot lie, which means you can completely trust His Word. As you grow in your understanding of the Bible, and rest in a relationship with Jesus Christ, you will find freedom from the traps of life.

By trusting and accepting that others will help you

1. In this passage, the apostle Paul is giving instructions to Timothy pertaining to the ministry. His first instruction in this passage is for the servant of the Lord to help others.

2. The servant of the Lord is to give instruction and teach God's truth so that you can see the truth about your situation, acknowledge the source of truth, start making sound decisions, and thus find freedom.
3. The important point to grasp from this is that there are people that desire to help you through this time of struggle. You don't have to suffer alone. In fact, you should not suffer alone.
4. Everyone needs the fellowship and encouragement of others, and according to the Bible you should be willing to accept this encouragement and fellowship.
 - *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, **restore such an one in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. **Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**” Galatians 6:1-2*
 - *“We then that are strong ought to **bear the infirmities of the weak**, and not to please ourselves.” Romans 15:1*
 - *“Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn them** that are unruly, **comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient** toward all men.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14*
 - *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should **have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.**” 1 Corinthians 12:25-27*
5. You should not be an island unto yourself. As you face the struggle of addiction, lean on the help of others.

Conclusion:

1. You may be feeling overwhelmed right now with your struggle, or maybe you are just unsure of what to do now. Don't despair and don't quit. The change won't happen overnight.
2. For many of you, there is still a long road ahead of you. But understand that freedom from the traps of life is not just a dream. It can become a reality.