

# **How We Become Vulnerable to Satan**

**Lesson**

**7**

## **TEACHER TO TEACHER**

When I was a teenager my family toured Carlsbad Caverns. I shall never forget how dark the “main room” became when the park ranger turned out the lights. *Surely my eyes will adjust*, I thought to myself. *Surely I will be able to see something in just a moment!* Truth became evident; as the axiom says, “I could not see my hand in front of my face.”

Then the same ranger who had plunged the mysterious room into total darkness struck a single match. It was amazing! We could see again. Indeed, a little bit of light makes a big difference.

This study has the potential for shedding a little bit of life-changing Light into the hidden darkness in the lives of some in your Bible Fellowship. The lesson is about “footholds” and “strongholds” that might have been erected in members’ lives because they have failed to resist the enemy in one or more of the seven major categories of sin: occult involvement, deception, bitterness, rebellion, pride, habitual sin, and generational sin. In addition, they will have an opportunity to review several reliable indicators of demonic oppression related to the seven categories of sin.

For several years Casas has helped people gain freedom from the bondage of these types of sin through what we call the “Seven Steps to Freedom.” My first experience with the “steps” occurred in the early 1990s. Again I was amazed at how a little bit of Light made a big difference. I found that I needed to confess, renounce, and seek God’s forgiveness and healing from things in each category of sin. For me, the steps served well as a “serious spiritual inventory.” I was surprised by some of the things that I discovered when I trusted the Lord to tell me the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). I had grown blindly comfortable to a couple of areas of bondage because I had allowed myself to be deceived and had deceived myself. Consequently, I repeatedly sinned in some areas, giving demons an opportunity to gain a foothold through my thoughts and actions.

Over the last decade Casas ministers, pastoral counselors, and numerous trained and dedicated volunteers have served as prayer partners or facilitators to help many others work through the Seven Steps to Freedom. For many, the resulting spiritual freedom has been remarkably life-changing. I continue to regularly work through the steps related to both bitterness and pride. These are areas in my own life where I have to remain vigilant and alert to the schemes of the enemy.

May I encourage you to carefully consider the fact that you, too, may be vulnerable to demonic oppression in some of the seven categories of sin? You may discover footholds and strongholds that need to be destroyed. Be open to allowing the Spirit of Truth to shine liberating Light upon your own thoughts and actions. Remember, Jesus said,

*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.  
Then you will know the truth,  
and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)*

My prayer for you and for those you teach is that the Spirit of Truth will lead each one to know the truth and that all will choose to allow that truth to lead them into a lasting freedom in Christ.

Notes 

## Studying the Word Together

*For the sake of those who come to see me for help, I never accept the excuse, "The devil made me do it." We are all responsible for our own attitudes and actions. Satan simply takes advantage of the opportunities we give him. We have all the resources and protection we need to live a victorious life in Christ. If we're not living it, it's our choice. When we leave a door open for the devil by not resisting temptation, accusation, or deception, he will enter it. And if we continue to allow him access, he will assume squatter's rights.*

*If you have failed to stand firm in the faith or you have willfully sinned, it is your responsibility to do whatever is necessary to maintain a right relationship with God [and others]. Your eternal destiny is not at stake, but your daily victory is.<sup>1</sup>*

—Dr. Neal T. Anderson

**A**t Casas we believe that Christians can make themselves vulnerable to demonic attack, allowing the devil to establish footholds and strongholds in their lives. In this lesson we will:

- ◆ Define footholds and strongholds
- ◆ Review seven areas of vulnerability which Christians must confront in order to maintain their freedom to live freely and abundantly in Christ
- ◆ Review a list of symptoms that might indicate that a person is being demonized

### Footholds and Strongholds

**T**he evil one and his demons seize opportunities to cunningly influence our thinking in many different ways and to varying degrees. If his schemes remain hidden from our conscience thought they can form a foothold or establish a stronghold in our souls from which evil spirits can operate unimpeded.

#### ► Footholds

**T**he most common use of the word *foothold* today is as a place or thing that will support a climber's foot or as a secure starting position from which further advance can be made. In biblical Greek it can refer to a spot, place, location, room, home, position, tract, occasion, opportunity, locality, region, or condition. Paul gives us insight into how Satan might establish a foothold in our thinking from which further advancement can be made. He says,

*"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)*

In these verses Paul warns us to quickly forgive an offense so that retained anger does not turn into bitterness, because bitterness (long held unforgiveness) can give Satan a "foot up" in our thought life. It can give him a platform that will support further incursions into our thought life.

Let me illustrate. When I am offended or emotionally wounded, becoming angry or embittered, I may think things such as:

1. If I forgive the person who offended me, he/she will just hurt me again.
2. By holding onto my anger, I can punish the one who offended me.
3. This offense is so egregious, I cannot forgive.

There is no truth in any of these thinking patterns. The behavior that typically follows these kinds of deception is sinful disobedience of Christ's instruction and



example of forgiveness. Through unwillingness to forgive, the evil one gains a foothold—gains ground, a place, or a spot from which to make further advances into his target’s thought processes and actions.

### ► Strongholds

Another of Satan’s deceptive schemes is to establish strongholds in our mind. Look at what the Apostle Paul has to say about this:

*...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)

The Greek word for *stronghold* is used in the Greek Old Testament several times where it always carries the literal meaning of a fortress. The above passage is the only occurrence of the word *stronghold* in the New Testament and it is used figuratively to refer to the “strength of false arguments.” The words rendered *arguments* and *pretension* in the Greek tell us that the stronghold—the strong false argument—is established by a proud adversary for evil purposes. Look at the way Today’s English Version<sup>2</sup> expresses it:

*The weapons we use in our fight are not the world’s weapons but God’s powerful weapons, which we use to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments; we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ.* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, TEV)

Mark Bubeck defines stronghold, saying:

*“a stronghold is an idea, belief, fear, feeling, desire, or anything else (arguments, pretensions against the*

*knowledge of God) that has a strong hold, or a firm grip on, our mind, spirit, body, or heart—enslaving us—motivating us to act out against God’s will through repeated sinful behavior. A stronghold is a believed lie we have allowed to become reality to us and hold us in bondage to sin. It’s a lie that has darkened our minds to the truth of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>*

The differences between footholds and strongholds are subtle. But we can make this distinction. A foothold is based upon lies one believes that lead him/her into sin for which he/she remains unrepentant. Continuing to function in that sin gives Satan a place from which to advance against us—to gain more ground in our lives.

A stronghold seems to be directly connected to a proudly held strong argument or belief that weakens a person’s faith in God or leads the person away from God. Such false beliefs may stem from apostasy, habitual sin, or from misinterpretations of traumatic events in a person’s life. The false belief is so deeply ensconced in the person’s thinking that Satan can safely operate in the person’s life as if he were protected within the walls of a strong fortress.

Now let’s look at some ways we can give evil spirits an opportunity to establish footholds and/or strongholds in our lives—ways in which we can become vulnerable to demonic attack.

### Becoming Vulnerable to Demonic Attack through Sin

The door for spiritual attack in our life is opened both by the sins we commit and the sins committed against us. A review of writings of the “experts” in the field of spiritual warfare reveals that there are numerous areas of sin through which the enemy gains ground in our lives so that he can harass, oppress, and demonize believers. These include involvement in the occult (false religions), deception, bitterness, rebellion, pride, habitual sin, and generational sin.



### ► **Involvement in the Occult**

Replacing the worship of God with the worship of Satan is the core characteristic of involvement in the occult. The worship of Satan is often hidden in the activities and beliefs of occult groups (occult means “hidden”). Just as Satan in his Temptations of Christ openly offered Jesus ruling power (Matt. 4: 8-9), the occult is seductive and deceptive as it offers power to the seeker.

It seems there are two kinds of occult practitioners: those like witches and Satanists, who are clearly seeking power over others, and those who are unaware both of the demonic nature of the power “source” and the seductive pull they experience. Those who have been caught up in occultist practices are often surprised to learn that Scripture specifically warns against such involvement.

*When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.... You must be blameless before the Lord your God.  
(Deuteronomy 18:9-13)*

In this passage Moses warns the people of Israel to avoid “these detestable ways” in order to be “blameless before the Lord your God.” Although there are many other occult activities, notice the specific practices mentioned in verses above:

1. Human sacrifice to idols
2. Divination
3. Sorcery
4. Interpretation of omens
5. Witchcraft

6. Casting of spells
7. Being or consulting a medium, spiritist, or one who consults the dead

### ► **Deception**

We discussed deception at length in Lesson 5 of this series. It is a major issue for many Christians. By way of review, remember that we can deceive ourselves, we can be deceived by the messages of our worldly culture, and we can be deceived by Satan. It is important that we take every thought captive and be renewed in [our] mind. See Lesson 5 for a review of the process

### ► **Bitterness**

Bitterness (unforgiveness) is one of the primary areas of vulnerability for many Christians. Neal Anderson says,

*Of the hundreds of people I have had the privilege to help find freedom in Christ, forgiveness has been the primary issue, and in some cases, the only issue that needed to be resolved. Ask any of my staff members what affords Satan the greatest access to [individual believers], and based on experience, they would all say “unforgiveness.”<sup>4</sup>*

Some people struggle with bitterness because they have misconceptions about what it means to forgive. Forgiveness assaults their sense of justice. For these, forgiving someone for an offense means to let the offender off the hook. This smacks of weakness and codependency. The opposite, of course, is true. Forgiveness takes great courage and it reflects the grace and mercy of Christ.

Frankly, my experiences with counselees tell me that some do not want to forgive because they want vengeance. And they are dedicated to extracting that vengeance. Some do it with cruel and direct retaliation. Others are more covert. They get their vengeance through gossip, manipulation of relationships, and other passive-aggressive behaviors. Some just enjoy hating the offender.

Notes 

Hanging onto bitterness is self-destructive and poisons the soul (Heb. 12:15; Eph. 4:30-32). It is a violation of love (1 Cor. 13:5); it is rebellion against Jesus' instruction to His followers (Matt. 6:12, 14-15). We will study forgiveness in detail in a later lesson. But for now let's make these observations:<sup>5</sup>

1. Forgiveness is not forgetting.
2. Forgiveness is letting go of resentment; we forgive in order to heal.
3. Forgiveness is not seeking revenge (overtly or covertly).
4. Forgiveness is something you do for your sake; it is between you and God.
5. Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another's sin. We pay the price for the evil we forgive, just as Christ did.
6. Forgiveness is a crisis of the soul; it is an act of the will—a choice we make even if we do not feel like it.
7. Forgiveness sets the offended one free to heal and grow beyond the pain of the offense.

### ► **Rebellion**

Rebellion is failing to submit to the authority of God and to the authorities that He has placed over us in the structures He has ordained. The essence of rebellion is rooted in this question: *Who is in control?* When we rebel against those God has placed in authority over us we are taking control away from God and claiming it for ourselves. The Bible says this about rebellion:

*Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness [insubordination] is as bad as worshiping idols.  
(1 Samuel 15:23, NLT)*

Witchcraft and idolatry are both on God's list of "detestable ways." That makes rebellion and stubbornness [insubordination] detestable to God. How sobering! The Word gives us specific information about those to whom we are to submit—those not to rebel against.

- ◆ Civil government. This includes government officials and the laws they have imposed (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).
- ◆ Parents, stepparents, or legal guardians (Eph. 6:1-3). Children should also be submissive to teachers, coaches, and school officials (Rom. 13:1-4).
- ◆ Husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-4; Eph. 5:22).
- ◆ One another (Eph. 5:21). This includes husbands being submissive to the needs of their wives and Christians being submissive to the needs of others in the Body.
- ◆ Church leaders (Heb. 1:3-7).
- ◆ Employers (1 Pet. 2:18-23).
- ◆ God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and the written Word (Dan. 9:5-9).

Christians become vulnerable to Satan and attacks by his demons when they rebel against authority in any of the above areas.

We cannot leave this section without acknowledging that we are not to submit to an authority that instructs us to do something that is against God's teaching. Nor are we to submit to an authority that is physically, emotionally, or spiritually abusive or that tries to keep us from doing that which God teaches us to do. In either case, we are to obey God rather than man.

### ► **Pride**

When we behave arrogantly or harbor prideful attitudes, we are emulating Satan rather than being an image-bearer of Christ. Remember that Satan was removed from the presence of God and cast to the earth because of his pride. Notice the connection between pride and spiritual warfare in the following verses:

*He gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, "God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." So humble yourselves*

**How We Become Vulnerable to Satan**

*Notes* 

*before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.*

*(James 4:6-8, NLT)*

*“God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*

*Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.*

*(1 Peter 5:5-9, NLT)*

Pride often manifests itself in self-reliance, selfishness, and self-condemnation. Pride is a nasty 5-letter word! It is an issue that many Christians must constantly battle because it is so deeply entrenched in our human sinful nature. It is easy for Satan to gain a foothold or to establish a stronghold in our lives through this sin. (Review Lesson 9, “Of Pride and Brokenness,” in *The Prayer God Always Answers*<sup>6</sup> for further information.)

► **Habitual Sin**

The habitual practice of a specific sin can lead to bondage to “the god of this age.” In the previous lesson we learned that Paul, using the sin of bitterness and unforgiveness as the example, clearly identifies this principle.

*“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)*

If we habitually remain unforgiving, holding onto anger, we create an opportunity for Satan to establish a foothold or beachhead in our life from which he may advance. This principle works because it is based on the nature of sin. Sin is rebellion against God and rebellion is at the core of who Satan is. He was the first rebel against God and has continued to work his plans

against God by tempting man to join with him in his rebellion by committing sin. Demonization can take place when we join Satan in his rebellion by our habitual sin, giving him a place to build a stronghold.

Of course, unforgiveness is not the only habitual sin that can give evil spirits entrance into our mind and will. A habitual gossip, liar, thief, etc., can open himself or herself to demonization as well. This principle is at work in the lives of many addicts, too.<sup>7</sup> Drug addiction, sexual addiction, and alcoholism are all forms of habitual sin that open people up to demonization.

► **Generational Sin**

People can be spiritually influenced in a negative way by the idolatrous sins of four generations of their ancestors. Look at these passages:

*“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 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 20:4-6)*

*“Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ‘The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.” (Numbers 14:17-19)*

*You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them. (Jeremiah 32:18)*

Now look at these two passages:

*In those days people will no longer say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—his own teeth will be set on edge. (Jeremiah 31:29-30)*

*The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?*

*“As surely as I live,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die....” (Ezekiel 18:1-4)*

It is clear from these two passages that we are not accountable for the sins of our forbearers, nor will we share any guilt as the result of their sin. However, it is also important to recognize that we can be affected both psychologically and spiritually by the consequences of the sins of previous generations. We sometimes refer to evil spirits that demonize one generation of a family after another as either “generational” or “familiar” spirits. Some refer to them as “familial” spirits. These spirits have gained ground in the family because of a particular family member’s sin—usually a sin of idolatry—the sin of putting something else in the place reserved for God and God alone.

We acknowledge that this entry point for demonization is difficult to understand. However, in our experience at Casas we have seen it demonstrated in the lives of many we have helped over the years. It is easy to connect the sins of the fathers in a social context. A person who has been physically abused by his father is likely to abuse his own children. Addiction has a genetic component and is easily tracked from one generation to the next. Sexual sin can be observed generation to generation.

### ► Indicators of Demonic Oppression/Attack

Perhaps it would be of interest to you to have a check list to aid in determining if the symptoms presented by a person might have a demonic origin. Casas pastoral counselors, healing team members, and intercessors have found helpful the following indicators of demonic oppression/attack:

- ◆ A family history of demonic influence coming from witchcraft or satanic worship; Native American, New Age, or Eastern religious practices; Freemasonry
- ◆ Disinterest in or inability to read Scripture, comprehend the teaching of the Word, or participate in worship and prayer
- ◆ Possession of items used in Pagan, New Age, Eastern, or Native American worship rituals or in Freemasonry ceremonies
- ◆ Fearful, bizarre dreams and/or night experiences related to sexual perversion, occultic symbolism, or violence; evil presences, visitations, or impressions of demonic faces
- ◆ Conscious invitation extended to Satan and/or demons to become involved in one’s life
- ◆ Systematic patterns of personal sinfulness, i.e., lying, dishonesty, and resentment toward others; sexual acting out; and racial hatred
- ◆ Personality disturbance, i.e., paranoia, vengefulness, abuse of others (physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual), self-mutilation, suicide attempts, depression, rebellion, and bizarre, violent, blasphemous thoughts
- ◆ Addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, work, food, exercise, internet, or television
- ◆ Experiencing no relief from medical treatments (including prescribed drugs), personal prayer, or psychological counseling

Notes 

Notes 

This list should be used as a guide rather than as a determinant of the presence of the demonic. For example, we know that addictions can have many causes, including genetic factors, and we would not assume an addiction was solely the work of the demonic in a person's life. However, it is incumbent upon us to consider that the demonic probably plays a role in the addiction.

### Application Ideas and Questions

The objective of this lesson is to help our Bible Fellowship members understand that many Christians have given ground or surrendered a foothold or stronghold to the enemy though particular

areas of sin. In addition, we want to help them learn to identify demonic harassment, oppression, or other forms of spiritual attack. Our objectives are met when they can apply in their lives what they have learned.

Here are some questions that you might ponder as you continue to prepare:

- ◆ Have evil spirits gained a foothold or stronghold in any area of my life?
- ◆ If I were to take a serious spiritual inventory, which of the seven areas of vulnerability would be most likely to hold me in bondage at some level? Past or present involvement in the occult? Deception? Bitterness? Rebellion? Pride? Habitual sin? Generational sin?
- ◆ What indicators of spiritual attack do I see in my life?

<sup>1</sup> Neal T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sin*, copyright © 2000 by Neal Anderson, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene OR, pp. 192-3, 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Today's English Version (TEV), First Edition*, copyright © 1976 by American Bible Society, New York, NY. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> Mark I. Bubeck, *Preparing for Battle: A Spiritual Warfare Workbook*, copyright © 1999 by Moody Press, Chicago, IL, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> Neal T. Anderson, *Discipleship Counseling: The Complete Guide to Helping Others Walk in Freedom and Grow in Christ*, copyright © by Neal Anderson, Regal from Gospel Light, Ventura, CA, pp. 254-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid Anderson, *Discipleship Counseling*, p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Barrier and Jerry Wilkinson, *The Prayer God Always Answers: Lord Make Me a Spiritual Parent at Any Cost*, copyright © 2005 by Casas Adobes Baptist Church, pp. 9-9—9-13.

<sup>7</sup> While there are certainly genetic, social, biological, and psychological reasons for addiction there are also spiritual forces at work. Treatment programs like Teen Challenge, which recognize the work of the enemy in the lives of addicts, have an 85% success rate compared to secular programs that claim 20% at best. If we as Christians rely solely on the medical and mental health professional to help us deal with difficult issues like addiction, eating disorders, pathological lying, and personality disorders and ignore the "reality" of the existence of strongholds, then we will have dealt with only part of the problem. The Casas Healing Model (see p. 7 in the Spiritual Warfare Workbook) is based on an understanding of the interaction of medical, psychological, and spiritual factors present in the lives of wounded, hurting people. Our diagnostic process involves looking at all three areas as possible causes for troubling symptoms (i.e., rage, depression, compulsive behavior) in people's lives. The Good News of all of this is that Jesus Christ can and does provide freedom for those held in captivity. The role of the Church is to provide guidance on how to gain that freedom and eject the enemy from those places where he has gained a foothold/stronghold. [Steve Dowdle]

*This page is intentionally blank.*

*Please turn to the following page for Commentary.*

Notes 

# Commentary

A decision to minimize information on deception in this lesson's Studying the Word Together was made based upon several things:

1. We covered the concept of deception thoroughly in Lesson Five.
2. In an effort to keep the length of Studying the Word Together to a manageable length, we elected to provide additional information in the Commentary for those who either needed or wanted a more through summary.

The material that follows is abridged from information provided by Steve Dowdle in *Casas' Guide to Spiritual Warfare*<sup>1</sup> and the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*<sup>2</sup> by Neal Anderson.

## ► Deception

Deception, by its very nature, is something we are not aware of as it is taking place in our lives. It is one of the most effective strategies Satan uses against the individual believer and the church. Jesus described Satan as the father of lies. "Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). If he can convince us to believe a lie about ourselves or God, about someone we are in relationship with, about our church and its leadership—and the list goes on—then he can influence us to act in accordance with whatever we have chosen to falsely believe is true.

On the other hand, God wants us to live our lives based on what is true—not what the world says is true, not what we have told ourselves, not what others have told us—but solely on what God says is true. We live our Christian lives by faith according to the Word of God. We know Jesus is the Truth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of

Truth, God's Word is truth, and we are to speak the truth in love (John 14:6; 16:13; 17:17; Eph. 4:15). Lies keep us in bondage, but the truth sets us free (John 8:32).

We can see the heart of Jesus for us as it is expressed in His dialog with the disciples at the Last Supper. He prayed: "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15, NASU). He then revealed how this can actually take place. "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is the truth" (John 17:17, NASU). Knowing and acting on the truth taught in the Scriptures is the mark of a disciple of Christ. Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32, NASU).

In Lesson Five we learned that Satan seeks to capture our mind, emotions, and will through deception. We also learned that we must to be alert to several sources of deception.

1. Satan and his demons can directly deceive people (1 Tim. 4:1).
2. Other people can deceive us (Matt. 24:4-11).
3. We can be deceived by the culture in which we live (Rom. 12:2).
4. We can deceive ourselves (1 Cor. 3:18).

Although it is often difficult to pinpoint a direct cause-effect relationship between a lie that we believe and the source of the lie, we know that Satan's power is always in the lie because he is the father of lies. The list below reflects examples of lies that some have chosen to falsely believe:

1. Acquiring money and things will bring lasting happiness.

# Resisting the Enemy

## Lesson 7

### How We Become Vulnerable to Satan

Notes 

2. Excessive food and alcohol can relieve your stress and made you happy.
3. An attractive body and personality will get you what you need.
4. A person spiritually needs more than what God has given you in Christ.
5. An individual regularly can read, see, observe, or listen to things inconsistent with the moral/ethical behavior taught in Scripture without being corrupted.
6. An individual can choose to just hear God's Word but not do what it says.
7. They have no sin.
8. A person can be truly religious but not bridle their tongue.

Often a person who is unaware that they are operating under the influence of deception or who is not wanting to deal with the truth will develop "defense mechanisms" that help him or her avoid being confronted with the truth. Some of those mechanisms include:

1. Denial (conscious or subconscious refusal to face the truth)
2. Fantasy escape (avoiding "real world" truth)
3. Emotional insulation (withdrawal to avoid rejection)
4. Regression (mentally reverting back to a less threatening time)
5. Displacement (taking out frustration or anger on others)

<sup>1</sup> Steve Dowdle, *Casas Guide to Spiritual Warfare: Prepublication Edition*, copyright © 2006 by Casas Adobes Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ. (Casas teachers were provided with an advance copy of the workbook to be studied prior to release of *Resisting the Enemy*.)

<sup>2</sup> Neal T. Anderson, *Steps to Freedom in Christ: A Step-by-step Guide to Help You Resolve Personal and Spiritual Conflicts, Break Free from Bondage and Renew Your Mind and Experience Daily Victory as a Child of God*, copyright © 1996 by Neal T. Anderson, Gospel Light, Ventura, CA.

*Notes* **RESOURCES  
NEEDED:**

- ◆ 2-sided copies of Lesson Notes / Take-Home pages
- ◆ Pencils or pens for each person
- ◆ Dry erase markers and marker board or felt tip markers and a flip chart

**TIMEFRAME:**

- ◆ 35 minutes

**Suggested Lesson Plan**

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** This *suggested* lesson plan contains many elements that, if employed, will help maximize learning for life-change in your Bible Fellowship. If you are an experienced teacher, you have freedom to create your own plan based upon the “Studying the Word Together” section. If you are less experienced, we suggest that you “stick to the plan.” However, even less-experienced teachers should feel free to modify the plan based upon the needs of your Bible Fellowship. This plan is designed to be presented in 35 minutes. It is important, therefore, that you carefully plan your presentation so that you communicate the main points with brevity and clarity.

**Important Scripture  
References:**

- ◆ Ephesians 4:26-27
- ◆ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
- ◆ Deuteronomy 18:9-13
- ◆ 1 Samuel 15:23
- ◆ 1 Peter 5:5-9
- ◆ Exodus 20:4-6

**Teaching Goals:**

- ◆ **Learn:** Bible Fellowship members learn that Christians make themselves vulnerable to demonic attack through seven categories of sin
- ◆ **Experience:** John 16:13 spirit of truth revealing or confirming areas of demonic attack in their lives

**Before Class Begins:**

- ◆ Distribute handouts.

**STEP ONE: GETTING  
READY TO LEARN  
(5 MINUTES)**

- ◆ Begin by telling your department that today’s lesson is about how Christians make themselves vulnerable to demonic attack. Then say something like: “I want each of you to do a short exercise to get ready for our discussion.”
- ◆ Refer everyone to the “Opening Exercise” on their handout.
  1. Invite each man to silently read Ephesians 4:26-27 (on handout) and, based upon how they think Paul is using the word in the passage, to write down a definition of “foothold.”
  2. Invite each woman to silently read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (on handout). Then, based upon her understanding of how Paul is using the word in the passage, write down a definition of “stronghold.”
- ◆ Ask one or two men and one or two women to share their definitions.

**STEP TWO: Footholds  
AND STRONGHOLDS  
(5 MINUTES)**

*Use the material found on pages 7-2 to 7-3 to prepare for this section.*

- ◆ **Footholds:** Briefly explain the concept of a “foothold” as a point of

entry resulting from sin, which gives Satan ground, a place, or spot from which he can make further advances into our thought processes and actions.

- ◆ **Strongholds:** Briefly explain the concept of a “stronghold” and define it using M. Bubeck’s definition: “A stronghold is an idea, belief, fear, feeling, desire, or anything else (arguments, pretensions against the knowledge of God) that has a strong hold, or a firm grip on, our mind, spirit, body, or heart—enslaving us—motivating us to act out against God’s will through repeated sinful behavior. A stronghold is a believed lie we have allowed to become reality to us and hold us in bondage to sin. It’s a lie that has darkened our minds to the truth of Christ.”
- ◆ Tell your group that: The differences between footholds and strongholds are subtle. But we can make this distinction.
  1. A foothold is based upon lies one believes that lead him/her into sin for which he/she remains unrepentant. Continuing to function in that sin gives Satan a place from which to advance against us—to gain more ground in our lives.
  2. A stronghold seems to be directly connected to a proudly held strong argument or belief that weakens a person’s faith in God or leads the person away from God. Such false beliefs may stem from apostasy, habitual sin, or from misinterpretations of traumatic events in a person’s life. The false belief is so deeply ensconced in the person’s thinking that Satan can safely operate in the person’s life as if he were protected within the walls of a strong fortress.

### STEP THREE: BECOMING VULNERABLE TO DEMONIC ATTACK THROUGH SIN (20 MINUTES)

Use the material on pages 7-3 to 7-7 to prepare for this section.

- ◆ Explain to your group that there are at least seven categories of sin through which evil spirits can easily establish footholds or strongholds in our lives. Refer them to the list on their handout.
- ◆ (NOTE: Carefully prepare this section. Plan your words so that you can complete your lesson in 35 minutes. If you have additional time for teaching, this is the section to use it in.) Using applicable Scriptures, briefly explain each of the seven categories. (NOTE: *Italicized Scripture references below are passages you may ask someone to read from “Today’s Scriptures” on handout.*)
  1. Involvement in the occult (*Deut. 18:9-13*)
  2. Deception
  3. Bitterness
  4. Rebellion (*1 Sam. 15:23*)
  5. Pride
  6. Habitual Sin
  7. Generational Sin (*Ex. 20:4-6*)

### STEP FOUR: APPLICATION AND CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

- ◆ Refer your group to the closing exercise on their handout where they can find a checklist that can be used as an aid in determining whether the evil one or his agents might have established a foothold or stronghold

Notes 

**How We Become Vulnerable to Satan***Notes* 

in their lives. (NOTE: You should do this exercise before leading your Bible Fellowship through it. If you are comfortable doing so, share any things the Spirit reveals to you, or has revealed in the past, concerning things you may need to work through or have worked through.)

- ◆ Invite each member to silently pray the following prayer:

*Holy Spirit, the Word of God declares that you are the Spirit of Truth who has come to guide me into all truth. I submit myself to You and ask that You reveal to my mind—or confirm to me—truth concerning these indicators that may reveal where I have made myself vulnerable to demonic oppression (John 16:13). It is the desire of my heart to recognize and destroy footholds and strongholds that evil spirits may have established in order to influence my thoughts and actions (Psalm 21:2; Eph. 4:26-27; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). I thank You in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ. Amen.*

- ◆ After giving them a moment to pray silently, invite them to review the indicator list and to place a mark by any of the indicators that the Spirit seems to confirm in their spirit.
- ◆ Give people a moment to read the

list and then suggest to them that they pray the following prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I thank You that You have provided me with all of the resources that I need for abundant spiritual life in You (2 Pet. 1:3). Holy Spirit of Truth, I thank you for revealing to me indications of possible demonic oppression in my life. I trust You, in accordance with your Word, to liberally give me the necessary knowledge and wisdom to destroy any footholds or strongholds established in my life by the enemies of God and Christ. I understand that Your knowledge and Wisdom may be provided to me through your Word and through godly and wise counsel of other believers. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.*

- ◆ End your teaching time by reminding your group of the opportunity to participate in the Seven Steps to Freedom process on April 21. This may be the opportunity through which God would desire to help them destroy any footholds or strongholds. Some may prefer to contact Pastoral Ministries (878-1136) to make an appointment to talk through their discoveries with a Casas Pastoral Counselor who can arrange for them to meet with some prayer partners to help them work through the Seven Steps.

# Today in My Bible Fellowship

### Opening Exercise

- ◆ **Men:** Silently read Ephesians 4:26-27 (in "Today's Scriptures") and, based upon how you think Paul used the word in the passage, write a definition of "**foothold**."
- ◆ **Women:** Silently read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (in "Today's Scriptures") and, based upon your understanding of how Paul used the word in the passage, write a definition of "**stronghold**."

### Seven Categories of Sin Which Can Result in Footholds or Strongholds

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Involvement in the occult (Deut. 18:9-13)  | 4. Rebellion (1 Sam 15:23)                                  |
| 2. Deception (by Satan, 1 Tim. 4:1; by other people, Matt 24:4-11; by the culture in which we live, Rom. 12:2; by ourselves, 1 Cor. 3:18) | 5. Pride (James 4:6-8, 1 Pet. 5:5-9)                        |
| 3. Bitterness/unforgiveness (Heb. 12:15; Eph. 4:30-32; 1 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 6:12, 14-15)  | 6. Habitual Sin (Eph. 4:26-27)                              |
|   | 7. Generational Sin (Ex. 20:4-6; Num. 14:17-19; Jer. 32:18) |

### Indicators of Demonic Oppression/Attack

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. A family history of demonic influence coming from witchcraft or satanic worship; Native American, New Age, or Eastern religious practices; Freemasonry                       | 5. Conscious invitation extended to Satan and/or demons to become involved in one's life   |
| 2. Disinterest in or inability to read Scripture, comprehend the teaching of the Word, or participate in worship and prayer   | 6. Systematic patterns of personal sinfulness, i.e., lying, dishonesty, and resentment toward others; sexual acting out; and racial hatred   |
| 3. Possession of items used in Pagan, New Age, Eastern, or Native American worship rituals or in Freemasonry ceremonies   | 7. Personality disturbance, i.e., paranoia, vengeance, abuse of others (physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual), self-mutilation, suicide attempts, depression, rebellion; and bizarre, violent, blasphemous thoughts |
| 4. Fearful, bizarre dreams and/or night experiences related to sexual perversion, occultic symbolism, or violence; evil presences, visitations, or impressions of demonic faces | 8. Addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, work, food, exercise, internet, or television  |
|   | 9. Experiencing no relief from medical treatments (including prescribed drugs), personal prayer, or psychological counseling   |

**Prayer for Revelation:** Holy Spirit, the Word of God declares that you are the Spirit of Truth who has come to guide me into all truth. I submit myself to You and ask that You reveal to my mind—or confirm to me—truth concerning these indicators that may reveal where I have made myself vulnerable to demonic oppression (John 16:13). It is the desire of my heart to recognize and destroy footholds and strongholds that evil spirits may have established in order to influence my thoughts and actions (Psalm 21:2; Eph. 4:26-27; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). I thank You in the Name and Authority of Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Thanksgiving and Prayer for Knowledge and Wisdom:** Lord Jesus, I thank You that You have provided me with all of the resources that I need for abundant spiritual life in You (2 Pet. 1:3). Holy Spirit of Truth, I thank you for revealing to me indications of possible demonic oppression in my life. I trust You, in accordance with your Word, to liberally give me the necessary knowledge and wisdom to destroy any footholds or strongholds established in my life by the enemies of God and Christ. I understand that Your knowledge and Wisdom may be provided to me through your Word and through godly and wise counsel of other believers. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

### Today's Scriptures

**Ephesians 4:26-27:** "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.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5:** 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.

**Deuteronomy 18:9-13:** When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.... You must be blameless before the Lord your God.

**1 Samuel 15:23:** Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness [insubordination] is as bad as worshiping idols. (NLT)

**Exodus 20:4-6:** "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 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...."

### Next Week's Lesson:

### Bitterness versus Forgiveness

**Daily Reflections**

**B**egin each daily reflection by meditating a few minutes on the suggested Scripture passage. Seek to listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to you. Then consider the comments and questions about the passage. Be aware of both your thoughts and your feelings. Respond to God through both.

**Monday:** *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 4:26-28)*

Unforgiveness—bitterness—makes you vulnerable to demonic attack. Demons can use it to establish a foothold in your life. Ask God to search your heart and reveal any unforgiveness there. As He does, make the choice to forgive and then prayerfully confirm that choice with God.

**Tuesday:** *...[T]hough 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)*

The enemy uses distorted truths and false beliefs—also known as “stinking thinking”—to establish strongholds in your mind. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any of your “stinking thinking” and commit to Him to pursue His truth with which the stronghold can be demolished.

**Wednesday:** *When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord...You must be blameless before the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 18:9-13)*

Even innocent, casual, or “playful” involvement in the occult and false religions can open the door to demonic harassment or oppression. Confess to God and renounce any instances of occult involvement and declare your commitment to God’s truth and your heart’s desire to worship Him only. In Jesus’ Name, command any evil spirits that have gained ground in your life through participation in the occult or false religions to depart from you.

**Thursday:** *Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft and stubbornness (insubordination) as bad as worshiping idols. (1 Samuel 15:23, NLT)*

Rebellion is the opposite of submission. The Bible teaches us that we are to submit to—or not rebel against—civil governments, parents, spouses, one another in the Body, church leaders, employers, and God. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any acts of rebellion in your life. Agree with the Spirit in confession and seek God’s forgiveness, committing to submit to Him and any authority He has placed over you.

**Friday:** *“God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. (1 Peter 5:5-9, NLT)*

Our “worries and cares” provide opportunities for demons to entice us to question God’s love. These are the times when we can be tempted to wrestle control from God and claim it for ourselves. Confess any ways in which you seek to “take control” because you question God’s love for you. Seek His forgiveness.

**R  
e  
f  
l  
e  
c  
t  
i  
o  
n  
s**