

**WHAT IS
FREEDOM?**

GOD HAS AN INCREDIBLE PURPOSE FOR US IN THIS LIFE. WE GET TO KNOW AND LOVE THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE, AND EVEN PARTICIPATE IN HIS PLANS! OUR AMAZING PRIVILEGE IS TO LIVE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT HIS NAME AND HIS FAME WOULD BE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE EARTH. AND IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, JESUS HAS PROMISED US ABUNDANT LIFE AND JOY NOT DEPENDENT ON ANY LIFE CIRCUMSTANCE.

THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY; I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY. *_JOHN 10:10 (NASB)*

Even though we know all the promises of Scripture are true, it's easy to lose focus and become weighed down with cares, defeat, past hurts, hopelessness, and other areas of sin that keep us in bondage. These hindrances steal our intimacy with Christ and the joy of our salvation. Freedom is about being released to love and serve Jesus wholeheartedly.

Put simply, the Freedom Class is about becoming more like Jesus and reflecting His love and power to everyone around us. Freedom is not just about changing behavior, but about letting God change our very being. The goal of the class is not to learn new information that we can store on a dusty bookshelf. The goal is transformation, and the time is now!

THE FOUNDATION: THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The essence of salvation is freedom. Freedom is not a separate component of the gospel; rather, it is the very heart of the gospel message. ***Freedom is what Christ brought us through His death and resurrection.*** Take a look at what Christ has done for all of us:

[IT IS GOD] WHO DELIVERED US FROM SO GREAT A DEATH, AND DOES DELIVER US, IN WHOM WE TRUST THAT HE WILL STILL DELIVER US. *_2 CORINTHIANS 1:10 (NKJV)*

1. We are delivered from the penalty of sin: shame, guilt, condemnation, and death.
2. We are set free from the power of sin. Because of the power of Christ, we are no longer controlled by the power of sin. Before Christ came into our hearts we were slaves to sin. And as slaves, we were powerless to gain

victory over our oppressor or our flesh and sin nature. However, because of Jesus, we now have power to say no to sin and all of its temptations (see Romans 6-8).

3. It is important to understand that when Jesus returns we will be delivered from the very presence of sin and all of its destruction. But before that day, we are in a battle.

DEFINITION OF FREEDOM:

DISCOVERING YOUR IDENTITY AND PURPOSE IN JESUS AND TEARING DOWN EVERY STRONGHOLD THAT OPPOSES YOUR ABILITY TO WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF THAT IDENTITY AND PURPOSE.

WHAT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD TO LIVE IN FREEDOM?

1. The meaning and fullness of **salvation**.
2. The **calling** and **destiny** Christ has for you.
3. **How to tear down strongholds**.
4. The effects of an absence of **love** and **truth** in your life.
5. How sin gives the enemy **jurisdiction** (a place of power) in your life.
6. The power and simplicity of genuine **repentance**.
7. Understanding the **power** that is yours in Christ at salvation.
8. How to **take back territory** from the enemy in your life and home.

Expanding this definition will help you to gain a fuller understanding of the exciting truths you will learn and experience in this class.

FREEDOM: AN EXPANDED DEFINITION

1. JESUS HAS A SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE. The kingdom of God is not random and neither is your life. Jesus came to give you abundant life, so that you might reflect His glory. He has lavished you with His love! To really accept and move in your purpose as a child of God, you must accept the love and favor of Christ. As you live in His love, you will gain the confidence needed to fight against any strongholds that hold you back from moving in your purpose (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, John 10:10).

2. JESUS NEVER LOSES AND ALWAYS LEADS US IN OVERWHELMING VICTORY. Loss is not in His game plan. Through His power, you are more than a conqueror! You have the ability to rip off every hindrance and chain in which you have been bound by the enemy (Romans 8:37).

3. THE VERY WORD "FREEDOM" IMPLIES WAR. Only the broken, the desperate, and the weak are equipped to win this war. The weapons that are yours in Christ are so powerful that nothing in hell can withstand them. Freedom comes when you stand firmly behind our commander, Jesus Christ, in full allegiance to Him. The more you radically obey all that He asks of you, the faster strongholds are demolished and joy is released in your life (John 8:31-32, Ephesians 6:12).

4. REALIZE THAT SATAN IS A THIEF AND A DESTROYER. He desires your destruction, and he desperately wants to steal all good things from your life. Freedom is about the realization that only through taking your sins to the cross and receiving God's forgiveness will you win this battle. The deeper your repentance, the more territory you take back in your life (John 10:10, 1 John 1:9).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DISMANTLING STRONGHOLDS?

We are created to have an intimate relationship with Jesus! The primary purpose for dismantling strongholds is so that we can experience His love in a deeper way. In the Freedom Class, we do go after sin patterns and strongholds. The main reason for this is to remove any obstacles that separate us from God. Imagine life as a pipe: If the pipe is clogged with debris (strongholds), then the water (God's love and power) is unable to flow through effectively. When we unclog a pipe, we do not keep the debris as a prize. In the same way, the goal of pursuing freedom is not to focus on our strongholds, but to focus on removing them for the purpose of experiencing God's love in a more intimate way. Our prize is a greater revelation of Christ!

Here is a more thorough answer to the question, "What is the purpose of dismantling strongholds?"

1. TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF GOD.

DON'T COPY THE BEHAVIOR AND CUSTOMS OF THIS WORLD, BUT LET GOD TRANSFORM YOU INTO A NEW PERSON BY CHANGING THE WAY YOU THINK. THEN YOU WILL KNOW WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO DO, AND YOU WILL KNOW HOW GOOD AND PLEASING AND PERFECT HIS WILL REALLY IS. *_ROMANS 12:2 (NLT)*

Strongholds are composed of thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs that do not reflect the character of God. As we dismantle strongholds in our lives, we can more clearly know and understand the true character and nature of God. Consider the following examples:

STRONGHOLD OF PASSIVITY:

There is never passivity in Jesus' love for each one of us! God never hesitates in His forgiveness or approval. God does not forget what He has promised, nor does He need to be reminded to be outward focused. God moves in initiation toward each of us. *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the*

ungodly" (Romans 5:6, NIV). As we read about Jesus in the Gospels, there is no passivity in the demonstration of His love, mercy, and compassion toward those around Him. This realization helps us understand why passivity falls so short of the character of God. As we realize that the character of God's love is selfless, initiatory, and bold, we grow in intimacy with Christ. Jesus did not respond to the Father in passivity on the way to the cross! His actions force us to re-evaluate our own level of obedience.

STRONGHOLD OF UNFORGIVENESS:

God never withholds forgiveness for those who come to Him. We are completely forgiven for our sins through the work of Jesus on the cross! God does not function in resentment toward us or carry a personal grudge over our sin. He does not sit around complaining and criticizing us behind our backs. God is patient and enduring in His love toward us—we cannot wear God out! God never thinks about whether or not He is going to forgive us, nor does He say, "I forgive you," but not mean it. God rejoices over just one sinner who repents (Luke 15). He does not compare us to other people, nor pout when we refuse to do what He asks. His nature and character is love, and it is unconditional. As we remove bitterness, resentment, and buried anger from our lives (by granting full forgiveness to people), we will begin to walk in a greater revelation of the love Christ has for us. We will become more and more like Christ, and therefore have deeper intimacy and joy in our relationship with God as well.

2. FREEDOM DRIVES US TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S LOVE MORE DEEPLY.

FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NEITHER ANGELS NOR DEMONS, NEITHER THE PRESENT NOR THE FUTURE, NOR ANY POWERS, NEITHER HEIGHT NOR DEPTH, NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. *_ROMANS 8:38-39*

God wants us to know the height, depth, and length of the love of Christ. He wants us to have personal revelation of this love so that we can live confidently in it.

As we grow in understanding of Jesus' love for us and receive it in our hearts deeply—transformation follows. The Lord wants to open up our hearts and minds to a revelation of His immense love for us. Then we can come closer to loving like he does. Everything a Christian does should be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Examine the following verses regarding the love of Christ:

- Christians have no excuse for not loving **“because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”** (Romans 5:5).
- We are therefore told to **“pursue love”** (1 Corinthians 14:1).
- To **“put on love”** (Colossians 3:14).
- To **“increase and abound in love”** (1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philippians 1:9).
- To be **“sincere in love”** (2 Corinthians 8:8).
- To be **“unified in love”** (Philippians 2:2).
- To be **“fervent in love”** (1 Peter 4:8).
- To **“encourage one another to love”** (Hebrews 10:24).

Freedom drives us deeper into the transformational knowledge of Christ. Strongholds stand in the way of our ability to love others as Christ loves us. The freedom of Christ renews our minds and the way we think.

Examples to consider:

STRONGHOLD OF FEAR:

Fear restricts us from truly expressing the passions of our hearts. Fear of other people keeps us living in other people's minds—constantly seeking their approval. Fear constricts us from stepping into our true design and destiny. The Bible tells us that, *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18, NIV). The stronghold of fear keeps us at a distance so that we never truly experience the depth of Jesus' love for us. As more and more fear is removed, greater trust and peace will pour out of our lives.

STRONGHOLD OF UNBELIEF:

Unbelief is deadly to our hearts and minds because it hinders God's presence and power in our lives.

In addition, unbelief makes us critical, leads us to independence (pride and arrogance), and discourages others. Matthew 13:58 (NLT) says, *“And so he did only a few miracles there because of their unbelief.”* On the contrary, Matthew 21:22 (NLT) says, *“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”* If we do not see many miracles around us, it is possible that we are riddled with unbelief. Unbelief never allows for God to lavish us with his love and provision. He wants to pour out on us in every way possible. He is so generous! But unbelief can hinder us from simply accepting his love, forgiveness, and outpouring.

FREEDOM IS ABOUT A DEEP AND POWERFULLY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST!

