

Demolishing Strongholds Video Series

God's Way to Spiritual Freedom

Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz

Chapter 1. Creation: God Created Us
With Seven Needs (Part 4 of 5)

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"



Freedom In Jesus Series

(Part 2)

Chapter 1. Creation: God Created Us With Seven Needs (Part 4)

Purpose and Meaning

The next need which God created in mankind is a need for purpose and meaning:

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it...Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name” (Genesis 2:15,19).

Few people stop to realize that God gave Adam work to do BEFORE the fall! That’s right, BEFORE the fall! Why give him work? Because God had placed in Adam, and in all of us a need for purpose and meaning. Without purpose and meaning we all lose our reason to live.

In a pleasure-bent society like the United States, the need to find God’s purpose and meaning in work is difficult for many, even Christians, to get hold of. Yet our Hebraic ancestors in the faith understood this need clearly. In fact, the Hebrew root word for work and worship is the same: *avodah*.

Your true worship of God begins in experiencing joy in the work you do. Your joy reveals your gratefulness to God for the purpose and meaning you experience in your workplace and your home.

(Explore: Restoring the Early Church, Chapter 6. “Greek Philosophy in the Church”)

What many Christians don’t realize is that western culture is an offspring of Hellenism. This demonic influence places man and his pleasures in the center of all things, rather than God.

The western world view is heavily influenced by the philosophy of the ancient Greeks who considered self-pursuit and self-achievement to be mankind’s highest goal. The Olympics, for example, embody this self-seeking philosophy. Work is degraded to a menial responsibility man must do, and isn’t recognized as part of God’s plan to give him purpose and meaning.

Much of western Christianity is steeped in this Hellenist, man-centered view of religious practice. We can say this because studies have affirmed that few who call themselves “Christian” are sacrificially serving the purposes of God. Rather, their view of God is that He exists to serve THEIR interests.

Like corporate America, today’s popular Church growth movement uses religious services to appeal to the self-centered, instant gratification nature of people. They consciously avoid the biblical truths of sin and repentance so that they can feel good about themselves JUST AS THEY ARE.

In Scripture we find a GOD-CENTERED perspective. Man’s highest goal is captured in Deuteronomy 6:5 and repeated by our Lord Jesus:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30).

How many Christians do you know who are GRATEFUL for their jobs and who worship God because they have work to do? If anything, most either grumble about their workplace, or sigh with resignation that they even HAVE to work.

Strongholds of pride, rebellion, and idolatry hinder so many Christians from fully living out Paul's encouragement to keep your life purpose firmly focused on Jesus:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23,24).

When followers of Jesus work for HIS purposes, they see themselves as instruments of God to extend His kingdom among the people they work with. In essence, YOU are an ambassador to represent Jesus in the flesh to all who encounter you. And, God gives you work to put you into proximity to someone who needs to meet one of His representatives.

If you perceive your work as something you have to endure, you won't recognize the people around you as God's gift to you, and your opportunity to represent your Lord to them.

Among the over 5,000 people who came to our retreat center, few were experiencing true purpose and meaning in their lives. And women in particular were consumed with their personal appearance and the decor of their homes. How sad that so many believed the lie that acquisitions would bring them joy.

I remember only a few men who saw their jobs as far more than laboring for material gain. These few understood God's deeper purpose and meaning for giving them that particular workplace. They went to work each day with a sense of spiritual opportunity as their King's representative. And like the Apostle Paul who was a tentmaker to support his ministry, these few men had the same motives. We grieved that the majority of the men didn't have our Lord's perspective about their workplace and coworkers.

People who call themselves "Christian" but LACK purpose and meaning in the way God would have this need met, end up defaming His reputation by their moaning and complaining. That's because NON-Christians don't see in these people two vital differences every follower of Jesus must have:

1. Inner joy because of their gratefulness to God.
2. Godliness with contentment that doesn't value the wealth, prestige, and materialism of this world.

You might want to evaluate your OWN life regarding these two character qualities. Would a non-believer see any difference between YOU and himself?

Freedom and Boundary

God instilled in all of us a need for freedom and boundary.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die'" (Genesis 2:16,17).

Years ago while Mike was still in the Navy, we directed a chapel youth group at the base where we were stationed. At the end of the Wednesday night gatherings that met at our house, some of the kids would go straight home as their parents had asked. Others would go down to the base canteen for ice cream or soda.

After a few months one of the young men whose parents insisted he come home immediately after the meeting confronted those who were heading off to the canteen. "I envy you guys. You get to go have fun and I have to go home. I wish my parents weren't so strict." One of the boys going to the canteen responded, "Don't envy us. YOUR parents love you. That's why they have you go home. Our parents don't care about us. I wish I had your Mom and Dad."

Isn't it interesting how these young people connected parental boundaries with genuine care. We've seen this often among children whose parents establish biblical boundaries, and enforce them.

In Part 1 of our **Freedom In Jesus** series we discussed man's inherent sin nature. We mentioned that a holy and loving God gave Adam and Eve a boundary when He told them to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Why do you think God did this? The answer is simple: Our holy God didn't want them to know evil. The knowledge of evil leads to sin.

In any situation in which people associate, there are areas of freedom that make the relational interaction conducive. There are also necessary boundaries to prohibit things that are harmful to the relationship.

Healthy relationships between both God and man, and mankind with each other, can't exist without freedom and boundary. The Older Testament recounts 613 laws which God gave to Moses. Two-thirds of these are boundary-type laws because our inherent sin nature tends toward disobedience. The other one-third provide positive freedom in the way we should respond toward God and each other.

In the Newer Testament we are given 1,050 commands. Again, there are commands that give us boundaries, such as staying away from bitterness, anger, slander, and other acts that inhibit intimate relationships.

God's boundaries are good. These boundaries are meant to deter us from evil and to keep us from creating unnecessary apprehension in other people.

Remember, apprehension is the silent destroyer of all relationships. We'll discuss this more fully in chapter 3, *How Adam's Fall Into Sin Has Harmed Us*. But for now, consider this: Wherever apprehension exists in relationships, it blocks the development of love. And, God's freedoms and boundaries for us are aimed at eliminating interpersonal apprehension.

Ever since Adam and Eve's disobedience, mankind's rebellion has struggled against God's boundaries. Studies show that the lawlessness in the world, AND among the church is the same. Many Christians perceive any restraint on their personal freedom as a hindrance to their happiness and rights. Remember the self-seeking and pleasure-bent influence of Hellenism we've mentioned previously...

Because of the influence of Hellenism, this culture's values are worldly. That means there's NO REGARD for God or His Word. So people — even Christians — are brought up to believe that mankind is basically good. It's "society" that's to blame for the evil that exists. Well, who makes up society? People!

If man were basically good, God would have no need to put boundaries in His holy commands. However, the Bible presents the true nature of man:

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5).

The Lord Jesus made very clear the nature of the inner man. It reads like today's news and TV shows:

"But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make man 'unclean'. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'" (Matthew 15:18-20).

(**Explore:** Newsletter 2001-06 *"The Queen of Heaven, god of the Biblically Ignorant"*)

Satan has deceived many Christians into believing a lie about our God: that He is wrathful, and rejects people who violate his boundaries. In their minds, discipline means rejection rather than loving deterrence from evil. They can't see the love behind God's rebuke:

"My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a

father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:11,12;).

This same truth that our God LOVES those He disciplines is so important that it's repeated in Hebrews 12:7-11.

Parenting

What a sorrowful impact ignorance of God's boundaries, or failure to APPLY them, has had on Christian parenting. Just like the culture around them, many believing parents fail to establish and enforce the boundaries God requires of them. It's no wonder that the rebellious actions of children raised in Christian homes parallels that of the worldly.

Because man's basic nature stirs him to do evil, parents are given specific biblical instruction in child-raising:

"Impress [the commands of God] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

If you've believed the "man is basically good" lie, you probably cringe when you read the wisdom our Father gave Solomon:

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (Proverbs 13:24).

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).

If your heart isn't determined to stay within the boundaries that God has established in His Word, you'll spiral onto the path of the demonic. As we'll see in the next chap-

ter, demonic oppression and captivity are the hellish fruit of transgressing God's boundaries.

If you find yourself stepping outside of God's boundaries, ask yourself why you do this. Spirits of bitterness, control, rebellion, or idolatry could be influencing your desire to stray from God's will for you.

If you don't live within God's boundaries or don't repent when you cross them, you will be vulnerable to demonic captivity. Occasionally we'd challenge retreaters, "Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a number of how many hours a week He considers you righteous, that is, free from unconfessed sin."

There are 168 hours in a week. Do you know the average hours a week the Holy Spirit revealed they were FREE of unconfessed sin? Four! That means 164 hours a week people are holding onto sins. In other words, that's how much they're living outside God's boundaries.

This is no surprise to God. He realizes that people enjoy their pet sins, and don't WANT to turn from them. That's why He prompted the writer to the Hebrews to warn people to disengage from appeasing their sin nature:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Just remember you were born with a sin nature. You were predisposed to sin. But our Lord wants you to grow with the Spirit's help in obeying both the freedom

and the boundaries you find in His Word. He also wants you to gratefully live WITH-IN those boundaries so He can answer your prayers and bless you.

We have talked a lot about our boundaries. When we get to chapter 5, *After You've Demolished the Strongholds*, we'll share much more about our freedoms in Jesus.