

GWEN SHAMBLIN

EXODUS

from Strongholds®



by

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Student Guide



Audio selections



Scriptures used in this week's lesson:

Romans 7:21–23
 Colossians 2:16a, 20–23
 Psalms 81:8b–10
 1 Timothy 4:1–4
 Job 31:1–12
 Psalm 52:5–9
 Exodus 34:14
 2 Chronicles 16:12–14a
 Jeremiah 50:6–7
 1 Chronicles 28:9
 2 Peter 2:4–22
 Ephesians 4
 Romans 8:5–8
 Colossians 3:1–11
 Galatians 6:7–10
 Philippians 4:8
 Galatians 5:16–25
 1 John 3:1–10
 1 John 2:3–6
 Mark 7

Thoughts from this week's video and audio

You are about to embark on a unique journey of freedom. It is a journey away from the magnetic pull of any stronghold that has a hold on your heart and mind. And at the same time, it is a journey toward replacing this stronghold with a new stronghold—God Almighty—who has all resources for anything you need and is the source of all feelings that can fill up your heart. You are not a failure. Years of misguided counseling and gimmicks have only increased your attraction and allegiance toward your strongholds. Again, you are not a failure. You have just been trying to free yourself with man's suggestions, and they have only driven you deeper into yourself and gratifying your own desires.

You are about to join a mighty exodus of people who are choosing to walk away from slavery to their old habits. This miserable state of slavery is not unlike the bondage the children of God felt when they were enslaved centuries ago to the Egyptian pharaohs. The Old Testament story of the Exodus tells how God's children, once subjugated to Pharaoh, were forced into slave labor to build Egyptian structures. Those towering icons are representations of the strength and the soul that they invested in Egypt. At one time, His children were just free men in a foreign land. But when God saw that they had become slaves to making bricks for Egypt, and He heard their cries, He fought a mighty battle for the deliverance of the Israelites.

He is fighting now for the deliverance of your heart so that you will no longer be overpowered by those things that seem to control you and drain you of your health, your energy, your time, your joy—even your very life. The Lord our God can deliver you from any addiction that has a hold on you. You are not undisciplined—you have just not tried this approach to breaking free.

So, we have all started off behind bars or in Egypt—enslaved. And we have given our devotion to something on this earth. And since we are slaves to what we love, it will take an even stronger love to remove us. God let the Israelites know that He would not sit by and let Egypt enslave them. He exposed Egypt for what it was... worthless. He showed His passionate, jealous love and power in an incredible display of devastating plagues. His children made the right choice and followed Him out of Egypt and into the desert, and finally into the Promised Land. In

this series, we hope that the prison scenes will make you aware of the bars that surround you—exposing your enslavement for what it is.

Our Egypt may seem different, but being locked into an affair or fantasy or glued to the refrigerator or to a bottle of wine every evening at 10:00 is equally enslaving. We have given our strength and our soul to something on this earth, and it has become our master. Even if it seems as small as anger or gossip or overshopping, it is equally maddening when you cannot seem to stop yourself.

We have spent years trying to figure out how to overcome addictions and cure hidden obsessions based on the assumption that it is something on the outside that is causing the problem. We have examined our entire surroundings under a microscope to determine the root of our problems. Billions of dollars have been spent studying the contents of cigarettes, alcohol, and food in an effort to discover what it is about them that creates in people such an inability to resist. We are constantly developing new and improved low-everything cigarettes, lite beers, and fat-free foods. We make the world change, but we do not change our hearts at all. We continue to pile our plates and fill our glasses to excess. We steadfastly wage war against pornography, yet we look longingly at our neighbor's spouse or our fellow office worker. We spend endless hours and countless dollars going to man-made self-help seminars, and we continue to look to our peers for advice and approval.

We have accumulated an incredible amount of literature and established man-made rules, but how much have we studied our own hearts? The man-made rules dictate that we change our surroundings, but these rules have no value in changing the inside of our soul. It's like treating the symptoms, but not the disease. An aspirin works fine temporarily to get rid of the fever, but unless the correct antibiotic is given to the bacteria, it continues to exist and cause trouble. Of course, we much prefer to think that the problem lies outside ourselves; that means that we won't have to change. But it's simply not true. What we really need to do is reverse the focus of

the heart from whatever now has our attention and our devotion to a focus on God. Just as we fell in love with this stronghold, we can fall out of love with it and into a full, satisfying, and lasting love with God.

Colossians 2:16a, 20–23 says: “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink. Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

This week, recognize the difference between your normal, God-given urges and greed. Your mind will always wander to your false god. Identify it. This is the beginning of the end. When you feel the urge to run to that false god or that desire, instead run to God in any way you need to: take a walk, read the Bible, listen to the audiotapes, listen to some uplifting Christian music, and always drop to your knees and ask for God's help. It may be helpful to find someone to talk to who is not in bondage to the stronghold you have. They will be able to help you decide what is “need” and what is “greed.” Up to this point, you have simply made a mistake by trying to fill yourself up with something from this earth when what you really need is a relationship with God. Take a look around you. He is everywhere! You cannot help but fall in love with Him as you begin to see what freedom and love He offers you.

Thought questions for week 1

1. There are several ways to find out if something is an idol. If you suspect something, remove it. Let it be taken away. For example, if it is alcohol, try to go the whole week without a drink. If it is pornography, abstain. If it is cigarettes, throw away all the cigarettes in the house. If it is food, try to wait until you are physiologically hungry. If you suspect gossip, try not to talk about anyone for one week. (See the list of possible strongholds on page 3.)

You can make anything on this earth an idol. You can love anything to a fault. We were born to love and to worship something. And another thing, you can be enslaved to several things at one time—for instance, sexual lust, alcohol, and money.

If you long for it, you know that your heart has been given over to that stronghold. Another way to identify an idol is to examine what you worry about or what your mind wanders to all day long. Second Peter 2:19 says that “a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.” Spend some time this week with God and identify what you are thinking about or craving or worrying about. Ask God to reveal to you the strongholds that He wants you to give up. Record them here and ask Him to lead you out of this prison. _____

2. “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:17–24).

According to this passage, God is calling us to a new life, and obviously the early Christians had the same struggle. Please read the entire chapter of Ephesians 4 and list the ways we are to be pure-hearted.

3. Think about the effects of your stronghold on your life. How has it imprisoned you? For example—if you are overweight, the added heaviness has caused discomfort, bone and joint problems, sleeping problems, etc. If you have panic attacks, they confine you to your home. If you are in love with money, it imprisons you in a workaholic state. _____

- 4. Read Colossians 2:16–23 again (see page 2). Describe some of the man-made approaches (such as nicotine patches) you have used in trying to overcome your stronghold. _____

Have any of these approaches made your heart desire the stronghold any less? _____

- 5. According to the above verse and the audiotapes *Stronghold Basics* and *Secrets of the Prison*, why have these methods failed? _____

- 6. Focus is crucial in breaking free from a stronghold.

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God” (Romans 8:5–8).

The word *focus* is used frequently in both of these tapes. Read Colossians 3:1–4, Galatians 6:7–10, and Philippians 4:8. What do these scriptures ask us to focus on? _____

- 7. List things that you can focus on now instead of your old focus and compare notes with your fellow Christians. _____

- 8. The following scriptures all convey one main thought. Read them and summarize that idea below.

Galatians 5:16–25: “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Ephesians 4:17-24: "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Also read: Colossians 3:1-11; 1 John 3:1-10; 1 John 2:3-6; and 2 Peter 2:4-22. _____

- 9. Take some serious time this week and recount any way your stronghold has helped you, comforted you, filled you, or given back to you. Then make a list of the ways that it has robbed you spiritually, financially, relationally, and physically. Refer back to this list every time you feel a craving for your stronghold.

Consequences of idols

Rewards

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- 10. According to the audiotape *The Secret of the Prison*, how do you walk away or escape from the prison that you have been locked in for years? _____

- 11. Homework assignment: Make sure you find someone this week who is not magnetized to your particular stronghold and watch them respond. For example, if your stronghold is alcohol, watch the behavior of a moderate. If it is food, watch a thin eater. If it is sexual lust, watch someone who would never look to the right or the left and interview them if possible. Ask them why they would never overindulge, overeat, or cheat on their spouse.

12. (This item will be repeated each week.) List and recount all the ways that God has blessed you, given to you, cared for you, and helped you. The more you fill in this list every day, the less magnetized you will be toward your stronghold. Spend extra time on your knees and on your face before the Father. Cry out to God and praise God for letting you find Him and talk to Him. It is hard to get to famous people, and He is the richest, most famous, and most popular being of the universe. Praise Him for allowing you to get close to Him. Focus on the heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and have a great week as you learn to approach each day minute by minute and hour by hour!

Example: God, thank you for letting me live today. I was able to share the day with my friends and family! I know you give life, and I know you take it away. I am thankful for today! Thank you for Jesus Christ who died so that we can live in a rewarding relationship forever. Jesus, praise your name for this supreme love. You might have wanted it to just be you and God in heaven, but due to your ultimate sacrifice, you are letting us draw near to God.

The common struggle for week 1

There are struggles all the way through the 12-week seminar. That is perfectly normal and part of God’s plan so that this material will be planted deeply into your heart. The main struggle of this week is understanding the concept. It is new to think that there is nothing wrong with some of the created things on this earth and that the whole problem lies within our hearts. Read Mark 7:14–23 and 1 Timothy 4:1–4. Remember that this is a journey for your heart, and you do not have to be a scholar. No one is going to be looking over your shoulder, and you do not have to fill in this workbook to be successful. There is no formula. If some of the concepts are not sinking in yet, remember that we will be going over them again and again until they sink into your heart. My suggestion is to get with someone else this week who seems to be excited about the concept and seems to get it and spend some time with them. Please do not worry. This is more of a love story seminar than a spiritual marathon. Relax and enjoy learning how much the Father adores you!

Prayer

God, help us to learn that you are simply jealous of anything that we put before you. You are the Creator that deserves all of our praise and love and adoration. Help us to put you first this week, and help us to realize the prize for putting you above all else.

Dana

Oklahoma

I have watched soap operas for the last 17 years. When I was younger, I would stay with my aunt in the summer, and the two of us would watch them all the time. I guess I just carried this habit with me as I grew up. I felt a void developing in me that needed some type of attention, so I turned to soap operas for consolation. Part of my addiction can be attributed to the fact that I work out of my home. Watching soaps just became a habit of convenience. At my lowest point, I was watching five a day while staying updated on the latest breaking news in *The Soap Opera Digest*. If I wasn't going to be at the house, I would record them. I lived for my soaps.

When I started this class, however, I started questioning my compulsion. I began to see that these soap operas were prohibiting me from spending time with God. I simply didn't have the time. I mean, I was



devoting four to five hours of each day to these shows. Eventually, they took precedence over my daily prayer time. That's when it hit me. God wanted me to spend time with Him. He was telling me to give up my soaps and let Him come into my life. So, one day I just decided that I wasn't going to watch anymore, and in doing so, realized that I no longer needed them. I needed God. It wasn't until after I quit watching the soaps that I realized that it was an addiction as a result of the spiritual

void in my life.

It has been a year and three months since I've seen a soap opera, and I no longer have a compulsion towards them. I no longer expect my husband to act like the men do in soap operas and as a result, I have grown to appreciate him more. In addition to this, I am much more comfortable with my spirituality and am no longer apprehensive to speak out about God. And my prayer life has become much stronger.

Don

Indiana

When I first came into the program, I had been having trouble with panic attacks. During the time when I was having the attacks, I was afraid to go to work because I would have trouble at work. Several times I had to leave my job. It got to the point that I didn't want to go to work. I didn't want to go outside my home. When I had the attacks, all of a sudden I would get short on breath. I'd get dizzy and just didn't know where I was. I'd almost feel like I was blacking out sometimes. Several times I thought I was having a heart attack; I was taken to the hospital, by ambulance once and two or three other times by my wife. I really thought I was having a heart attack, which scared me.

They finally diagnosed it and gave me medicine for it. I was told by the doctor that I would not be able to go off the medicine, ever, which was pretty upsetting to me. And when I was on the medication, it affected me. It made me grumpy, and I snapped at everyone. My family noticed it and let me know that they noticed it! Now, since going through this program,



I'm off the medicine completely! All the side effects are gone just by getting off the medication. Letting go of the worry I had and giving it to God has had a tremendous effect on me. I just don't worry about things anymore. There have been several things God has tested me on to see if I'm letting Him be in control. It's really neat to look back when you go through the trials and struggles to see how God has worked them out. God has been faithful in helping me with the panic attacks. He tells me, "I'll take care of it," and He's done it every time! I just trust in Him. I just allow Him to handle everything.

What's in my heart now is a desire to be obedient to what God would have me to do, living for Him. The peace that He gives me for letting Him take control is wonderful. That's the biggest jewel—just knowing that you are in God's control and He's leading you where He wants you to go. I feel a real peace now. And I want to encourage others to be obedient and hang in there, and trust God. You'll feel great physically and spiritually. Just don't give up. You'll have a peace you will never forget. You'll feel good about yourself and it will put a smile on your face. It's wonderful!

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"



Proverbs 23:20–21, 29–35

My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Psalm 25:15



