

Resources for Helping People Break Free from Personal and Family Bondages

INTERVARSITY STAFF MEMBERS sometimes share the following material as a handout at a seminar designed to help international students break free from personal and family bondages. Many team members have also benefited from the material. Consider using the material yourself, with your team and with disciples who might benefit.

Bondages occur when part of our life is controlled by the world, sinful nature or the devil (see Ephesians 2:1-2). Bondages to the world and our sinful nature (e.g., bitterness, fears, worry and workaholism) may give Satan an opportunity to influence us (see Ephesians 4:26-27; 6:11).

Bondages usually affect our behavior, but are associated with strongholds of the mind. A *stronghold* is a pattern of thought and feeling opposed to God's truth (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Fear and shame are common strongholds. Strongholds are based on lies we believe (John 8:44). These lies are usually unconscious until the Holy Spirit brings them to light.

SOURCES OF BONDAGE

Bondages may result from our continuing sin, sin committed against us or sins our family has committed.

- *Sin we continue in:*
 - unforgiveness or bitterness (Ephesians 4:26-31)
 - sexual sin

- idolatry, including giving highest priority to money, reputation, relationships or anything other than God (Exodus 20:4-6)
- consulting mediums or fortunetellers, witchcraft (Deuteronomy 18:9-13)
- divination: seeking magical or occult guidance, including the use of horoscopes (Deuteronomy 18:9-13)
- using good luck charms
- cursing or speaking evil against others, includes gossip (Numbers 22:1-12; James 3:6-10)
- allowing unclean media content into one's mind
- participating in New Age meditation
- playing occult-based games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, using Ouija boards
- participating in rites invoking other gods (including Freemasonry)

Table 1. Commonly believed lies with Scriptures that clarify the truth

Since I am a Christian, life should always go well.	Acts 14:22
What I have done is so bad that God would never forgive or use me?	Examples of Peter and Paul
I should have been a boy (girl).	Psalm 139:13-15
I have to be perfect to deserve to live on this earth.	Psalm 139:13-18
Confessing my sins to God is too shameful.	1 John 1:8-2:2
Everyone should pay for their own sins.	1 Peter 2:24
Every hurt should be paid back.	Ephesians 4:31-5:1
I need to hide my weaknesses and sins.	James 5:16
God should deliver us from all bondage the moment we become Christians.	Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 2:10-18; 5:8

- *Our responses to sin committed against us*, such as child abuse, negative language or actual curses directed toward us. Some responses give the enemy a chance:
 - not forgiving those who sinned against us (Ephesians 4:26-31)
 - judging those who have sinned against us; treating others as we have been treated (Romans 2:1-3)
 - shame, fear, paralyzing pain, self-protection, self-hatred

GOOD NEWS

Christ came to set us free from these bondages and strongholds (Isaiah 61:1-3; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Isaiah 53:4-6). Receiving freedom is a journey. There may be dramatic deliverances, but there are no quick fixes.

Some steps in receiving freedom. Beginning to become free from these challenges includes taking steps to recognize the truth and let the truth set you free.

1. Come out of denial. Admit your helplessness and ask God for deliverance. The *truth* sets you free (John 8:32; Psalm 32:1-3).
2. Focus on your relationship with God. *Intimacy* with him brings freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16-19).
3. Identify any emotional hole that might be connected to your bondage. Ask God to show you any strongholds, especially *lies* you believe.
4. Ask God to show you how the identity and blessings you have in Christ can meet that need or fill that hole.
5. Identify positive habits to replace the negative (Philippians 4:8). Find Scriptures that counter the lies (e.g., for shame: Isaiah 54:4-5; 61:6-7; for fear: Hebrews 2:14-15; for unforgiveness: Ephesians 4:32-5:1).
6. Fill yourself with God's Word. Consider reducing your time with media, devices and in social networking to allow more time in the Word (Psalm 19:7; Romans 12:2).
7. Ask for a new filling of the Holy Spirit.

8. Incorporate other disciplines:

- personal and group worship, including communion
- accountability with a prayer partner or small group
- prayer for others

Prepare for healing prayer. Some bondages may require special prayer for healing and deliverance.

- Pray Psalm 139:23-24 and ask God to show you the source of any bondage—including life patterns that might be strongholds—and issues in your family history.
- Seek reconciliation (make things right) in a culturally appropriate way with anyone you have sinned against or who has a grudge against you (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Find some mature Christians to pray through various areas of bondage with you (James 5:16; 1 John 1:5-7). *Don't let shame or fear hold you back!*

Guidance for prayer. The following are some steps to take in prayer with one or two trusted people:

- State your commitment to Jesus Christ verbally (and through baptism if you haven't been baptized yet).
- Confess to God silently or before others any sin the Holy Spirit brings to mind. Thank God for the blood of Jesus which covers that sin (1 John 1:6-2:2; Revelation 12:11).
- Verbally state your forgiveness for everyone who has sinned against you. Remember, forgiveness is from the will; emotions will follow.
- Ask God to heal emotional hurts you have received.
- Break the power of curses or negative words spoken against you in the name of Jesus.
- Renounce (reject and separate yourself from) the sins of your ancestors (Leviticus 26:39-42; Nehemiah 9-10; Jeremiah 14:20; Daniel 9:4-19). Remember that it is possible to respect the memory of ancestors while admitting that they, like all people, have sinned.

- Command unclean spirits influencing you to leave in the name of Jesus (James 4:7).

Pray to receive freedom. This prayer is adapted from a prayer in *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil Anderson.

Father, I am your child. I confess that I have sinned in these ways: _____ (confess any sins the Holy Spirit brings to mind). Thank you that Jesus paid for all my sins with his blood. I forgive everyone who has sinned against me, and I ask you to bless them. Right now, I reject all the sins of my ancestors. You have saved me from darkness and brought me into your kingdom. I trust your power to cancel any works of evil spirits passed on to me through my ancestors. In the name of Jesus I also cancel all curses or negative words spoken against me. I am now seated with Jesus in the heavenly places, and I reject every way Satan may claim to own me. I am completely given over to the Lord Jesus Christ forever. By Jesus' power I command any family spirits or other evil spirits to leave me and never return. Father, I ask that the freedom you have given me will extend to the thousandth generation of my children. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. I present my spirit, soul and body to you as a living sacrifice, so I may honor you in my life. I do all these things in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.¹

Continue in victory. To maintain victory, take appropriate steps to continue in good habits and a close relationship with God.

1. Get rid of objects related to other religions, the occult or impure themes. Pray through your living space, asking God if there are items that should be discarded (Acts 19:18-19).
2. Replace bondages with good habits, and replace lies with Scriptures or true statements. Review these godly beliefs often.
3. Confess your sins to God regularly and forgive those who have sinned against you as soon as you can (Ephesians 4:26).
4. Pray Psalm 139:23-24 often. Spend time with God, allowing the

Holy Spirit to bring unconscious strongholds (both thoughts and feelings) to the surface.

5. Get mature Christians to hold you accountable and pray with you concerning continuing problems. Get Christian counseling if needed (James 5:16).
6. Praise and thank God, even in difficulties. Let God develop his armor in your character (James 4:6-7; Psalm 50:14-15, 23; Ephesians 6:10-18).
7. By using the Word of God, resist any thoughts the enemy tries to put in your mind (Matthew 4:1-11; Ephesians 6:17).
8. Not all attacks of the enemy are the result of bondages; the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8).
9. Identify and avoid (if possible) situations where it might be especially easy to give in to bondage. If you can't avoid a situation, get prayer from friends.
10. Continually humble yourself before God and resist the enemy when you sense an attack. Command evil spirits to leave your presence in the name of Jesus (Luke 10:19-20; James 4:7-8; 1 Peter 5:5-9).
11. Ask God to reveal and bring into your life your family blessings. All Christians are spiritual children of Abraham (Romans 4:16-17).
12. Share with others the freedom you have received (1 Peter 2:9-10).

DECIDING ABOUT QUESTIONABLE CULTURAL PRACTICES

Every culture has practices that are at variance with God's teaching. The following steps are helpful in deciding how to respond when faced with opportunities to participate in cultural practices about which you have questions (see Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 for Paul's consideration of similar issues).

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit's leading.
2. Study the Bible; some things, such as idol worship, occult practices

and consulting the dead or fortunetellers, are forbidden for Christians (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 18:9-13).

3. Consider what the practice means in your culture: worship, showing respect, something else?
4. Consider how your involvement would influence Christians and non-Christians (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 10).
5. Find out what older Christians in your country and your church believe about this practice.
6. If you need to attend a ceremony where other gods might be worshiped, such as a funeral or wedding, find a way to avoid forbidden activities.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Books

Anderson, Neil T. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006. Contains specific steps to break bondages.

———. *Victory Over the Darkness*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2000. Addresses identity in Christ and basic relationship issues.

Anderson, Neil T., with Chris Campbell, Rich Miller and Dave Park. *Steps to Freedom for Young Adults*. Knoxville: Freedom in Christ, 2009.

Kylstra, Chester, and Betsy Kylstra. *Restoring the Foundations*. Hendersonville, NC: Proclaiming His Word, 2001. Contains a thorough four-step process for inner healing and deliverance.

Richardson, Rick. *Experiencing Healing Prayer*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

White, Thomas. *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2011.

International Organizations with Online Resources

Freedom in Christ Ministries, fcm.org. Founded by Neil Anderson.

Restoring the Foundations, rtfi.org. Founded by Chester and Betsy Kylstra, assumes a charismatic perspective.

¹Adapted from Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Broker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1990), 130. Adapted and used by permission from Harvest House publishers.