

Pursuing Partnership: Moving Mountains of Strongholds

Stronghold #2 – Independence

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In this series of blogs, Leslie and Chad identify spiritual strongholds that need to be unearthed and removed so that godly men and women can partner well together for the completion of the Great Commission. Pray with us into these mountains, and by faith may these tectonic plates move in Jesus' name!

Independence



God's Gift of Unity

Unity is a spiritual weapon. Therefore, the enemy loves to fragment men and women with an attitude of independence!

God created men and women to live out harmonious relationships. It started so well! In Genesis 2, we find the man in the Garden of Eden searching for something similar to himself among all the animals, but none were like him. Not even close.

Until *finally* God brought him a fellow image bearer... the amazing woman.

When the first man saw the first woman, he broke out into the first-recorded love poem, "*Bone of my bone. Flesh of my flesh.*" His joyful proclamation illustrated how perfectly God made the couple for one

another. The man was no longer alone! He had a friend, an equal strength, someone like him - but wonderfully different!

Women Originated as a Curse? NO!

The Bible stands in stark contrast with other religions' accounts of the origin of woman. For example, in the tragic Greek story, men lived at peace on the earth without women. But Prometheus ascended Mount Olympus and stole fire from the gods and gave it to men. To punish men for this theft, the gods created the worst imaginable curse to inhabit earth alongside men... woman! The Chorus in Orestes sang, "Women were created to mar the lives of men." Greek writer Aristophanes stated, "Women are a shameless set, the vilest creatures going." Thankfully, the biblical story offers a different perspective, and sets out the true origins of humanity which reveals God's heart of love and the value given to both sons and daughters.

God's intent from the beginning was male and female, serving side-by-side in God's presence. God designed the powerful relationship between a man and a woman – strong, honorable, holy, interdependent, and unified. Together, the world-changing couple shared a common identity – God's image-bearers.

This God-honoring interdependence and shared identity fueled their destiny and empowered them to fulfill God's first commands in Genesis 1:28. *"God blessed THEM and said to THEM, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over [creation]..."* These shared commands and shared responsibilities revealed God's strategy for accomplishing his mission. God wants unified men and women, working together to spread God's culture across the whole earth.

When we look back into history, we recognize God's original intent was for men and women to be "ONE." Therefore, it makes perfect sense that this would be the ground the enemy would choose to attack. Satan absolutely hates and fears unity between men and women. Focusing his attack of deceit and doubt led to the sinful choice and "independence," dividing the blessed team from God and from each other. As evidence, the man's post-Fall vocabulary switched to "I" and "me" rather than "we/our."

Common Vision Unites

Today, Satan still seeks to keep the male and female divided, but God has another plan. We can overcome the stronghold of independence and disunity when we *"fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."* When Jesus' goals become ours, we move together in unity and harmony.

Years ago, we found an awesome picture frame. It offered this wisdom, **"Love does not consist in gazing lovingly into one another's eyes, but in looking outward together in the same direction."** We could not agree more! When men and women look up at God and look out at the world together, we unite around a mission that is unstoppable!

Just before he went to the cross, Jesus prayed, *"I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me"* (John 17:23).

As we stated earlier, UNITY is a spiritual weapon! Men alone will not *“let the world know,”* nor will women laboring alone. The impact of the godly unity between men and women in the church is reflected in the phrase, **“The WHOLE is greater than the sum of its parts.”** The UNIFIED and INTERDEPENDENT team of men and women focused on God’s mission, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and walking in faith... this team can move mountains and shake the world.

Good... Very or Not?

Recently, we saw a pastor celebrating on Facebook with the caption, “All my church leaders praying together.” He posted a picture of a room full of men. Not a *bad image* in itself, but it is a *bad understanding!* Of course, it’s great that men pray, but the picture missed the unity, the interdependence of the whole Body of Christ. It missed male and female laboring shoulder-to-shoulder, leading the church together for God’s glory.

When God walked the Garden before the Fall, he indicated that one thing was not good – the man alone, independent and without a female image-bearing counterpart. If God walked into your church or mission organization, would he say, “It is not good.” Or would he see gifted men and women working well together and conclude, “It is very good!” Unity spears the demonic stronghold of independence.

Pray believers will live with hearts of bold and courageous unity and interdependence. May the mountain of INDEPENDENCE be moved, in Jesus’ name!