

The Replacement Principle

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Jeroboam and Rehoboam were both kings of Israel and sons of Solomon, or so I thought. When did I begin believing this? Maybe when I was 17 years old.

I didn't doubt it when I went through Bible college, and for 30 years, I didn't doubt the truth that Jeroboam and Rehoboam were brothers and sons of Solomon.

That is until I wrote a book on the kings of Israel, stating confidently that this was the case, and people started pointing out that the Bible says they're not actually brothers.

Really clearly, embarrassingly clearly, the Bible states Jeroboam and Rehoboam are not the sons of Solomon, and they're not brothers. What I thought was the truth was not the truth.

My doctor told me years ago that my blood pressure was up and that my good cholesterol was too low and that I had dropped dead syndrome. Lovely, I thought. Then I had some chest pain and became convinced that I was having a heart attack.

So I took myself up to emergency and found out no, I wasn't having a heart attack. I had become convinced of something that simply wasn't true. Google doctor will do that to you these days.

Have you ever experienced what I'm talking about in relationships? Someone says something and you interpret it a certain way, and then you hear another snippet of information and you're convinced they're out to get you.

But the truth is, no, they're not coming for you. You've just jumped to a false assumption. Essentially, you've believed a lie, a lie you told yourself.

Have you discovered that a lie believed as truth will affect your life as if it were true? You can get all agitated and anxious and angry. You can build walls around yourself and develop phobias.

You can produce all manner of dysfunction by believing a lie as though it was true. And the effect is the same for your emotions and body and social interactions. A lie believed as truth will affect your life as if it were true.

So far, we've looked at the Great Emission, that part of the Great Commission in Matthew 28, which is often overlooked, where Jesus says, make disciples of all nations and teach them all that I have commanded you.

Teach them how to live the way I said you could live. This is an invitation to a way of life. It's more than a ticket into heaven, this Christianity thing.

Jesus offers formation and transformation of a human life by grace through faith. Matthew 11, 28 taught us about the easy yoke.

Jesus, like the seasoned oxen, will show us the way of the master by living alongside us, with us, in unhurried rhythms of grace. Last chapter, we saw how important it is to live the master's way out of our identity as a child of God.

Romans 8 tells us that the Spirit testifies to our spirit that we have become a child of God through belief in Jesus. We belong, and now we can behave christianly.

We've been referring to this diagram of spiritual formation, which works from the inside out. And if you've got a book, you'll see it there, the concentric circles.

God gives life to our spirit at the core, like in the bullseye of the circles, and replaces our heart, spiritually empowers our will, and then begins to renew our mind, which affects our emotions, our bodily habits, and how we interact in our social

context. All these complex aspects of our personhood make up our soul. The next four chapters are going to be spent unpacking the mind. We'll look at renewing and reframing.

We'll look at recalibrating our mind with the ways of the master. Jesus said in John 14, 6, I am the way and the truth and the life. And in John 8, 32, then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

A lie believed as truth will affect your life as if it were true. It's not hard to see why following Jesus makes a big deal about finding out what is true and what is false. Our passage today is 2 Corinthians 10, 3-5.

Paul writes, For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. And we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. We're going to see in this chapter that strongholds of deception exist.

Strongholds can be pulled down, and spiritual formation can establish new strongholds of truth. So firstly, strongholds of deception exist. The Apostle Paul says that there are such things as strongholds, which exist in our lives.

Now we might ask, what on earth are strongholds? The text clarifies immediately in verse five. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

Jesus is the truth. Strongholds are fortified thoughts built around lies, and these strongholds exist in our minds, which over time lives in our communities and our social contexts.

A stronghold is a fortification, which means typically in the ancient world, a fortress built on high ground with a really thick reinforced wall. These structures were often thought to be impenetrable and invincible.

The very beginnings of sin in human history was built upon a lie. The devil in Genesis 3, 1 to 5 said, Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?

The woman said to the serpent, We may eat from the trees in the garden, but God did say, You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.

Verse four, you will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Sin is built from the very start upon a lie.

A lie believed as truth will affect your life, as if it were true. Adam and Eve distrusted God. Their relationship with him was fractured because they believed a lie, and it led them to act out their disobedience.

Proverbs 23, 7 says, For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Our thoughts will dictate our destination. They will shape our emotions and our bodily behavior externally and internally, and influence our social context.

Strongholds are established over time. Lies believed build strongholds around them. Lies develop strongholds in our thinking.

Ivan Petrovich Pavlov was a Russian physiologist who in the 1890s was researching salivation in dogs in response to being fed. He inserted a small test tube into the cheek of each dog to measure saliva when the dogs were fed.

You might have heard of the phrase, Pavlov's dogs. Pavlov discovered that dogs salivated when given food.

It happened as soon as they smelled or saw the food, but if you rang a bell when you gave the food over time, you could make them salivate simply from ringing a bell. It's called classical conditioning. It seems like most brains are wired like this.

The dogs believed that when a bell rang, they were going to get fed. But that wasn't the truth. They just believed that when a bell rang, they were going to get fed because they had been conditioned to believe this.

A lie believed as truth will affect your life as if it were true.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 3, But I'm afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Eve was deceived.

She didn't know that she had believed a lie. She believed that she could find the good life outside of God by following the snake. But it was a lie.

We can be led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ in just the same way. The question we need to ponder in our journey of spiritual formation is, what are the lies that I have believed?

Are there lies I have believed about myself and my relationships, my past and my future, which have over time established strongholds around them? If there are strongholds which exist, we need to remember they can be pulled down.

Number two, strongholds can be pulled down. Paul says the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

This is warfare language, which sounds a lot like Ephesians chapter 6. Verse 10, Paul writes, Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

There is a battle to be fought to remove thought strongholds, which oppose the truth of the gospel and the kingdom of God in our lives.

And what's very important to remember in this battle is that we cannot change what we cannot confront, because we cannot defeat what we cannot define. If you don't know where the strongholds are in your life, it's very hard to remove them.

So what lie have you been believing such that it has become a stronghold in your life? Here are some possible lies which can form strongholds. I'll just read through a list.

I'm not good enough. That's a powerful lie that many people hold on to. Or I am spoiled.

Something happened to you, and you were told a lie that you are now different, less than. I am unwanted. I don't belong.

Some people believe I am under attack always. They're out to get me, but they are not defined. I must elevate myself.

I must dominate conversation and make it about me. I must earn more and save more and collect more. I must have the praise of people.

I cannot express myself because I might not be accepted. I must not fail. I cannot stop working because poverty is always at my door.

I am better than everyone else. I am guilty. I am ashamed.

God hates me. God is harsh. I can never rest.

I can't achieve anything worthwhile in life. I must self-medicate with X, Y, Z or else. I can't let anyone get close to me.

I don't trust truth. I'm cynical. I will always wrestle with unbelief.

God can't be trusted. We are starting a war against every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God that has been established within our personal world. To wage war, we need to identify the stronghold.

How? To identify the stronghold, we reflect on our behaviour and our thoughts, and we ask probing questions. Questions like this, why am I doing this?

When did this start? How does this make me feel? Is fear driving this behaviour?

If so, what am I afraid of? Is there a certain trigger that prompts this behaviour? If so, why?

What need do I feel this behaviour is meeting? Does when I do this help me understand why I do it? What is different about this habit than others I've been able to quit?

What is the real need I'm trying to meet with this wrong thinking? How do we demolish strongholds? We identify the problem, uncover the false narrative, the lie, ask probing questions, and then pinpoint the lie.

And then with divine power, as the scripture says, to demolish strongholds, we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. And we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

This is immensely important. We demolish strongholds in the name of Jesus through the power of the risen Christ. The lie must come under the light of truth in Jesus.

This is the secret. The gospel is not something that we believe at the start of the spiritual formation and then forget about it at every stage of our formation. We've got to remember the gospel.

Jesus defeated sin, death and the devil in our place. This is what we're taught in Philippians 2. Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the

glory of God the Father. Jesus took the punishment for every sin when he died on that cross. He took every curse when he was covered in the sin of the world and the wrath of God in his death.

When he rose from the grave, he conquered death and is now the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. When we discover the lie, we preach the gospel at it, and the lie will not stand.

When we preach the gospel at the stronghold, we remember the truth of the gospel, which involves us being sinners in need of forgiveness.

Pulling strongholds down will thus involve repentance, it will involve renouncing the lie, and it may even involve spiritual deliverance if there has been some sort of spiritual oppression involved. Strongholds can be pulled down.

Identify the problem, ask probing questions, pinpoint the lie, remove the lie, and replace with truth. Number three, spiritual formation can establish new strongholds of truth. We respond to the lie with gospel truth.

So I'm going to read out what the lie is, and then I'm going to read a response of gospel truth. I'm not good enough. What's our response?

I know, but Christ is, and I am in Christ. I'm spoiled. Well, I was spoiled, but Christ paid for my sin.

I am now perfect before the Father. I am unwanted. The gospel shows me I am eternally wanted.

Jesus died for me. I am under attack always. No, greater is he that is in me because of the gospel.

I must elevate myself. Christ makes me important so I can be humble. I must win.

I have already won. I am in Christ. I must earn more and save more and collect more.

No, I seek first the kingdom. Christ satisfies all my needs. I must have the praise of people.

No, I live for an audience of one. I cannot express myself because I might not be accepted. No, I know that I am already accepted by my Creator.

I must not fail. There is grace for my failure shown in the Gospel. I cannot stop working because poverty is always at my door.

No, God provides all I need. I am better than everyone else. I am not better than everyone else.

Jesus is. I am guilty. No, I am not.

Jesus took my guilt. I am ashamed. No, I am not.

Jesus took my shame. God hates me. No, the gospel shows me.

He loves me and sent his son to save me. God is harsh. God is actually loving and kind.

I can never rest. Jesus offers me rest and he is the boss. I can't achieve anything worthwhile in life.

No, God has good things for my life. I must self-medicate with X, Y, Z or else. Actually, my life is hidden with Christ in God, and so is my well-being.

I can't let anyone get close to me. I am free to love because I am loved. I don't trust truth.

I'm cynical. I will always wrestle with unbelief. No, the truth sets me free.

God can't be trusted. What rubbish. All of his acts demonstrate to me that every word he says comes true.

He promised a Messiah and he sent one. This is the battle. These are the truths which need to replace the lies.

Satan's primary weapon is lies. Our greatest weapon is the truth. This is the Replacement Principle.

Identify the problem, ask probing questions, pinpoint the lie, remove the lie and replace with truth.

When you consider the concentric circles that we've come back to often in this book, can you see how our mind will affect our emotions and our body and our social context? Can you see why Paul taught the Philippians in Chapter 4?

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put into practice and the God of Peace will be with you. The mind, think about such things as these. The body, put into practice.

Emotions, the God of Peace will be with you.

Spiritual formation involves the replacement principle in the battle for the mind, because strongholds of deception do exist, but strongholds can be pulled down, and spiritual formation can establish new strongholds of truth.