WHAT DO “FORTRESSES” LOOK LIKE IN THE REAL WORLD?

This article appeared on the front page of the Sunday, June 11, 2006 issue of the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Notice the paragraph below the word “God” in large type, stating that an Iowa judge just struck down a similar program as religious “coercion.”

That’s fortress mentality.

Here’s another example.

Notice also the last paragraph at the lower right. The director of religious programming will not support the program even if fewer prisoners are reincarcerated because of concerns that it violates federal and state laws separating church and state.

Fortress!!

My wife, Joanne, has been involved in the InnerChange program. She and others from a Christian outreach group we are part of used to go every Monday evening to meet with...
the men, counsel them, and teach them about Jesus. I know all of those in this particular group. They are true Christians, with hearts for God.

The men they met with – prisoners – had to sign up and be on a waiting list in order to get into the program. There was no coercion. They loved it, because it gave them real hope for a better life.

Here’s the bottom line: For those who participate, the recidivism rate is only 8% as compared to 75% nationally.

It’s very likely that some of the people involved in making the decisions regarding this program and others like it are people who go to church on Sunday. But they have so compartmentalized their lives that they are allowing the secular society around them dictate what is right and what is wrong.

That’s fortress mentality in the real world today.

(In the following passage, I have added alternate translations within the square brackets to match those used by the speaker.)

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

1 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— 2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds [fortresses].

5 We destroy arguments [speculations] and every lofty opinion [thing] raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Examples of Speculations (continued)

2) EGALITARIANISM – the blurring of role distinctions between men and women.

- Fathers and mothers – they’re the same, we’re told
- Husbands and wives – interchangeable, we’re told

It’s the notion that men and women are the same; interchangeable.
3) **ECONOMICS** – the idea that *having* and *happiness* are somehow related.

**Here’s the speculation:**

How many people have spent – how many hours this week? – thinking: “IF I could just have *this* or *that* or *more*, THEN I would be happy!!

**Here’s the truth:**

Some of the happiest people in the world have nothing! “Having” is more a curse than a blessing. Having and happiness are not related.

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**Note from Jan:**

The word “happy” has the same root as the word “happen”. It relates to an event, to something that “happened”.

Here’s how it works:

> Something good happened, and now I’m sooooooo happy!!

> But now something bad happened… and I’m not happy anymore.

Happiness is tied to events [happenings] of this world.

What you really want is joy. For the Christian, joy comes only from the Lord.

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4) **EXPERIENCE** – the idea that somehow the answers to life’s questions are “out there somewhere”.

5) **EGO** – self-centered “I / me / my / mine” thinking.

**Characteristics:**

- It’s all about me.
- I do what I think is right.
- I’m at the center.
- I am what matters.
- I am the master of my fate.
- I am the captain of my soul.

Sadly, we even find this kind of thinking in churches.

The truth: it’s all about God.
Notice that all these things – and many more that could be mentioned – are “raised up against the knowledge of God”.

We don’t want to just fight the battle. We want to win the battle.

Look back at Ephesians chapter 6, where we were in a previous lesson.

Recall the various pieces of armor.

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14Stand firm therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

THE BATTLE IS WON WITH SCRIPTURE!

Note from Jan

I don’t think this can be emphasized too much.

This is the main reason why you’ve heard me saying over and over how important it is to know some Scripture. That’s our only weapon.

The battle is raging all around us and within us. Satan and his demons are trying to bring us down. Church people are not immune. This is not some kooky thing concocted by evangelical Christians to make Catholics seem pathetic. It’s real.

Either you believe that, or you don’t. Each of us gets to choose. Look at the passages from the Bible. Do you believe they are meant for you?

*To do nothing is the same as saying you don’t believe it. To do nothing is the same as calling God a liar.*

Decide. Choose wisely!
Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)
17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment
You shall condemn.

Are you “locked in”?

Locked into paradise.
Locked into knowing Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe.
Locked into knowing my sins are forgiven.
Locked into understanding the promise of eternal life.
Locked into relating to women in a way that doesn’t hinder the most
important human relationship that I have.
Locked into protecting my life against addictions and other things that take
me in a wrong direction.
Locked into raising my children and protecting them from the ravages of this
world.
Locked into can’t wait until I get to see the King and say, “you had me so
locked in. Thanks for locking me in!”

This is our only offensive weapon: the Word of God.

How do we use it?

The battle is won when Truth replaces deception.

When satan says, “this will make you happy” say to him, “I don’t think so. God’s
Word says this.”

James 4
7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Question: how do you submit to God?
Answer: do what His Word says. (To do so you have to know His Word.)

Question: how do you resist the enemy?
Answer: speak His Word. (Again, it means you need to know His Word.)

Question: Why did God the Father allow the Second Person of the Trinity to be
tempted? Was He trying to find out what Jesus was made of?
Answer: Jesus was not tempted for any other reason but to show us how we can
have victory.
Matthew 4

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’

and,

‘In their hands they shall bear you up.
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’

7 Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

10 Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Notice that in all 3 temptations, when Jesus resisted satan, he fled.

That’s the battle right there: name the lie; insert the truth.

Example: if you’re a married man, what do you say when a friend suggests you should flirt with a cute girl at the office?

Answer:

Genesis 2:24

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Say that, and the battle is over. But… if you begin to weigh the possibilities, the enemy has you!

Final thought: we are not alone in the battle.

Romans 16

19 For the report of your obedience has reached to all, therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent of what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Be wise in what is good. Spend yourself in obedience, and that will win most of the battles. Do what is right and what the Scripture says.

Genesis 3

15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

Be wise in what is good. Be innocent of what is evil.