

# 30 DAYS TO OVERCOMING EMOTIONAL STRONGHOLDS

T O N Y   E V A N S



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Verses marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

*Cover by Dugan Design Group, Bloomington, Minnesota*

*Cover photo © Terry Dugan*

### **30 DAYS TO OVERCOMING EMOTIONAL STRONGHOLDS**

Copyright © 2015 Tony Evans

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-6183-7 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6184-4 (eBook)

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

**Printed in the United States of America**

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 / BP-JH / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	5
Week One: Emotions. . . . .	9
Week Two: Stress . . . . .	29
Week Three: Worry . . . . .	49
Week Four: Hopelessness. . . . .	65
Conclusion . . . . .	81

## Special Offer

Dr. Evans would like to share two important messages with you that will help you overcome fear and worry.

To download “Freedom from Fear” (from Matthew 14:22-33) and “Be Happy, Don’t Worry” (from Philippians 4:6) at no charge, visit our website:

**[go.tonyevans.org/overcome](http://go.tonyevans.org/overcome)**

# INTRODUCTION

Healthy emotions are to the soul what the senses are to the body. They reveal the way we feel about life's circumstances.

But some people are imprisoned by negative emotions. These people don't just have a bad day once in a while—that happens to all of us. Rather, they feel as if they're trapped, as if they can't escape, and as if their very life is being choked out of them. When they wake up in the morning, they don't say, "Good morning, Lord." Rather, they say, "Good Lord, it's morning." They struggle to survive and may feel helpless, hopeless, and worthless.

I use the word "stronghold" because anger, depression, worry, stress, low self-esteem...these are spiritual issues. They must be overcome spiritually. When we get the spiritual component right, we won't be enslaved by our emotions.

Some emotional strongholds can be tied to a physiological cause, such as a chemical imbalance. But most emotional strongholds don't spring from physiological causes. Rather, they stem from sin—either your own or

someone else's. For example, you might struggle with emotions of guilt, shame, or regret because of wrong choices you have made. Or you may have suffered abuse, rape, betrayal, or rejection. In these cases, the stronghold of fear, insecurity, or worry didn't come from your own sin but from others'.

Emotional strongholds can even result from what I call "atmospheric sin." This happens when sin clouds the atmosphere around us and affects us regardless of whether we actively participate in it. This is often the case with greed, social irresponsibility, injustice, racism, and so on. These can lead to emotional strongholds just as secondhand smoke can lead to lung cancer. In an environment that is rife with sin, people are more likely to suffer from emotional strongholds.

People who find themselves enslaved to their emotions may deny the problem exists, or they may use pills, entertainment, sex, or money to distract themselves from the real issues causing their emotional discomfort. But I want to help you discover the root behind what you are experiencing so you can overcome it. I want to look beyond your feelings so you can discover and address the causes of your emotional strongholds—and overcome them.

God did not create you to be imprisoned by emotional strongholds. Rather, He has promised you a full life in Christ. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). He has not called you to live each day in defeat. He wants you to know

and trust that He is in control of all things and that He is watching over your entire life.

If you are not experiencing the abundant life Christ freely gives, now is the time to overcome your emotional strongholds. Turn to Him and ask Him to reveal the areas where an emotional stronghold may have set in. He wants to show you how to see past your sorrow—how to view your life from His vantage point.

From where you stand right now, life may look dismal. Yet from where God is seated, all is well. When we overcome emotional strongholds, we let go of our need to understand everything right now. We trust God to make a miracle out of what looks like a mess.

Remember, emotions don't think—they merely respond. Emotions have to borrow thoughts in order to stimulate feelings from them. Therefore, whatever controls your thoughts also controls how you feel.

For example, if you were weighed down with worry and stress because your bills had piled up, you had been laid off from work, and you saw no way out of your financial chaos, your emotions would be responding to how you were thinking about your situation.

But if I handed you a check for \$500,000...well, let's just say your emotions would completely change. That's because your emotions follow your thoughts. You can overcome emotional strongholds by mastering your thinking. When you align your thoughts with God's truth, you will be set free. Guaranteed.





# WEEK ONE

## EMOTIONS

### DAY ONE

The battle to overcome your emotional strongholds is a battle for your mind. Whoever and whatever controls your mind controls your emotions (and your actions). So if you are worrying, stressed out, and depressed, you're probably thinking things that aren't true. That's why the apostle Paul tells us we don't war against the flesh, but against Satan's attacks on our mind.

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

So we're fighting not only our flesh but also our minds—and Satan's lies. One of Satan's favorite strategies

is to plant his thoughts in our minds, disguising them as our own thoughts. We accept them as true and begin to act on them. This is the same strategy he used with Eve in the garden when he twisted God's truth and enticed her to sin.

But if Satan is sending us these sinful thoughts, how can we be blamed for thinking them or acting on them? The answer is that you and I are responsible for what we do with these thoughts once they enter our minds. That's why the passage we just looked at says we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

When a thought enters your mind, luring you into an emotional stronghold of worry, doubt, anger, hate, or shame, you have two choices. You can reject the thought, or you can adopt it and make it your own. By rejecting it, you tear down the stronghold and put an end to the false way of thinking. It can't dominate or corrupt your emotions any longer.

Paul says our thoughts can lead in two directions. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). In this verse, "death" is the opposite of life and peace. It is spiritual impoverishment—you may be alive physically, but your emotional life is ebbing away. This ebbing away leads to worry and depression because the flesh does not bring peace, joy, or purpose.

On the other hand, if you set your mind on the things of the Spirit, you have life and peace, purpose and

meaning, hope and joy. When the Holy Spirit governs your thoughts, external circumstances don't dictate your responses.

So if you want to overcome emotional strongholds, *change your thoughts*. To break free from whatever is holding you hostage, reject Satan's attempts to influence your thoughts and set your mind on God's truth—what He says about you and your circumstances.

## DAY TWO

**T**he best ways to begin overcoming emotional strongholds are to understand your identity in Christ and to avoid a life of sin.

Worry, fear, doubt, hate...all of these and more overtake us when we don't remember who we are in Christ. On the other hand, when we focus on the truth about our identity in Him, we enjoy new life.

What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through

baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4).

Take a look in the mirror. That person you see was crucified, buried, and resurrected with Christ. When Jesus died 2000 years ago, so did you. When He was buried, you lay in the tomb with Him. When He rose, you did too. You may have received Christ only a short time ago, but those events in Jesus' life form the foundation of your spiritual identity.

How does this identification work? The process reminds me of the jumper cables I keep in my car. Once a good battery is connected to a dead battery, the car can be started. Electrical current flows from the good battery into the dead battery. Through no action of its own, the dead battery becomes "alive" again.

In the first century, Jesus defeated sin and death with all the power necessary to jump-start those who are dead in sin. Like a set of jumper cables, the Holy Spirit connects your dead soul with Jesus' victory on the cross. The result: Your spirit "turns over," and you are raised to walk in newness of life.

This is why you *can* overcome your emotional strongholds. I know you can because I know who you are in Christ.

Satan is a master at disguising his thoughts as your

own. *I can't overcome worry...I can't be free from this emotional bondage...I can't resist these old habits of falling into depression...* In order to overcome, you must *stop believing these lies*. Those statements may have been true when the *old* you was alive. But that person died on the cross with Christ. You are a completely new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Consider the electric appliances in your kitchen. They all draw power from the same source. If your house has no electricity, none of those appliances will work. Likewise, people who are not connected to Christ are powerless to overcome their emotional strongholds. But those who belong to Christ are plugged into the same unlimited power source. The same power that enabled someone else to overcome a stronghold is available to you. Christ is in the business of setting people free. You cooperate with Him by acknowledging that your new life in Him empowers you to overcome every lie the enemy plants in your mind. You have the power to overcome whatever is holding you down.

One day many decades ago, Sir Frederick Handley Page—a pioneer in aviation—was flying one of his planes across a barren Middle Eastern desert, unaware that a large rat had crawled into the cargo hold behind the cockpit before takeoff. While cruising several thousand feet, Page heard the sickening sound of gnawing from behind him. His heart began to pound—hydraulic lines and control cables ran throughout the cargo area.

One misplaced bite could disable the aircraft and send him to his death.

Autopilot did not yet exist, so being alone, Page couldn't abandon the controls momentarily to deal with his uninvited guest. Descending from his current altitude and landing might take too long. Besides, touching down on the desert sand was risky, and his chances of being able to take off again were even slimmer.

That's when Page recalled a piece of trivia: Rats require more oxygen to survive than do humans. Page pulled back on the yoke, and the aircraft climbed. In a few short moments, the gnawing sound stopped. Safely on the ground a few hours later, Page discovered a dead rat lying just behind the cockpit.

Friend, Satan can't live in the atmosphere of God's truth. His dark lies fade away in the light of God's presence. Soar in the heavenlies by aligning your thinking with God's perspective (see Ephesians 2:6). Sure, the air might be a little thin if you're not used to it, but the Spirit will sustain you.

Keep climbing into God's mindset and adopting His perspective until He brings the victory you thought was impossible. Rehearse the truth over and over until Satan and his emotional strongholds fall to the floor and die for lack of air. When they do, you will breathe free.