

Footholds & Strongholds

OVERVIEW

The devil doesn't overpower or coerce us with his lies, instead he utilizes the seductive allure of influence. The authors of the Scriptures call this "giving the Devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:27). The word "foothold" literally means "place," and was often used in a military context in reference to an invading army securing a place behind enemy lines from which a deeper attack could be launched. It's the same concept as a "beachhead." This is the strategy used by the allied forces in WWII to invade Normandy. This gave the allied forces a foothold and opened the door for their advance and played a key role in their overall victory of the European War. This is a classic strategy of war, and so it shouldn't surprise us, knowing that we are in a real spiritual war with a real enemy, that the devil uses the same strategy.

The devil surveys the territory of our lives, looking for any place to get a foothold. And when you give the devil a foothold, he takes a stronghold (2 Cor. 10:4). That is to say, he once he gets in with his lies, he seeks to build a fortress of deception in your soul and protect his territory, keeping you isolated in darkness and blocking you from experiencing the presence of God and the abundant life he offers in Christ. This is the essence of the devil's mission.

In light of this, a key task in our discipleship to Jesus is learning to navigate our life and relationships without opening ourselves to the pull of the enemy.

In order for us to fight against giving the devil a foothold, we have to start thinking more like soldiers and less like civilians. Paul says it like this in 2 Timothy 2:4: "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." The enemy wants to trick us into thinking it's peacetime, when in reality it's wartime. And like good soldiers, we need to guard our lives against the enemy's schemes.

To do this well, we need to honestly evaluate our lives and do at least two things:

1. Identify the areas in our life where we are giving or are tempted to give the devil a foothold.
2. Set up spiritual guardrails to help us stay close to Jesus.

IDENTIFYING FOOTHOLDS

In Ephesians 4:26-29, Paul mentions three broad areas where we tend to give the devil a foothold:

1. In what we do with our emotions (our pain, wounds, triggers, anger, fear, loneliness, shame, sense of abandonment, etc.)
2. In what we do with our hands (our habits, rhythms, behaviors that we live into)
3. In what we do with our words (the way we talk to people, about people, to ourselves)

Spend about five minutes in silent, listening prayer, asking the Spirit to reveal to you any areas of your life where are giving, or are prone to giving, the devil a foothold.

Write those areas down as they come into your mind. Be specific. (You don't have to share this with the whole MC, as long as you write it down for yourself.)

SETTING UP GUARDRAILS

Remember that guardrails are not rules and regulations by which you are trying to earn God's favor, but are boundaries to help you stay close to Jesus and avoid giving the devil a foothold.

In light of any areas the Spirit has revealed, take a few more minutes in silent, listening prayer, and ask him to help you discern any guardrails you need to set up in your life. (Anything you might need to stop doing (e.g., a habit or behavior) or start doing (e.g., a spiritual discipline, plugging deeper into community).

Write those areas down as they come into your mind. Be specific. (You don't have to share this with the whole MC, as long as you write it down for yourself.)

Take a moment to meditate on Colossians 2:13-15 and what it means for you. Practice putting on your new identity in Christ and walking in his victory over your sin and the enemy.

You are encouraged to share what you wrote with your DNA Group, so that you may encourage and help keep one another accountable to follow Jesus.