

WEEK 5:

THERE IS AN ENEMY

Objective: Continue honest and vulnerable discussions as you move into recognizing, admitting and breaking strongholds. Claim victory over the enemy and live in freedom from the bonds of sin and its consequences.

PRAYER POINTS

- For the people in your group to respond to the Holy Spirit as He reveals areas of strongholds that need to be broken in their lives.
- For truth to be heard and received so that each person may understand that we live in a spirit-filled world where Satan is a real adversary. Pray group members will live in victory over spiritual warfare.
- For those who are new in their faith or not yet Christians, to be open to these truths that are being read and spoken about regarding spiritual warfare.

LEADER PREPARATION

- Pray, pray, pray! The most important thing you will do for your group this week is to pray for them and for your ability to lead them. Pray they will move toward freedom in Christ through the power of God's Word and the Holy Spirit.
- Remember, not every bad thing or every struggle is spiritual warfare. Much of what we struggle with is our own sin and the consequences of it. Some people tend to overemphasize spiritual warfare while others tend to underemphasize it.
- If you are leading a co-ed group, confirm you have someone to lead each group (men/women). If you are assigning someone to help you out for this session, make sure you adequately brief him/her on what he/she needs to do.
- Important: See appendix for notes on strongholds.

GROUP TIME

15 minutes - Welcome and Introductory Questions

- Open the group in prayer, inviting God into your meeting before you begin your discussion.
- Since our prayer experience, where have you seen or heard God?
- What has God revealed to you this week as you spent time with Him?

40 minutes - Discussion

The theme: Spiritual Warfare

As you lead this week, be sensitive to the different perspectives you will hear from people in your group. You will start your time with a general discussion on spiritual warfare from the homework, and then divide your group between men and women to discuss strongholds and pray for them. If you prefer, you can divide your group before the discussion.

- Have you ever contemplated the fact that we live in a spirit-filled world and have an enemy?
- How did this week's homework impact your thoughts about the fact that we live in a spirit-filled world?
- What questions do you still have about the spiritual realm or spiritual warfare?

Leader note: Remember to take notes when each person shares part of their story, things they question or may not believe, and breakthroughs in their spiritual journey. You will use all of these notes for the Affirmation Prayers in Week 10.

45 minutes - Prayer Time for Strongholds

Leader note: Separate men and women. Share strongholds and have a time of prayer. Sit in a circle of chairs without a table in the middle. This seemingly small detail really helps to break down walls and inhibitions.

- Strongholds are areas of sin in our lives where our flesh and Satan have worked together to create destructive patterns that are sometimes hard to see. We have the authority and power through our relationship with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to break free from these influences.
- How have repeated patterns of sin in your life caused problems or challenged your relationships?
- What types of strongholds do you struggle with that you circled on Day 5? (It's common to have more than one.)
- Some people will think they don't have any strongholds. Once others begin sharing, they will recognize places of concern in their own lives. Allow for discussion here. Don't limit sharing to one person at a time, but encourage back and forth dialogue.
- Help your group embrace the truth that contradicts the lie they have believed. Where the enemy has a stronghold, replace it with the truth of their identity in Christ. These are listed next to the main headings of each stronghold, but recognize there are others not listed here as well.

Prayer time - Before you break strongholds, consider if there are people in your group who might not be Christians. Remind group members we all have imperfections in our lives that are harmful to ourselves and others. As Christians, we have the ability to break these strongholds through the power of the Holy Spirit. When a Christian prays to break a stronghold, they confess the pattern of sin in their life and choose to replace it with a new

character quality they want to adopt. The Holy Spirit works in this process.

For those who have not chosen to follow Christ, they have the ability to stop destructive patterns in their lives, and you can pray that for them. Each person in the group should be prayed over either way. We all need prayer to overcome the difficult places in our lives, but it is different without the Holy Spirit living in us. If there are non-believers in the group, you can give them the opportunity to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord before praying for them.

Move your group into a time of prayer where you, as the leader, are praying with each person or the individual is praying and you are praying with him/her in agreement to break these areas of strongholds in his/her life. You will want to model your prayer after the prayer in your Rooted workbook. Make sure you pray out loud with each person in your group. Be careful to not let other people step in and try and rescue someone as he/she is sharing a stronghold or minimize it and its damage in his/her life.

As you end your prayer time, remind everyone this is just the first step. They must continue to do all they can to not repeat the patterns of sin that have led to these areas of strongholds.

This exercise can be painful and may reopen wounds that your Rooted group may not be qualified to address. In these situations, you may want to suggest seeking counseling or therapy from a qualified professional.

Leader note: Hand out the Rooted bookmark with the “identity in Christ” verses listed. Read the verses aloud as a group. Have group members insert their own names for personal pronouns “I” and “me.”

10 minutes - Prayer Requests/Close Group in Prayer

- Close by praying over the whole group according to who we are in Christ listed on the bookmark.
- Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality.

10 minutes - Closing

- Ensure you have set the time and location for your Serve Experience. 100% participation is the goal.

WORKBOOK REVIEW

There is an Enemy

The focus this week is on the enemy and his influence on our lives, to recognize and break strongholds and experience freedom in our identity in Christ.

Day 1 The Enemy is Real

- What new thoughts do you have about Satan and his kingdom of this world?
- What comforts do you find in knowing Jesus is victorious now and in the end?

Day 2 The Spiritual Realm

- Where do you recognize spiritual battles in your life?
- Where do you feel dressed in God's armor to fight them? Where don't you

Day 3 Tempting, isn't it?

- Where is the love of the world creeping into your life?
- How does this open a door to Satan/evil?
- Where is it creating weaknesses?

Day 4 The Enemy Within

- Where in your life do you experience what Paul does in Romans 7 (being a slave to sin and a slave to God's law)?
- What are examples of where "the flesh" is winning in your life?
- What are examples of where the Holy Spirit is winning?

Day 5 Strongholds

- Look at the list of strongholds. Mark it up. Circle or list any areas where Satan has a foothold or you have developed habitual areas of sinning. Then, in the box provided, write what the Truth could look like in your life.