

BOOK 1 in the Keys of the Kingdom Trilogy

SHATTERING YOUR STRONGHOLDS

UPDATED AND EXPANDED



Liberty Savard

Shattering Your Strongholds

2

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AMP or <i>Amplified</i>	<i>The Amplified Bible</i> - Zondervan
ASV	<i>The American Standard Version</i> – Lockman Foundation
TM or <i>The Message</i>	<i>The Message</i> – NavPress
NASV	<i>New American Standard Version</i> – Lockman Foundation
NIV	<i>New International Version</i> – Zondervan
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i> – Thomas Nelson
TLB	<i>The Living Bible</i> – Tyndale House

Mathew Henry's Commentary – Hendrickson Publishers

Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon of the New Testament – Baker Book House

Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldean Lexicon of the Old Testament – Baker Book House

SHATTERING YOUR STRONGHOLDS

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my friend, Marian Johnson, who believed in this message from the very beginning when I felt God was giving this new revelation to me in 1985.

She was always faithful to pray these prayers with me as I struggled to learn all that Matthew 16:19 could really mean to the average Christian in his or her everyday spiritual walk. She still prays the binding and loosing prayers, saying they have changed her life dramatically.

Marian now teaches these prayer principles to others.

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Introduction

Everyone who believes in the sacrifice that Christ Jesus made to purchase their forgiveness and salvation has obtained an equal privilege of receiving whatsoever the Bible promises. Our God is no respecter of persons and the basis of His giving is not determined by a sliding scale of who is, who is not, or when one finally becomes worthy of receiving what He has promised. To God the Father, a believer is worthy to receive simply because he or she is in His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you have the privilege of receiving spiritual wisdom, power, authority, understanding, answers, and peace right now. Your heavenly Father has no desire to withhold any good thing from you. If you do not have these blessings in your life right now, it is not God who has opposed your receiving them. Nor can you blame the devil, your parents, your spouse, your relatives, your boss, your friends, or even your children. It is you who has opposed you.

We've all wondered why some believers seem to have so much spiritually and others seem to have so little. Church leaders have been trying to explain this inequity for years with the teaching that God's gifts are dispensed when one meets certain conditions or spiritual levels of service, prayer, study, etc—but these are man's conditions. God has not made the manifestation of His promises contingent on any of man's conditions.

The Lord does not realign His faithfulness to conform to man's misconceptions of Him. His faithfulness to His promises simply exists because He exists. Our dedication to service, prayer, and study may make us better people, but such dedication has nothing to do with increasing His faithfulness to His Word. He is faithful to all He has said He will do, period. A heart that has been able to receive from Him is a heart that can trust His Word, a heart that can enjoy great thanksgiving, understanding, love, and worship.

What is the difference between those who seem to receive so much from the Lord and those who do not? The main difference is in how much room the recipients have made within themselves to receive from Him. Those who receive much have stripped off, torn down, and moved out the trappings of their old natures, thereby enlarging their capacity to receive. Having done this, they have ceased to oppose themselves and God's work in their lives. Every believer shares an equal privilege, right, and ability to do the same thing.

The Lord stands at the door knocking, wanting to bring in the abundance He has been waiting to give you. May the following words reveal that there are Keys to the Kingdom that have been given for you. These Keys can unlock your understanding of how to make room to receive from Him.

Chapter 1

Keys to the Kingdom

The Truth Will Set You Free

Have you ever seen a time when so many were so leery of trusting today's media headlines? Who knows if we are getting facts or fiction? It is very hard to tell anymore. Does anyone mean what they are promising? Will anyone actually do what they say they will?

"Nothing is what it seems. What is the truth?" cries the world.

Christians know the truth. Jesus died so we could be forgiven and go to heaven. That is rock-solid, life-giving truth. Many Christians will make it all the way through life and home to God on that truth alone. They may not impact other lives and change the world, but that truth is enough to get them out of spending eternity in hell. Providing, of course, that they are not hit with any brutal or harsh circumstances that have to be lived out and walked through in their own strength while they are still here on earth.

Life has a way of doing that sometimes. When it does, the strongest Christians need every bit of truth they can get. This is a book about seeking for truth, whole truth—the deeper truth that comes with a price but brings great reward.

Too many Christians quit seeking when surface truth brings them temporary blessings or relief. They are content with a one-dimensional understanding that costs little and requires little growth. Learning whole truth can bring growing pains. This is fearful to some, even though God always gives growth in stages we can handle. He has said to seek and we would find; so our command is to begin seeking and to keep seeking. Those who do will feel growing pains when their capacity to receive anymore becomes too small.

Think back to when you were little and remember the new dress shoes your mother bought for you. They were shiny and new and probably a little too big, but you could walk in them. After a certain length of time, however, they began to pinch your toes and you had to step into a larger size. There was nothing wrong with the shoes, but your feet had grown. You needed more room.

That is the way it is with our understanding of God's multi-faceted, ever-expanding truths. If we are always seeking truth, we keep growing spiritually. When this happens, our size "1" understanding becomes too tight. So God says, *"You're ready to walk in this size '2' understanding now, and I also want you to increase your solid foods. Try chewing on this piece of roast beef."*

Baby Christians are initially fed on the sincere milk of the Word of God because they cannot chew anything. Babies know only how to suck and swallow. First Peter 2:2 (AMP) tells the new believer: *Like newborn babies you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto [completed] salvation.* Try feeding a baby Christian the stronger meat truths of the crucified flesh, dying to

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self, and submission, and he'll choke. You'll have to thump him on the back and spiritually burp him!

You feed a baby Christian on love, joy, answered prayer, guardian angels, blessings, heaven, etc. He can swallow and survive on spiritual milk for a season. If he tries to stay on milk indefinitely, he will never be more than a baby.

A spiritually mature Christian needs and is trained to chew, swallow, and digest meat without choking. *Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil* (Hebrews 5:13-14, NIV).

One fact about milk and meat reveals an interesting spiritual principle. Spoiled milk might make you sick, but it will rarely kill you. The milk of the Word can be accidentally spoiled when a baby Christian handles it improperly and still not bring spiritual death. We have all known new believers who made seriously wrong decisions based upon their misinterpretations of the Word and still moved on in their relationship with God. They might get a spiritual tummy ache, but a dose of God's liquid grace gets them back on their feet.

Spoiled meat, on the other hand, can kill you. A believer who handles spiritual meat in such a way as to spoil its true meaning, misrepresenting God's standards of holiness and twisting His truth, can bring death. The meat of the Word must be handled with clean hands, pure hearts, and a renewed mind.

Old Mind Sets

Every believer comes to Christ with certain old mind sets of misinformation. If these mind sets are deeply entrenched and resistant to renewal, a believer can come dangerously close to mishandling God's Word. Inside every one of us is a picture of God formed by what we have read, what we have been taught, our personal experiences, and our past memories and feelings. We can actually have two pictures of God: 1) what we should believe about Him and 2) what we actually do believe about Him.

What you have learned about God has had to filter down through the beliefs—right and wrong—which already existed in your mind when you were saved. This fact is not always understood by Christians, lay people, or spiritual leadership. Many in leadership assume scripturally correct teaching will automatically clear up any wrong ideas anyone might have about God. Theoretically, scripturally correct teaching on trust, love, and faith should enable anyone to trust and love God with complete faith. It usually will—eventually.

The problem is this: even scripturally correct truth cannot always penetrate a soul that is filled with stronghold thinking. God can sovereignly impart revelation knowledge any time He wants to, but His work of renewal always occurs within the framework of our minds, wills, emotions, memories, experiences, and beliefs. He does not change, bypass, or override our memories and beliefs; He just keeps offering His love and truth until we finally become willing to exchange our old beliefs and old ideas for them.

An unrenewed mind (rigid in mind sets that have formed from wrong sources) can distort the most beautiful spiritual truth. The Christian's mind is not automatically renewed at the point of new birth. This is why the mind needs to undergo a continuing process of washing in the Word.

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Self-Erected Strongholds

Most minds come into the state of salvation stubbornly filled with old attitudes, wrong patterns of thinking, and some pretty strange ideas. Many of these old ideas and attitudes will be protected by self-erected strongholds. The key to receiving renewal as fast as possible is to tear down the stronghold thinking protecting your wrong mind sets. Unfortunately, some Christians never accomplish this; they just spend their entire lives trying to intermingle their soulish concepts of God with His truth.

Even the Old Testament prophets were subject to hearing certain things through old mind sets. God did not automatically create perfect, undistorted vessels to become His prophets; He worked through people just like you and me. Consider Elijah, the great prophet of fire, who fled into the desert to hide from Jezebel. He had just faced down hundreds of prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel when he called down heavenly fire from above, but something in Elijah caused him to fall apart before Jezebel's threat. He had an old mind set that defeated him when the right circumstance played out.

Many Christians have formed their concept of God from old ideas and personal experiences rather than the truth He has revealed about himself in His Word. This is why some believers never seem to get past believing that God accepts them when they measure up and angrily turns away when they fail. There are untold numbers who have never truly accepted God as a nurturing and loving parent always ready to encourage their restoration and their destiny purposes. They picture Him as saying, "Nope, that's still not good enough." This does not come from God. It comes from an old mind set that keeps them from receiving the truth.

No matter how discouraged you might be right now, you can be free of the old mind sets and distortions in your understanding. Jesus gave all believers the Keys of Kingdom (Matthew 16:19) to tear down and strip away these distortions of the truth. He knew that even though we had forgiveness and the gift of eternal life, we still had to live out our days on this earth. Jesus Christ was well aware that these days would be spent dealing with an enemy who is determined to destroy our relationship with God. Jesus knew we needed the power of truth to overcome this enemy.

He knew that we needed to know that He had experienced pain, want, hunger, fatigue, sorrow and loss. He knew the sting of rejection, animosity, and sarcasm. He knows exactly what life feels like as a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult. We are told in Galatians that in Christ Jesus there is no distinction between male and female (Galatians 3:28). In other words, He knows exactly how both men and women feel. He did not suddenly come into this world as a full-grown Savior, He experienced all of stages of life here on earth which means the child and the teenager can know that Christ understands their feelings, too.

Keys to the Kingdom

I remember seeing a Ziggy cartoon once where Ziggy stood looking in up frustration towards heaven as he said, "It's not easy being mortal, you know!" Jesus knows that. He knows what He experienced as a mortal. He has always known that we would need the Keys of the Kingdom power to overcome our pasts, our unsundered souls, and the devil in order to face our futures.

We have a definite reason for having a future, you know. We are not spiritual experiments here on earth like bugs in a test tube. We are not here to be scored on how well we do as we face all of life's tests. We are here to show God's love to the world. He has given His Son's power and authority to us so that we can.

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Too many in the Church today see themselves in terms of their pasts, their upbringing, their shattered marriages, their lost jobs, their lack of money, etc. They don't see themselves in terms of their potential in Christ. They need brothers and sisters who will say, "You need to see yourself like God sees you. I know a way to pray with you so you can."

The world needs people who will say, "You can turn your discouragement and hurt into an open doorway leading into Jesus Christ's arms and be healed. Or you can let your pain drive you into a blind corner. I know a way we can agree in prayer to help you become whole and strong."

The body of Christ needs people who will say, "You cannot rate God's love or His promises by your unanswered prayers. The problem is not in Him; it is in the manner in which we pray and expect God to respond to our prayers. We so often oppose ourselves. Let me help you pray to agree that God is working right now to bring resolution, resources, and restoration to the situations you are trying to get through."

Don't withhold love and compassion from those who are struggling. But do help them to work on loosing the *whatsoevers* in their lives to help them move into their status as new creatures in Christ. Love them and work with them in prayers of agreement if they will let you. Love them and work for them in prayer if they won't. You can have a strong, positive impact on peoples' lives—even without their cooperation. You can pray very effectively for God's will and purposes and the truth *behind their backs*.

The New Creature Process

The Bible clearly states, in the tenth chapter of Romans, that when we have confessed with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believed in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we are saved. It also states that when we are saved, we are new creatures, free of the guilt and punishment of our past sins. A new creature with old things passed away has the right to be free from the past.

This is truth, and I hope you believe it for exactly what it says. But this truth involves a process and because the enemy of your soul hates truth, he's going to do his best to gum up that process. Once the beautiful excitement of forgiveness, salvation, and your awareness of Jesus settles down into the daily Christian walk, Satan quietly begins to chip away at your new identity.

As believers, we are new creatures in old, unresurrected bodies. We are still in the flesh having unsundered souls and born-again spirits indwelt by the Spirit of God. What a dichotomy! As your new spiritual nature begins to grow in you, the trouble begins. Your old nature is sharply aware that something has suddenly appeared on the scene that could be totally disastrous to the free rein it has held in your life and it responds vehemently. It is no wonder that a Christian can feel totally undone at times!

Still, you can rest confidently in the fact that Jesus has made provision for us to walk into renewal and restoration right here on earth while we are still in these fleshly mortal bodies. Titus 3:5 (NIV) says: *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.* Many have experienced the rebirth, but still hold on tight to their old ways just in case the working out of their renewal gets delayed.

Believers receive all of God's covenant rights that He has for His children, and that includes being able to override Satan and destroy his works. Jesus said this in John 14:12 (*The Message*), *The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on*

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my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it. First John 3:8 tells us that the reason the Son of God appeared on earth was to destroy the devil's works—and He will provide what we need to do the same thing.

This is God's will, but your will has to make a choice to call your life on earth into alignment and agreement with God's will in heaven. God will not force you to do so, but He will help you. *It is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you—energizing and creating in you the power and desire—both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight* (Philippians 2:13, AMP). This is God's plan.

A Hope and a Future

Satan's plan is to drag you down, weighting you with lies and distortions unto the breaking of your will. He strives to convince you that you have no right to sonship with Jesus Christ. He strives to drag you under and prevent you from believing the God who says: *I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future* (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). This Scripture holds the promise of being prospered, having hope, and a future filled with God's good plans. Could anyone resist that? Yes, it is resisted every day by those who are afraid to believe (believers and the non-believers alike) God would do that for them because they are basing their understanding of God upon the negative experiences of their lives.

It is time to get down to the basics of changing and impacting lives for God—your life and other lives—of believers and unbelievers. The following words represent what the Lord has revealed to me as the unpracticed principles of one of His truths. At first it may appear to be in conflict with what you have been taught, but there is no reason for or intent to conflict with other prayer concepts. Rather, this understanding could be called *the rest of the truth*, as Paul Harvey would say. I encourage you to search the Word of God to see whether or not it agrees with what you read in here.

This is an understanding that has come slowly and carefully over many years. God's timing has kept me from running too fast with it and from being tempted to offer it in bits and pieces like buckshot. I have tested and tried this new understanding for years, as have others who wanted to know more about it. The results have been amazing. What I now want to share with you will bring you great freedom and a closer walk with your Lord. It will bring understanding that will strengthen and encourage you. It will enhance the effectiveness of your prayers. You will be able to tear down the stronghold/mental traps you have built.

In 1985, God began to shake my understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:19 (KJV): *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Jesus spoke these words in Matthew 16:19 and again in 18:18, revealing a spiritual principle to those who believed in Him. The word *heaven* as used in this verse is the same Greek word as used in the other Gospels to denote the abode of God. It is the same word used in the references by Jesus to the kingdom of heaven and our Father which is in heaven. Whatsoever we bind on earth (whatsoever covering an infinite scope), shall be bound in the abode of God as well.

Once more: Jesus said *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Matthew 16:19, KJV). Christ's giving of these keys in the first part of this verse represents the giving of permission, authority, and ability to enter into the kingdom of

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heaven to transact spiritual business. The remainder of the verse tells the believer how to transact that spiritual business.

Nearly everyone has heard teachings on binding and loosing, depending upon the church or denomination where you received most of your teaching. The basic teaching I learned illustrated the binding of the devil or evil spirits and the loosing of the Holy Spirit or ministering spirits to go and help a troubled person or to work in a troubled situation. I have also heard this Scripture used as a means to loose a person from bondage.

I moved in a limited understanding of this, but I did not practice it with much assurance. My main problem was that there is no scriptural record of Jesus ever binding an evil spirit or a demon. He either rebuked them or told them to get out—to hit the road. Binding an evil spirit may restrain that spirit's power, but Jesus knew this was not a resolution of the root problem. That would require a different approach. Jesus was more interested in destroying the works of evil spirits. He knew there was a far more beneficial use of binding and loosing.

I began to search for the fullness of the truth of Matthew 16:19 in prayer and from commentaries, lexicons, and study books. I initially found that the Greek word for bind, *deo*, means to bind, be in bonds, knit, fasten, tie, and wind. This word is related to *deomai*, meaning to petition, beseech, make request, and pray. To bind also means to obligate yourself to someone—a really good thing to know when want to corral your unsundered soul and make it submit to God's will.

What should you do with these word studies? Recognize that the word bind is more meaningful than generally thought. It is meant to be used for far more than just tying up an evil spirit.

The Greek word for loose, *luo*, means to loosen, break up, destroy, dissolve, unloose, melt and put off. *Luo* is closely related to *rhegnumi* and *agnumi* which mean to break, wreck, crack to sunder by separation of its parts, shatter to minute fragments, disrupt, lacerate, convulse, burst, rend and tear. Now those are words a prayer warrior can get into!

Reconsider the idea of loosing the Holy Spirit or ministering spirits to intervene in a difficult situation. What in the world would you loose the Holy Spirit from, anyway? He's about as free and unfettered as anyone could ever be. Jesus didn't call down or dispatch angels when He was in His most troubled time in the Garden of Gethsemane, but He said the Father would if He asked Him to. In Matthew 26:53 (*The Message*), He said to His disciples: *Don't you realize that I am able right now to call to my Father, and twelve companies—more, if I want them—of fighting angels would be here, battle-ready?*

I didn't really understand the ramifications of these definitions at first, so I took my dilemma to several who taught on spiritual warfare and prayer. I was told I didn't understand, I had a wrong interpretation, and I was probably headed for trouble. That did not exactly inspire me to continue along this vein! So I checked and rechecked the references again, prayed about them, and it still looked like there was something important there even if no one else saw it yet. As I was not eager to pursue or promote what might be construed as wrong doctrine, I backed away from the understanding for some time.

Still, the thoughts continued to gently simmer in my spirit. In early 1988, the Lord caused me to browse through a book of an internationally known Bible teacher I have always respected. I found that he also disagreed with the general interpretation of binding and loosing that I had been taught. I am fully aware this is not the best reason for surrendering to a new revelation, but this

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was the push I needed. I repented of my doubt and fear of rejection and asked God to enlarge my understanding. I was finally ready to stop seeking understanding from others and listen to Him.

I was ready to seek the whole truth. In the next chapter, I want to talk about how often we fail to search for the whole truth.

SUMMARY of Chapter 1

1. Every believer has an equal privilege and is worthy to receive from God because he or she is in Jesus Christ.
2. God does not desire to withhold any good thing from you. The devil cannot keep any good thing from you. Only you can oppose your receiving.
3. You can stop opposing yourself by stripping off, tearing down, and moving out the trappings of your old nature (your unsundered soul), enlarging your capacity to receive.
4. Every believer comes to Christ with certain mind sets of misinformation. The mind is not instantly renewed at the moment of new birth.
5. Scripturally-correct teaching will not automatically clear up wrong ideas. Truth can be twisted when it has to filter its way through a mind filled with strongholds.
6. Elijah, the prophet of fire, had at least one wrong mind set and stronghold that caused him to run and hide when the right circumstances played out.
7. Jesus has given us the Keys to dealing with all of our stronghold thinking and mental traps—they are found in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18.

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