

1. I am preaching today during the week in which a justice of the Supreme Court of the US has died. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Whatever you think of her judicial record, she was created in the image of God, and God loved her.
2. I think her deep friendship with the late Justice Scalia, her judicial polar opposite, is a great model for all the conflicting ideologies in our country today. And the way Justice Ginsberg welcomed the embattled Brett Kavanaugh to the high court is a beautiful example of classiness and grace.
3. I pray for her family, her colleagues, her friends. Christ died for her. I hope and pray that somewhere in her life, she had heard the way of salvation and took it. We never know...
4. Every time I come face to face with someone's passing, I can't help but hope that the person is now with the Lord.
5. It is not popular to say it, but there are two destinies, heaven or hell, and what a person does with Jesus Christ in this lifetime determines their destiny forever.
6. There is a fire in my belly today for evangelism. My job is to light that fire in you too. God loves lost people and he wants them found. Urgently. Passionately. Today.
  1. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)*
7. The unflinching revelation of the Word of God is that.
8. Why? Because we are Christians. There is a war going on, and we need weapons.
  1. The war is a spiritual war, not a shooting war. The war is a war of ideas, not a physical war for territory or turf.
  2. The battle is the battle for the mind. It is the battle for the soul of a city; the soul of a culture.
  3. In this battle, the highest priority mission for us is the pulling down of strongholds.
9. This is why we are launching our Sixty Degrees event next month, and I want to ask you to put all your heart and soul into this thing.
10. First, I want to talk about what a stronghold is. Then I want to talk about what strongholds we are facing today. And then how do we pull them down.

### I. Strongholds

- A. A stronghold is basically a fortress. This verse was part of a letter. The letter was written by St Paul to the Christians in the town of Corinth. The Corinthians were very familiar with strongholds.
- B. The shipping lanes were studded with strongholds — rocky fortresses overlooking the ships passing below. These rocky fortresses were built and maintained by pirates. They would come running out of these fortresses, board their fast ships, and do what pirates do to transport ships out at sea.
- C. Every so often, the authorities would go out to these shipping lanes and tear down the strongholds, and send the pirates running.
- D. Paul uses this familiar historical reality to communicate a less familiar spiritual reality.
- E. The spiritual reality was a battle over ideas. It was truth vs lies, reality vs unreality, good vs evil, and doctrines of God vs doctrines of demons. Spiritual warfare.
- F. Here's the important thing. The important thing is that these lies, unrealities, evil ideation, and doctrines of demons... these insanely dangerous ideas were more than just bad ideas.
  1. They were *constructed* ideas. They were entire systems, and philosophies, and structures. They included thoughts, ideas, arguments, truth-claims, instincts, emotions, opinions... all these things were locked together like Legos.
  2. What is a stronghold?
    - a) *A stronghold is deeply entrenched human reasoning, built over a lifetime, reinforced by repetition, deepened by emotion, confirmed by consensus, and corrupted by the devil's lies.*
  3. So, a stronghold is a person's worldview. It is their philosophy of life, and their conception of the world.
- G. Here's the important thing: to people who hold them, *strongholds feel normal*, even though they are infected through and through with demonic lies.
- H. The devil's lies are firmly entrenched. Paul called them the "doctrines of demons." These strongholds have been firmly guarded for millennia. They present a great wall of resistance against God's truth...
- I. So it was when Paul wrote to the Corinthians.
  1. In Corinth, their stronghold was *a religious stronghold*, with the temple of Aphrodite high above on a rock called the Acrocorinth, and at least twelve major pagan temples.
  2. Their stronghold was also *a sexual stronghold*, with over 1,000 priests and priestesses of the gods, engaging in ritual prostitution, and drawing visitors from the whole region.
  3. In fact an ancient pagan writer named Aristophanes, coined the term *Korinthiazomai*, which meant to be addicted to fornication.
  4. The Corinthian stronghold was *a strung out stronghold*, as the people were known for getting drunk and staying drunk. Another pagan writer (Strabo) wrote, "All Corinthians gorge themselves."
  5. Kay Arthur says, "The Corinthians ate well, satisfied their sexual urges without condemnation, flirted with the wisdom of men."
- J. And yet, inside that highly deceived city, there was a cadre of Christians.
- K. And even though that church was pretty messed up, when the great missionary Paul wrote to them, he told them to go out and pull down strongholds.
  1. *Part of proclaiming the gospel is dismantling the misconceptions and preconceptions that nullify the gospel in our listeners' minds.*
- L. That is what Sixty Degrees is all about.
  1. We are going to dismantle misconceptions.
  2. We are going to deconstruct preconceptions.
- M. So that the gospel can get a fair hearing. When I say gospel, I mean the saving work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection plus ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. This gospel is the power of God.
- N. We have God's own divine Word, the Scriptures, to cast down arguments, and to pull down all the conceited philosophies that your friends throw at you as reasons they don't believe.
- O. So what are the main strongholds we face today?

1. I'd like to create a mini worldview catalog — these are strongholds that stand in the way of the gospel today, strongholds that we need to pull down.

## II. A Basic Catalog of Strongholds

### A. SECULARISM

1. Secularism is what happens when nice people live decent lives without meaningful reference to God.
2. The word secular comes from the Latin word for the opposite of church. It means unchurchy. Worldly. Godless.
  - a) Secular is the opposite of sacred.
  - b) Secular people would describe themselves as spiritual. They would say they are good people, and they are. They would care about a few important causes. And they might be loving people and really good friends.
  - c) They are simply devoid of Jesus, the Bible, and God in their everyday lives.
3. By this definition, a whole lot of Americans would fit the profile of secularism. This is our society's main operating system.
4. Secularism does not mean a person is anti-God or an atheist. It does not mean a person is evil or a bad person. It simply means they are determined to keep God separate from culture, separate from life, separate from schools, and separate from everything.
  - a) To the secularist, God is okay, as long as we get to shove him out the door and nobody says Merry Christmas.
5. Secularism is the most appealing, and seemingly the most enlightened, and easygoing stronghold ever spit up from the belly of the beast of hell.
  - a) *Secularism is rebellion against God as practiced by nice people who write him out of the story of their lives.*
    - (1) Secularism is the gateway drug to atheism
    - (2) Secularism is the father of evolution.
    - (3) Secularism is the executioner of any concept of humankind created in of the image of God
    - (4) Therefore secularism is the Terminator of the sacredness of life, even if your secular friends have not yet thought it through.
      - (a) Everything that demeans, and degrades, and diminishes human life is spewed forth by a seemingly sophisticated and very well dressed agent of Beelzebub named secularism.
      - (b) Only the gospel and the word of God by the spirit of God can tear down this stronghold, and deliver its devotees from its spell.

### B. POST-MODERNISM

1. Agree or disagree: some things are true, and some things are false. Not any more.
2. Post-modernism started out as the stronghold of conceited university professors, but has now slithered its way into pre-school and everything else.
3. What is it?
  - a) *Post-modernism is the stronghold that has shoved real truth, true truth, or absolute truth out the back door. In the painful vacuum left behind, postmodernism declares that individuals and societies can create their own truth, their own absolutes, and their own right and wrong. It's okay if this doesn't make sense to you, because what do you know?*
4. In a speech before the United Nations Prayer Breakfast, Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias, described driving past the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University. He noted the unusual architecture, and was told that it was "America's first postmodern building." His host explained that it was designed "with no design in mind" to reflect the fickleness of life. The building has stairways leading nowhere, columns coming down without touching the floor, a crazy girder system supporting the roof, and pillars holding up nothing.
5. Ravi asked his host, "So [the architect's] argument was that, if life has no purpose and design, why should the building have any design?" His host told him he was correct.
6. Then Ravi asked a question that could only be answered with embarrassed silence: "Did he do the same with the foundation?"
7. This Wexner Center is named after Les Wexner, a multi-billionaire. You may have heard of him. If you have, it's probably through a person who's made a lot of news lately. Mr. Wexner turned over his mansion, his yacht, the management of his wealth, and much of his vast estate to a heavily demonized (my opinion) man named Jeffrey Epstein.
8. Yes, ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have horrible consequences and strongholds allow demons to sally forth to devour lives that are sacred to God.
9. These philosophies are not abstractions. They are concrete operating systems for hosts of people who pull the reins of power in our everyday lives.
10. The stronghold of postmodernism has given birth to a few monstrous babies.

### C. PLURALISM

1. *The stronghold that no religion or philosophy can call itself truth or superior, because mutually contradictory ideas can be equally valid and true.*

### D. SUBJECTIVISM

1. *The stronghold that I define my own truth, my own right and wrong, and my own ultimate values, by looking within, thus making myself my own god.*

### E. SEXUAL REVOLUTION 2.0

1. *The stronghold that disconnects a person's sexuality from their biology, and their sexual expression from their emotional health, making sexuality just as much a social construct as the rest of their ideas.*

### F. CRITICAL THEORIES

1. *The stronghold putting all people past redemption by defining all as co-conspirators in power systems designed to oppress marginalized peoples. Critical theories require the overthrow of the established order so that a new world of justice — powered by vengeance — can be built.*
2. Yes, there is a lot that's wrong in society, but these critical theories only make them doubly wrong. Jesus Christ can make us all one, but he won't do it by these critical theories, or by the power of turning brother against brother and sister against sister.

3. Christ reconciles a person to God first, and then only after that does he, by his Spirit, reconcile us to one another.

4. He will do it by the power of a new birth and the new creation, through his shed blood alone.

G. *NEW SPIRITUALITY (NEW CONSCIOUSNESS)*

1. Spiritualism is a really common stronghold. It has infected art, entertainment, Hollywood, schools, everything. When people want to be secular, but don't want religion, they turn to new spirituality.

2. New spirituality is a catch all term, and manifests its ugly lie in a whole bunch of lies.

3. When somebody you know is into new spirituality, they say things like this:

a) *Our thoughts are with you.* Instead of saying, I'll pray for you, they can only send out good thoughts and prayers.

b) I had a man on an airplane — a pilot who was going along for the ride — tell me about his really nice house in Hawaii, and then he said, *"I really manifested something great there."*

c) They might say, *"The universe is really taking care of me... Or, the universe really protected me."*

4. New spirituality believes in spirits, but doesn't know how to define them. Believes in an afterlife, but only by being absorbed into a cosmic consciousness. Believes that all roads lead to god, however he or she is defined (that's our next stronghold).

5. New Spirituality takes a lot of forms, from Marvel's revival of mythology, to yin and yang, to reincarnation, to sci-fiction. The Force is a play on new spirituality.

6. What is it?

a) *New Spirituality is a stronghold making a god out of self by deifying human consciousness, and projecting human fantasies and desires into a transcendent and future realm.*

7. It has a couple of babies too:

H. *UNIVERSALISM... The stronghold assuming that all roads lead to God, and that whatever salvation there might be is automatic.*

I. *ULTRA-TOLERANCE... The stronghold that everybody can be right except for Christians based on the irrational denial of the Principle of Non-Contradiction.*

1. New spirituality is demon worship no matter how you spin it. It denies an infinite supreme being, a God who had a Son who paid the ultimate price to redeem fallen humankind. I could go on.

2. New Spirituality bows the knee to the devil, who is called the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4).

3. And it worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator of all.

a) One more stronghold for today.

J. *UTOPIANISM*

1. The Emerald City. Shangri-La. Atlantis. Camelot. Wakanda. The Shire. Asgard. Avalon. The human heart longs for perfect society and has created plenty of mythological ones. Ever since Adam and Eve exited the Garden of Eden, our hearts have longed to return.

2. But Paradise was lost — not simply the physical place, but even more importantly, the Paradise of intimate fellowship with God.

3. Can we return? Some say yes, and apply their efforts to create Utopia. The Bible, however, presents a pessimistic picture of worldly society as long as it remains without the personal presence of Jesus.

a) *Utopianism is the stronghold that humans, working together, can usher in a period of perfect peace and prosperity and can make the world a better place without God. Utopian socialism unwittingly plays into the devil's hands.*

4. The opposite of Utopia is dystopia. There are a lot of movies with dystopian futures: The Hunger Games, Mad Max, The Matrix, the Divergent movies, Mazerunner... Even Wall-E. In a dystopian future, societies completely break down and turn nasty.

5. But Utopia can never happen.

a) The Bible declares this world is fallen, and so is every single bright person who will rule our utopian paradise.

b) The Bible declares that sin in our hearts makes Utopia impossible, because even the best of us will still use power to take advantage of one another. Society cannot erase sin.

c) The Bible declares that apart from the personal return of Jesus Christ, the second coming, and the millennial reign of Christ, there can ever be a heaven on earth.

d) Without denying that we are salt in the earth, we can never forget this:

(1) *The primary mission of the church on earth is the mission of saving souls for eternity, not fixing society for a while.*

6. People need Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is first, this is primary, this is foremost.

7. This is the main thing, and this is the thing that so many Christians have forgotten... and the fruit of that is the chaos we see now.

a) *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)*

b) This is the obedience to the gospel.

c) This is the obedience to a God who now commands all people everywhere to repent — meaning to tear down the strongholds that keep them from being saved.

(1) Which brings me back to...

III. *Sixty Degrees*

A. The name and logo: a triangle to remind us of our God, and each corner has 60 degrees.

B. The purpose is to build on the incredible things God has done this summer...

1. Over 500 of us rededicating our lives to Christ, and saying a prayer of consecration.

2. Over 270 prayer walkers going out to pray for over 53,000 homes, and 100,000 people to be saved.

3. We have gone out and served over 7,000 households in the name of Jesus.

4. We have given over \$70,000 to help stop sex trafficking in Thailand, and to bring the gospel of Christ to deaf kids who are trapped in that trade.

a) And as I said last time that was just the warm up for the main event.

C. The main event starts in 17 days from today.

© 2020 Bill Giovannetti. All Rights Reserved. Permission gladly given for free copying and distribution with this notice intact.

[www.pathwaychurch.life](http://www.pathwaychurch.life)

1. *The Goal is salvations*, will you join me in praying that 1,000 men, women and kids come to meet Jesus as their Savior.
  - a) You know that last time, I was struggling to set this goal. It was either going to be 200 or 1,000.
  - b) But I didn't want to fail...
  - c) But this week, I read this from J.I. Packer: "We must remember that the terms of our calling are that we should be faithful, not that we should be successful."
  - d) I though, okay, a thousand it is.
2. *The Emphasis is apologetics*. Apologetics is the art and science of showing how our faith makes sense. In other words our goal will be to dismantle strongholds of unbelief!
3. *Our Program will be 8 meetings*, starting October 7, 24 days. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
4. *Our Style will be something like TED talks...* Instead of one long talk, there's been several short talks. Each talk no longer than 18 minutes. Each event even will have short talks from guest speakers and from me...
  - a) Justin Brierley will speak on...
    - (1) Why God makes sense of existence
    - (2) Why God makes sense of you
    - (3) Why you can take the resurrection seriously
    - (4) Why, after 15 years of talking with atheists, I'm still a Christian.
  - b) Jon McCray will speak on
    - (1) Christian Faith and False Expectations
    - (2) Is There Really Only One True Religion?
    - (3) Can People Build Their Own Religion?
    - (4) What I've learned from Talking Regularly with Atheists
  - c) My topics will be
    - (1) Christianity's Unbeatable Logic
    - (2) Christianity's Undeniable Person
    - (3) Evolution's Unanswerable Objection
    - (4) Plus... wrap-ups
    - (5) There will be testimonies from Brad Fulton and Fei Xei.
    - (6) There will be apologetics short videos
  - d) We've had our students submit questions that keep their from Christ...
    - (1) How do you know God is real? Why do bad things happen? Why did God allow sin into the world?

#### IV. Five things you should know:

- A. We expect you to pray for and invite fiends and family members who don't know Christ. Winners of souls must first be weepers of souls.
- B. We are going to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for people who feel weird coming to church. As part of that...
- C. We are going to use mainly secular music on the weeknight events. Why? Because they don't get it when Christians start clapping and waving their arms and singing love songs to Jesus. But there are some really good secular songs that ask important questions about life and human value and worth. We want to build bridges to the minds of secular people and win a hearing for the gospel.
  1. Don't get all upset about this and don't go all Christian judgy on me, this is my call. Don't email me.
  2. On the two Sundays, however, you will hear Christian music as always.
- D. We are going to do outdoor services, with massive amounts of seating, because we will be using a Jumbotron.
- E. We need you to pray, starting now, for Sixty Degrees to be mightily used of God. Much prayer, much power.

#### V. Conclusion

- A. It is said that Satan once called to him the emissaries of hell and said he wanted to send one of them to earth to aid women and men in the ruination of their souls.
- B. He asked which one would want to go.
  1. One creature came forward and said, "I will go." Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"
    - a) He said, "I will tell the children of men that there is no heaven."
    - b) Satan said, "They will not believe you, for there is a bit of heaven in every human heart. In the end everyone knows that right and good must have the victory. You may not go."
  2. Then another came forward, darker and fouler than the first. Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?"
    - a) He said, "I will tell them there is no hell."
    - b) Satan looked at him and said, "Oh, no; they will not believe you, for in every human heart there's a thing called conscience, an inner voice which testifies to the truth that not only will good be triumphant, but that evil will be defeated. You may not go."
  3. Then one last creature came forward, this one from the darkest place of all. Satan said to him, "And if I send you, what will you say to women and men to aid them in the destruction of their souls?"
    - a) He said, "I will tell them there is no hurry."
    - b) Satan said, "Go!"
      - (1) (from Bruce Theilemann)
- C. Lord, give us hearts of compassion for lost souls, groping in darkness, and a readiness to roll up our sleeves to do what it takes to cast down strongholds, and let in the light of the triumph of the Crucified One.