

Message

of the Open Bible

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Breaking Strongholds



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

"It's as if the land were cursed." The statement often made about Haiti is understandable. Although it shares the same island as

the Dominican Republic, Haiti is the most unstable and poorest country in the Western hemisphere – despite millions in foreign aid and the work of thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Dominican Republic, on the other hand, enjoys relative prosperity.

Having just returned from the island, I can attest to deplorable living conditions in Haiti. It's almost as if the earthquake of January 2010 happened yesterday. Tents everywhere, rubble, broken roads, chaotic traffic, a severe lack of basic services. Yet we observed godly pastors and many others who spend every waking minute in a valiant attempt to meet the spiritual and physical needs of their communities.

I would hate to think these pastors' efforts were in vain because of a supposed "pact with the devil" long ago. Yet I would offer that many of Haiti's challenges are caused by their current practice of voodoo. Even though Roman Catholicism is considered the "official" religion of Haiti, most Haitians practice some form of voodoo as well, mixing it with Catholicism and other religions. The belief system of voodoo revolves around "family spirits" who are inherited through maternal and paternal lines.

In contrast, although many Americans do not love the Lord with all their "heart," "soul," and "strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4), for the most part, we are blessed that our country's guiding principles have been biblically influenced.

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Your

sin. My sin. It clutches us in its grip and drags us mercilessly to the grave. Nobody *plans* to be a drug addict, or a murderer, or a porn addict. Even the biblical Sampson, though supernaturally strong, was overpowered by his addiction to sex and power.

Growing up I often thought about ways to take my life. This did not seem unusual to me as others in my extended family had attempted suicide. I never acted on the thought. After all, I was a Christian, and I didn't want to cause someone else to stumble. But the obsession taunted me, especially when I felt alone, which was a lot. Once the only thing that kept me from acting on my impulse was the fact that by then I had a son, and I just could not abandon him.

One Sunday when my children were very young, in a service at Open Bible Christian Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, Pastor Les Potts talked about strongholds in our lives. These weren't the fleeting temptations we experience from time to time, but the obsessions we just can't seem to escape, those "familiar spirits" that attach themselves to you. These familiar or "family" spirits seem to pass down to other generations. At the end of the service Les had people stand if they wanted to be free from strongholds like pornography, drug addiction, anger, and...suicidal thoughts. In spite of what people thought, I had to stand. Pastor Potts then verbally denounced the strongholds in the lives of all those standing and declared us free by the blood of Jesus Christ.

I don't know what I expected. But the obsession was gone. I never again seriously contemplated taking my life, and I had yet to face some of my toughest battles. Bondages can be broken. I believe that for you. I believe that for Haiti.

Andrea
Andrea Johnson,
Managing Editor

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