



Do Not Give the Enemy a Foothold Plan



Aim

- To identify our weak areas, using the idea of footholds and/or arrow wounds.
- To see how to become stronger

Key verse

Do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:27 NIV / Do not give the devil a way to defeat you NCV

Stop all the burning arrows/ fiery darts of the Evil One. Ephesians 6:16 NCV/NLT

Bible verses

Romans 12:21	Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good. CEB
1 John 1:9	If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful ...to forgive us... to cleanse us
Psalms 19:12-14	cleanse me from hidden faults – don't let sin control me
Psalms 51:1-2, 7-10	v.10 create in me a clean heart NLT (pure)
Psalms 147:3	He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. NCV
Isaiah 61:1-3	He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted... and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. NIV
Jeremiah 30:17	'I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, NIV
Ephesians 5:18	Be filled with the Holy Spirit

Programme

Games & Interactive Ideas

Any game that can be used to introduce the idea of holes or footholds or where you have to catch or get hold of something, for example:

- Apple bobbing: this game is traditionally played at Halloween. Fill a large bowl with water and a few apples. They have to put their head in the water and try to pick up an apple. It demonstrates not being able to get a foot (tooth) hold on the apple. (*I always had to put my whole head in the bowl and push the apple to the bottom to get a grip on it.*)
- Battleships – once you have scored one hit on a ship, it is easier to score other hits. *Rules page 5*
- Oil the lid of a small jar and see if anyone can open it.
- Arrow making: Make some arrows from paper, twigs, lollypop sticks etc. What type of arrow hurts you the most easily?
- Sporty games like walking on pots with string attached to lift them with.

Perhaps later on when you get to the meaningful stage of the session, ask – 'Do you ever feel like that pot, pressurized by a heavy foot and manipulated by strings?'

Introduction

➤ What kinds of holes or footholds can you think of that can cause a problem?

Potholes in roads

Crevices used in rock climbing

What would be easy to climb? Craggy rock with plenty of crevices for hand and footholds

What would be hard to climb?

Holes in teeth causing toothache

Hole in the hull of a ship or spaceship

In science fiction when the hull of a space ship is breached, an invisible force field may become activated.

Some holes are made through a sudden sharp impact. Other holes are made as a result of slow steady erosion – people or situations that annoy you in little ways, but the irritation builds up. Once a hole is made it easily gets worse.

Footholds / Arrows

Do not give the devil a foothold. / Stop all the burning arrows of the Evil One. Ephesians 4:27 / 6:16

There are 2 ways in which the enemy can get a hold in our lives -

1. We reach out and dabble in things that are not good for us.

This creates a foothold / weakness the enemy can use to step into our lives and gain more ground. He can find a 'foothold' in us in the same way as you might find a foothold in a rock face. This is often something that we struggle with, or where we sometimes find ourselves getting carried away. Once you have found a foothold in a rock face, you can go further, climb higher. Similarly, once the enemy has found a 'foothold' in us, he can continue to bring us down in that way and then in other ways.

2. When something hurts us, it's like an arrow (or bullet) that finds its target and wounds us.

In the museum near the site of the Battle of Agincourt (1415) there is a large display of arrows. You would be surprised at how many different ways an arrow tip can be made in order to give maximum possible damage to its target. It does not always kill but it can seriously wound. When painful things happen to us, it creates an emotional wound. This can also create a foothold that gives the enemy the chance to make our lives more difficult.

➤ What would happen to a wound that was left untreated?

It easily becomes infected. The wound then festers.

It will not heal properly like this. It becomes a vulnerable place that can easily be hurt again.

In the same way, when we are hurting, bugs such as bitterness, rejection and unforgiveness can start to grow. It's the perfect environment for them.

Once we have been wounded in a certain area, it is easier for us to be hurt there again. This can cause us to over react to certain things that touch a sensitive spot or 'push our buttons'.

Discuss & Identify Real Life Problems

The arrows or footholds vary according to our temperament, personal weaknesses and past history. If the enemy can use a bad habit or open up an old wound, he will go for it.

➤ What sort of footholds/arrow wounds are in your life? Discuss or write down privately.

Possibilities include:

- Fears – Top ones include fear of rejection, of failure, of change...
- Guilt; feelings of being judged and useless
- Anger, resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness
- Jealousy
- Strong desire for physical pleasures such as food, drink, sex etc.
- Desire for power, control, influence
- Reading/watching unhelpful stuff
- Painful memories
- Things connected with the occult

Dealing with Footholds and Arrow Wounds – Prayer Ministry Time

➤ How would you get rid of a foothold, or potholes in a road or toothache?

Anything that is rotten or in the way, has to be removed

Then you fill the remaining hole with something good.

The quicker you act, the easier it is to keep the remainder healthy.

➤ How would we deal with an arrow/bullet wound?

A doctor needs to remove any pieces of arrow / bullet / shrapnel.

The wound needs to be cleaned thoroughly to kill any infection.

He then stitches up the wound to prevent further loss of blood and allow it to heal.

(Wounds can take time to heal so be patient when others are hurting.)

Ok, so we need the Holy Spirit to help us here.

- Confess any unhealthy activities, bad habits, failures to God. Tell him what you struggle with. Remember that God already knows everything there is to know about you so you have nothing to lose in being honest with him. Tell a friend or leader as well if it helps.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful ...to forgive us... to cleanse us

Psalm 19:12-13

How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?

Cleanse me from these hidden faults.

Keep your servant from deliberate sins!

Don't let them control me.

Psalm 51:1-2

God, be merciful to me because you are loving.

Because you are always ready to be merciful, wipe out all my wrongs.

Wash away all my guilt and make me clean again. NCV

- Where you have been hurt, confess any sins that have been breeding in the open wound.
- Ask God to heal you by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus.

Psalm 51: 7, 10

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. NLT

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 147:3 He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds. NCV

Isaiah 61:1-3 He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted... to comfort all who mourn,... to bestow on them ... the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. NIV

Jeremiah 30:17 'But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD,
'because you are called an outcast... for whom no one cares.' NIV

- Be filled with the Holy Spirit instead. Ephesians 5:18
Think of the holes in your life as spaces that the Holy Spirit can fill and make even stronger than anywhere else.

Discuss: How can you maintain this?

In old times, if you crossed a battlefield, there would be arrows flying everywhere. A trained, experienced archer could fire 8 arrows a minute! That's one every 7½ seconds - which is about the time it takes to fire off a quick insult. Arrows often come in the form of words. "Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword" and "the tongue has the power of life and death¹". Life can be like crossing a battlefield and some arrows will find you. Hold onto your shield of faith, believing what God says about you rather than what people say about you (in haste, or anger or misjudgement).

- Walk away from anything you know could be a problem to you – make positive choices here, to actively avoid that thing.
- Spend your time usefully. There is an old saying 'the devil makes work for idle hands'. Win the battle for the mind. Give your mind positive things to think about.
You could try the following to tackle negative thoughts:
 - Think of a bad thought as an arrow headed straight for a vulnerable spot. YOU have the power to deflect it.
 - Try a 'Jedi' technique and brush it aside with "That is not the thought I'm looking for"
 - Think of a bad thought, as a pesky mosquito that wants to land and suck blood!
- Be careful that you don't fire hurtful arrows into other people's lives. Even a joke can have a 'sting in the tail'.

¹ Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 18:21 NIV

Prayer Activity

If you made arrows, use them for a prayer activity. Write your hurts and failures on them and then break the arrow to remind you that God has broken the power of that arrow in your life.

Extra

As a follow up to this you could look at 'Joseph – It Wasn't all Dreams Come True' which looks at struggling to forgive.

Bible bits (*perhaps for reading during the week*)

- Take a look at the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness in Matthew 4
 - What does it tell us:
 - About the devil
 - About how Jesus dealt with the devil?
 - Why does God allow us to be tempted? (James 1:12-15)
 - When are we most likely to be tempted?
- There's a lot of advice in Ephesians 4 – 6. Identify both the footholds and the fillers
- Look at the Armour of God in Ephesians 6:10-18.
- How can you work at building a Christian character? Read Romans 12:1-3, 9-21
- Look at what the Bible says about our use of words. Start with Psalm 52:2; Proverbs 15:4; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 10:11; Matthew 12:33-35

Credits**Bible translations**

NCV = New Century Version®

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NLT = New Living Translation

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NIV = New International Version

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