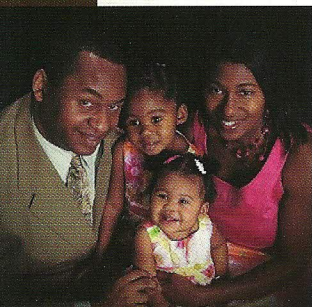


Breaking Out of ALCATRAZ

By j. d. stegall



j. d. stegall loves getting to know Jesus better through reading and studying His Word and praising His name. He says, "It is important to know and love Him with all my heart, soul, and strength so I can be the best husband and father to

my wonderful wife and kids. j. d. and his family attend Experience Church of the Open Bible in Des Moines, Iowa.

Throughout the decades, many have tried to break out of the infamous prison called "The Rock," or Alcatraz, and often ended up losing their life in the frigid waters near the Golden Gate Bridge. Dummies, life preservers, and vacuum cleaner motors used as drills were all used to try and escape, but in the end no freedom was found.

Nonetheless, a much more formidable prison lies within the jail cell of a Christian's mind, one that no one can see but you yourself.

Satan has deceived the world into calling good evil – and evil good. Therefore he becomes the warden of our mind – the one who keeps us desensitized to the words of truth that can set us free. Can we break out of this spiritual Alcatraz or are we doomed to end up like so many who tried to conquer the physical Rock?

birthday cake, so are Christians who simply wish their problems away without taking action. Some Christians smoke or do drugs while secretly wishing an angel would appear and snatch the cigarette or pipe from their mouths. In the twinkling of an eye, they want to be purged with "hot coals" to the lips, like in the book of Isaiah.

Some may be trapped in sexual sin, yet refuse to give up the soap operas, raunchy movies, and sitcoms that glorify what is lude and crude.

We sit on the couch dreaming about financial security, watching pulpit pimps prostitute the gospel for money, and then believe God will magically drop a pot of fool's gold into our laps.

Laziness never freed anyone from anything. *C'mon church, we're better than that.* Whether the bondage is bad financial habits, lying, sexual sin, controlled substances, or matters of the



BONDAGE SO SUBTLE

A group of little boys huddled around a lost puppy, pondering which of them would get to claim him and take him home. They decided whoever among them was the best liar would win the prized pup.

Each boy came up with his best whopper, longing to win the prize. Just then, a pastor happened to be walking by. Overhearing the boys tales he scolded, "I can't believe you young fellows would be making up lies like this. Why, when I was your age, I *never* lied. We based *everything* on honesty and integrity. Honesty was *always* the best policy."

The boys all stared at each other wide eyed. Reluctantly and unanimously, with frowns on their faces, they declared, "He's the winner," and stuffed the little puppy into the pastor's arms.

A lying tongue is just one of the things God hates, for it can get you in a world of trouble. Like the old adage goes, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can get you sued." So many Christians are in bondage to the lies and evil that come out of their mouth they think it's normal.

Like children blowing out candles on a

heart, a person needs more than *willpower* to get free.

FREE AT LAST

The first step is to admit the problem. The Bible does us no good if we try to read it like a Burger King menu, wanting to "have it our way." We must spend time with Jesus by following the rule of Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart out of your mouth; meditate on it day and night," so you will be able to do what's in it. Romans 6 explains that we are dead to our sins and alive in Christ when we truly trust and give our burdens to Him.

We must commit to getting extreme with the situation that has enslaved us. Matthew 18:9 says, "If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out." This may mean abandoning friends or even family, getting rid of all electronic devices, getting a personal financial counselor, or not going to go to certain places anymore.

When we do these things we realize that in our weakness *His* strength is perfected. Then the Lord can help us swim to safety as he successfully frees us from the Alcatraz of our minds.

