

SHOULD YOU GO TO A DELIVERANCE MINISTRY? Part 1

This is a challenging blog to write for I know there will be disagreement. It's also difficult because I want to express my feelings just right. But it's been on my heart and I know I need to address this subject. God has used deliverance ministries greatly in many lives. I have seen it happen. But God led me in my spiritual warfare ministry in a bit of a different direction and I want to share that with you. First some background.

I have been involved in spiritual warfare ministries for over 40 years. I have done a lot of teaching, writing, counseling and studying the subject. My early exposure and involvement was more as a typical deliverance minister, but God has clearly led me to see spiritual warfare more as a tool in discipleship and spiritual growth. It should be a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Many times, people call or email me wanting me to perform deliverance for them. I try to explain that only Jesus can deliver. I can pray for them and with them. I can counsel them as to how to find deliverance in Jesus. But I cannot command demons to be gone by my ability. I don't try. The Bible warns that if a demon is removed but the house is not filled with God's presence seven worse demons will come back (Matthew 12:43-45). Just removing a demon is not our goal.

We know that God is sovereign and Satan can only do what God allows. We see that in the book of Job where Satan had to have God's approval to attack Job. God always has a purpose for allowing demonic attack as he did with Job. The same is true of Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

When working with people who are being demonically attacked I try to counsel them and lead them to overcome issues in their life in order to help them see why God might be allowing the attack and what He wants to teach them about it. They need to know these things in order to close any 'doors' that are open and which allow demons to work. I believe this counseling is very important. Understanding the underlying causes is essential to close those doors and keep even more demons from working against the person.

I do not recommend public delivered sessions or mass deliverance meetings. Any kind of 'deliverance' that is preceded by training about what is happening and not followed up with counseling and discipleship training is lacking. If the demons do leave, it can be just to come back later and make things worse. I don't doubt they sometimes do leave, but unless that which allows them access is taken care of they will just be back. Sometimes they leave just to make it seem like the deliverance is working, but slip back in later and establish a much stronger foothold in the person. Then the person often thinks that deliverance failure is their fault, or the fault of the one administering deliverance. Thus, they end up in a much worse state than before.

Until God's reason for allowing the oppression is completed, there will not be total freedom. God always allows it for a reason – for our growth and for His glory. For Paul, it was a lifelong situation used to bring glory to God. He never found deliverance from demonic attack, but God did promise grace to endure the demonic affliction (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

I know some might say Paul was not demon possessed, and claim believers cannot be demon possessed. But the Bible never talks about demon possession or oppression. It only talks about "demonizing," being strongly influenced by a demon. Using the word "possession" only brings confusion and misunderstanding. Believers still have a sin nature and the capacity to sin just as much as they did before salvation. This is where demons do their work, whatever it is. No matter the details of how it all works (oppression, possession, inside or outside), Christians are not immune to these attacks. The cause of the demonic influence, in or out, as well as the cure is the same. It just gives believers false assurance by telling them they can't be possessed. We can be attacked and influenced just as strongly as an unbeliever. But that's another subject which I have already blogged about.

My concern is that some people look for a shortcut or an instant cure if they feel they're under demonic attack. There are usually other factors in their lives that need to be dealt with as well as demonic activity. Making Satan the scapegoat for it all prevents them from learning and growing in other areas God wants them to deal with. Their focus becomes on Satan and their own struggles instead of on Jesus which is where it needs to be. This actually strengthens demonic power over them and tightens the bondage.

Be especially aware of those promising exorcism who are not true born-again, blood-bought, Spirit filled children of God. There are demonic exorcisms done by Hindus, Mormons, Catholics and others. Pagan and witchcraft cultures also claim to be able to drive out demons. We know they are not doing it Biblically in Jesus name. So where does their power come from? Satan. He can go along with these counterfeits pretending their rituals and procedures are effective and withdrawing the demonic attacks so that people will put their faith in these false teachers and end up in greater bondage. The Bible warns these things will be more and more common in the last days. Matthew 24:24 says *"For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."* 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing."*

Instead of going to an intermediary for relief from demonic attack, go directly to Jesus. Use God's word as Jesus did when He was tempted (Matthew 4). Deliverance ministries can be very expensive and time-consuming, and that limits their availability to many people. Their focus can be on the person's symptoms instead of on Jesus. In addition, unless the person discovers why God is allowing this and His purpose for in allowing it, the opening will remain and the oppression will continue. Colossians 2:9-10 affirms that Jesus has all power over Satan's forces and when we are in Him we have direct access to that without going through anyone else. *"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority."*

In a time of instant-everything and feelings of entitlement, Christians facing real spiritual battles can be tempted to want a quick and easy solution by having someone pray over them and then 'live happily ever after.' The Christian life does not work that way.

I'll close part 1 by repeating that deliverance and spiritual warfare is an important tool when needed. But it is not a one-tool-does-all solution to all our problems. God allows demonizing for a reason, and we must learn what He is teaching, where He is pointing out sin and what He wants us to change to have victory. A hammer is an essential tool, but it can't do the work of a saw or screw driver. Spiritual warfare is essential in our faith and growth, but so is prayer, worship, Bible study and fellowship. They all have their place. None are an end in themselves. All are a means to the end – becoming more like Christ (Romans 8:29). Use your tool of spiritual warfare, but learn to use it correctly and effectively.

SHOULD YOU GO TO A DELIVERANCE MINISTRY? Part 2

In the first part of this blog, I warned against looking for quick, easy solutions to demonic oppression instead of seeking the reason God is allowing it and what He wants to teach through it.

So, what should you do if you are being attacked? Don't panic or fear – that plays right into the enemies' hands. Patiently persevere in keeping your eyes on Jesus, prayer, Bible study and worship. That doesn't mean ignore the attacks, for we have an enemy we are commanded to fight (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7).

When Jesus was attacked by Satan and tempted, He quoted Scripture to have victory over Satan's temptations. Paul says our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Psalm 119:9,11 tell us that it's through God's Word that we have victory. When

you have these thoughts and attacks use Scripture to have victory. Ask God to give you some verses that will help against these things, write them down and memorize them. Say them over and over when these thoughts attack you. That is the only way to victory, and God guarantees it will work!

God wants you to learn how to fight, not find an 'expert' to fight your battles for you. There are no shortcuts. The only way we can speed up the process is by turning to Jesus and asking what He is trying to teach us or accomplish in or through us. Then cooperate with what He is doing in your life.

In Jesus we have both power (δυνάμις dunamis - Luke 9:1; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 4:33; 6:8; Ephesians 1:18-23; Hebrews 2:14-15) and authority (ἐξουσία exousia - Luke 10:1,17-20; Matthew 10:1,8; Mark 3:15; 6:7; I John 4:4). Power comes from the Holy Spirit within (Acts 1:8), authority comes from our relationship as a child of Jesus (John 1:12). A policeman has both authority (badge) and power (gun or club). Both come from a source outside himself, as do ours (Colossians 12:9-10). Satan also has power (Luke 10:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Peter 3:22) and authority (Luke 4:6; Acts 26:10; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). Demons have these, also (Revelation 9:3,10,19; Colossians 1:16; 2:10; 1 Peter 3:22). God's power and authority is superior to that which Satan & the demons have. Men without Jesus do not have power or authority anywhere near to Satan and his demons, though.

In all areas it is Jesus' strength, not ours or anyone else's, that gives us victory (Philippians 4:13). God promises to give us power (2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3). God is faithful to keep His promise to strengthen us (Numbers 23:19; Philippians 1:4-6; Hebrews 10:22-23). Our part is to use His strength. We are to fight, but in His strength. We must put on the armor God provides and stand in His strength (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are promised what when we resist Satan in God's strength that Satan will flee (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). Victory is assured when we fight in His might (1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 John 5:5). French Painter Emile Ranouf, in a painting called "A Helping Hand," depicted an old man dressed in fisherman's garb, seated in boat with little girl beside him. Both have hands on an oar. He is looking down fondly and admiringly at her. Apparently he has told her that she may assist him in rowing the boat, and she feels she is doing a great share of the task. It is easy to see it is his strong, muscular arm doing the work. That's how it is with us and Jesus! It's all by His grace!

Therefore, we need not fear Satan or his forces (Joshua 1:9; 10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; 1 Samuel 17:45-47; 2 Samuel 22:33-35,40-41). They must have God's approval for all they do (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Luke 4:35). God protects His people (Luke 10:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Revelation 9:4; 1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-10). Nothing can get us away from God (Romans 8:38; John 10:29). When we ask, God will put a hedge around us or those we are praying for (Job 1:10; 3:23; Isaiah 5:5). God's power is greater than Satan's (Exodus 7:12; 8:18; I Jn 4:4).

Sad to say, I have met some people who are so preoccupied with the difficulties they face in life that they attribute them all to demons and spend all their time thinking and talking about their demons and what they are doing. They have names for many of them and almost seem to revel in the terribleness of being attacked by such powerful spirit beings. They go from one deliverance ministry to another not finding what they want. Their identity seems to be wrapped up in their oppression. It can be how they get attention and sympathy. Some even seem to resist any real help for deliverance but instead just want recognition and sympathy. I sometimes get the attitude from them: "I dare you to deliver me! Go ahead and try!" This breaks my heart for it isn't Satan's great power keeping them in bondage but rather their unbiblical response to it.

What about when deliverance is slow or not at all? Remember, sometimes God has a greater purpose than casting out every demon as soon as we pray. Sometimes there is delay. Jesus even had times when He had to persevere for a while (Luke 8:31 Greek word usage says this). Usually, deliverance is a process. It's like peeling the layers off an onion. As new sin is revealed and removed, more ground is taken back from Satan's forces. This gradual process allows the person to better fill the ground which has been reclaimed with God's Holy Spirit and gives him time to grow spiritually

(Psalm 59:11; 119:50,67,71) before the next 'layer' is removed. That's why the Jews under Joshua only conquered the Promised Land bit by bit instead of all at once. If they would have driven out the Canaanites immediately then lions would have come in and harmed them.

There is a learning process involved that can be used to help others, too (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). At other times complete deliverance never comes. Paul's thorn in the flesh is an example (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul testified that God then provides the grace needed to withstand. God wants us to learn to depend on Him alone (Psalm 119:59,92). Of course, if the opening is allowed to continue then the demonizing will continue, too (Psalm 94:12-16; 81:11-14).

Remember, Jesus is the only one who can bring deliverance. There are no shortcuts, no instant spirituality. Life is a battle we all must fight, but in Jesus there is victory. I hope these blogs have been helpful. If you have comments or experiences you'd like to share please write me at Jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org

(I have an article "SW Steps to Deliverance" on my web site or you can email me and I'll send you a copy. For more information about spiritual warfare go to [CTOtraining](#) and click on Spiritual Warfare. You will find all my books, study courses and articles there. Or you can email me and I'll send a PDF copy to you. jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org)