

*Breaking the Chains
of Spiritual Oppression*

in Ministry and Missions ©

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About the Presenter

Dr. Lois Dodds specializes in the care of cross-cultural humanitarian workers, including missionaries. In 1992 she co-founded Heartstream Resources, along with her husband, the late Lawrence E. Dodds, M.D., M.P.H. Heartstream was one of the first organizations created to provide multi-disciplinary care for international workers. Lois is President and Director of Heartstream. HSR is global in outreach, with partner organizations in New Zealand, Korea and the Philippine and associates in the UAE, Spain, and Hong Kong. We are still developing new partners. We provide evacuation sessions, retreats, and other services for global agencies. The Dodds served thirteen years in the Amazon jungle of Peru, Larry as physician and Lois as writer, counselor, and educator as part of their twenty-three years in WBT and SIL.

Dr. Dodds is a leader in the missionary care movement and loves to share her vision and passion for caring for the world-wide missionary force. She has taught people from about 100 nations in graduate courses in about 50 countries through Heartstream and as a professor with Azusa Pacific University. She is author of fifteen books and over 100 published articles, and two series of videos for grassroots training of missionaries and member care facilitators. She regularly presents at professional conferences such as the World Congresses on Christian Counseling. She co-authored three textbooks on global servants, along with Dr. Laura Mae Gardner. The books teach about the human development and formation of cross-cultural, global workers, twelve factors which make them effective, and how agencies can care for them over the long haul. (*Global Servants*) In her doctoral studies at UCSB she researched the role of the Holy Spirit in life-long formation. She earned an MA in education and counseling at UCSB, and another MA in human development at Azusa Pacific University. She earned her BA in psychology at Westmont College.

Dr. Dodds has three married children and eight grandchildren whom she loves to include in mission travels. She has four great-grandchildren. Her interests include creativity and personality studies,

interior decorating, art, classical music, and writing poetry. Dr. Dodds loves to present the truths of God's Word from a unique and artful perspective. She loves to teach retreats, to design and lead programs, and to foster learning in various contexts, particularly for people seeking to maximize their growth through the Holy Spirit.

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Abstract and Objectives

Ministry is a hazardous occupation, especially in foreign contexts, because we are engaged in Spiritual Warfare with God's enemy. He is a "roaring lion seeking to devour" and destroy. In many cultures Satan's work is more overt and Christians are more dramatically harassed and oppressed, sometimes to death. Those who minister to others are especially targeted and prone to attack. Even non-Christians "doing good" in foreign countries experience attack, as illustrated in this presentation by examples of embassy workers who came to us for help. Christian workers must learn to practice discernment and to "break every chain" through deliverance from curses, attacks, and other evil occurrences. We must train missionaries and others who work across cultures to identify Satan's work and to identify risk factors in a person's life and history. Many workers have no awareness of Satan's wiles and lack training in using the power of Jesus to break his hold. Thus, they are placed right into "the jaws of the lion" and are vulnerable to destruction. Without knowledge of the Holy Spirit and of Spiritual Warfare, they are easy prey.

We need to teach a Biblical understanding of Spiritual Warfare and the role of Satan in seeking to destroy the work of Jesus. We must teach others how to protect themselves with spiritual armor, and how to exercise the power Jesus gave to each of His followers to defeat the enemy. This presentation is based on decades of first-hand experience in other cultures and countries, with the discerning of spirits, as empowered by the Holy Spirit. It provides a list of the "footholds of Satan" through which he enters one's life and offers principles for differentiating spiritual harassment and oppression from other mental and physical health issues. Real experiences of the author and her team illustrate the truths presented.

Objective 1:

Describe the Biblical teaching about Spiritual Warfare, how Satan attacks and destroys, and what power Jesus gave to His followers to defeat the enemy.

Objective 2:

Identify the risk factors in the lives and histories of persons in ministry which make them most vulnerable to satanic harassment and oppression.

Objective 3:

Analyze, through examples presented, how the power of Jesus can break chains of bondage.

Biblical and Historical Perspectives

The belief in Spiritual Warfare and the contemporary practices which spring from it are centered in the life of Jesus and in the teachings of the Apostle Paul, especially in Ephesians 6. It has always been a tenet of Christianity, and of Judaism before it, that a cosmic spiritual war exists in the “heavenlies” and on the earth (see Daniel, chapters 10 and 12). The Old Testament tells us of unseen battles taking place in heaven and earth. The war is between God, the source of all and of all good, and his arch-enemy, Satan, the father of evil, who fell from his origin as an angel because he set himself up to become like God. Genesis, chapters two and three, lays out the basic facts of this cosmic struggle, as God instructs Adam and Eve about evil and the serpent shows up in the Garden of Eden to tempt them with the knowledge of evil.

Through The Ages

Teachings about Spiritual Warfare come down to us through the ages into contemporary Christianity. The Gospels are full of accounts of Jesus casting out demons. Throughout most of the ages of the Church there have been teachings, rituals, practices, and prayers designed to put to flight Satan, his fallen angels (demons) and other forces of evil. (The Apostle Paul speaks boldly of these: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” Eph. 6:12 NIV.) However, not every age of the Church or every Christian denomination has given equal credibility to the reality of Spiritual Warfare. Like many doctrinal teachings, belief in Spiritual Warfare has fluctuated in popularity.

The Apostle Paul reminds believers that our weapons are not of this world—therefore, they are divine weapons (II Cor. 10:4). He powerfully describes our adversary: “your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (I Peter 5:8 NIV). The Apostle John too writes powerfully of the war in heaven that will take place in the future (see Revelation Chapters 12, 17, and 19).

The Last Century

In the last century the acceptance of Spiritual Warfare gained greater popularity once again, especially as the Classical Pentecostal movement and the charismatic movement in both Catholic Church and Protestant denominations have gained about a half billion followers who tend more to matters of the Spirit (Synon, 2001). With the emphasis of these movements on the reality of the Holy Spirit has also come a greater awareness of gifts of the Spirit and a re-awakening to realities described in the New Testament accounts—reasons for which we must practice the gifts of the Spirit as well as battle the forces of evil. This has included greater knowledge of demon possession,

exorcism, and deliverance from spiritual harassment, demon oppression and possession. It has made us more aware of the profound encounters of spiritual darkness by experienced by Christians.

Burgeoning Literature

Currently books on Spiritual Warfare number in the hundreds, including manuals, handbooks, personal accounts of deliverance, theological treatises, special editions of the Bible, women's studies, workbooks, prayer guides, and others. Most of these have been published in varied versions, multiple times. One can find sermons on YouTube about Spiritual Warfare, even video games and novels devoted to Spiritual Warfare and the end times. Peretti's series of novels and films, though controversial, helped to make concepts of Spiritual Warfare popular (1986 and onward). So too the series by LaHaye and Jenkins (1998 and onward). Colorful titles such as *Pigs in the Parlor* (Hammond, 1990) have drawn attention to the ugliness and hidden nature of Spiritual Warfare and its impact on daily life. The popular on-line Wikipedia includes a lengthy and informative discourse on Spiritual Warfare.

Landmark works on Spiritual Warfare include classic Pentecostal writers such as Jesse Penn-Lewis (republished in 1973) and Catholic charismatic writer Francis McNutt (2009). Ed Murphy's 600 page *Handbook of Spiritual Warfare* has become a classic (1995, 2003). Even the writings of Baptist Charles Spurgeon of London, who was deeply moved by the Pentecostal movement of the nineteenth century, have been reissued (1998).

Whole movements have sprung up to foster the freedom of Christians caught in spiritual battle. Neil Anderson's ministries, Freedom in Christ, has reached into five continents and is established in over twenty-five countries. His book *Bondage Breaker* and the methods of prayer he recommends for deliverance are known to millions. In some segments of the church, such as in Africa, converts are routinely taken through hours of prayer for deliverance from any remnants of occult influences in their lives; some missionaries say that in Haiti and other countries no one is untouched by the occult and therefore each convert needs deliverance from spiritual oppression (Dodds, 1986 and onward). A French missionary told me that everyone in France—yes, modern, sophisticated France-- is touched by the occult.

Impact in World Missions

Contemporary mission scholars such as C. Peter Wagner and Kurt Koch have contributed greatly to understanding Spiritual Warfare as it relates to world missions. Especially during the last two hundred years of world mission more missionaries have described what Wagner calls "power encounters"—the need to demonstrate the reality that Jesus has power over demons. Though some of Wagner's ideas (such as territorial spirit mapping) are controversial he has been enormously helpful to missionaries seeking to demonstrate Christ's power to conquer the forces of evil in societies which have floundered in spiritual darkness. As millions have come to Christ who were steeped in the occult and have lived in daily fear of demonic power, finding freedom in Christ has loomed as a huge need for the Church to validate Christ's power.

Why Spiritual Attack?

We do well to ask several questions.

- Why is there demon oppression and possession?
- Why does the devil destroy people in ministry?
- What are the signs and symptoms of oppression and harassment?
- What authority did Jesus give us?
- What is needed to defeat the enemy?

God has an enemy and since we are God's children we too have an enemy—one who is out to destroy us! This is a powerful truth yet simple enough for even a child to understand. I learned this when my four-year-old Michael bounded into the room with the gleam-in-his-eyes of, "I gotcha now, Mommy!" "Jesus says to love our enemies, right Mommy? So, why don't we love Satan?" While I pondered how to answer this amazing questions from so young a child, his sister Kathryn, age six, answered, "Oh, Michael! That is so easy! We don't love Satan because he is God's enemy!" I marveled.

Since his fall from heaven, Satan has had every intention of thwarting God's purposes in the world. He actively "goes to and fro throughout the earth" looking to see whom he can devour--or at least debilitate and minimize (ref...). We might ask, "How does he get away with it? Why would God let him succeed? Can't Jesus stop this wretched enemy before he wrecks and destroys?" We will come to an answer to this poignant question.

Ten Ways Satan Attacks

Through our fifty years in missions we have come to see many of the ways in which Christians are attacked—especially those in ministry. Let's have a look at some of Satan's methods:

1. Creating conflict
2. High-jacking God's purpose and agenda
3. Darts of doubt
4. Depression
5. Disturbances in nature
6. Physical attacks and spiritual phenomenon related to health
7. Visible demonic appearances which incite terror
8. Sexual aberrations
9. Disruptions to devotional life of prayer and Bible reading
10. Masquerading as mental illness

Signs and Symptoms of Spiritual Attack and Oppression

Any of the above ways or means of attack bring certain signs and symptoms. When we have the discernment of spirits, as described in II Cor. 1:9 and 12:10, we come to recognize these.

1. **Conflict is the enemy's favorite way** to thwart Jesus' work in the world. Since Jesus said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:15 NIV). Satan seems to devote most regular attention to disrupting peace and love in Jesus' people, the Body of Christ. One has only to look at churches and mission teams to see this ugly reality! It is rare to find one which truly operates in love, grace, and peace. This ugly truth robs God of credibility in the eyes of the world. It is sadly accepted as "okay" even by missions committed to reaching the world with God's love. For example, one young pastor overseas, who was in a graduate course we taught, said his mission only appoints one couple to each country. When we asked, "Why?" he said, "Because missionaries can never get along, so they just have us work alone." Sadly, he was unaware of the tragic assumption of his organization that it was impossible to learn to love each other. In addition to losing credibility in the eyes of the world, a team or church in conflict swirls all their energy around like "a tempest in a teapot," leaving little to invest in those outside the tempest.

2. **High-jacking God's purpose so that** God's chosen servants miss the crucial truth that the *real* purpose of any ministry is to love people on God's behalf, to make Him visible through their lives so that they come to know His love. It is easy to be distracted into believing that translating the Bible, building a school, establishing a hospital, or any other task is the real work. In my own life in a Bible translation organization, living amidst dozens of cultures, I observed some diligent Christians working on the task but forgetting to love the persons God set before them. Their work habits blocked the intended outcome of people knowing Jesus.

3. **Darts of doubt easily flood the minds** of those who belong to Jesus. Satan loves to whisper lies to us which undermine our belief in and understanding of God's truth about who He is and who we are. The enemy belittles and bullies us into thinking we do not count or that God has made a mistake in creating us or calling us. He puts us in a fog of confusion about God, and just as He did in the Garden, he tells us God does not have our best in mind. He condemns us for sins God has already forgiven and forgotten.

4. **Depression which blinds us to God** and depletes our energy is another favored way in which Satan attacks us. The tunnel vision created by dark thoughts leads us to ignore Truth and to be blind to who God is. Depression eats up our energy. It reduces our world to a very small space and shrinks our vision to keyhole size. At its worst it can lead to suicide. One of my own worst episodes of depression in the jungle of Peru ended instantly when I was prayed over by friends. Another lifted the moment I recognized it was a spiritual attack.

5. **Disturbances in nature and the physical world** may be attempts of the evil one to destroy or to disrupt God's work. Colleague in our Peru work told of this happening, often on the eve of the Lord doing some miracle. The roof of the building was ripped off during one prayer meeting, when no storm was in site. The wind raged in that one small spot. The next day witch doctors came to Jesus. (Larson and Dodds, 1985). Others told of furniture being hurled at them after moving into a house which the local people said was inhabited by demons. The translators had not believed it, and moved in anyway. The disruptions in nature were accompanied by unexplainable outburst of anger and rage between the linguists which almost destroyed their translation work.

6. Physical attacks and spiritual phenomenon related to health are perhaps the most commonly experienced. Even non-believers, such as business people and embassy personnel came to us in Peru because they were being choked, having the life squeezed out of them by unseen arms around their chests, and other terrifying experiences. They knew *something terrible* was trying to kill them, but without knowledge of spiritual things they could not make sense of the powers or escape them. We prayed and each time the person was released. A young anthropologist in a mountain village collecting data for her dissertation was attacked repeatedly and fled the village to visit us in the jungle. Jesus delivered her! Another typical terror is to awaken in the night with an unseen body weighing on them, attempting to have a sexual relationship. Another missionary traveled half way around the globe seeking prayer from the Dodds after a surrealistic attack to his brain, like a thousand lights exploding in his head, led to months of terror filled with headaches, unexplained traumas, and temptations. A couple serving in an extremely dark country spent years with illness and suffering. When prayed for the woman writhed on the floor and pulled from her mouth an invisible snake which had been choking her. A family moved temporarily after receiving death threats. They were terrified through the night as they could hear their intercessor in the next room literally and physical wrestling with a demon.

7. Visible demons and demonic harassment or oppression meant to terrify. Most all the native peoples in the Amazon lived in terror of demons. They saw them, and even knew their names and where they lived. Many of the cultural norms relate to avoiding demons or appeasing them so as to avoid their wiles. Discovering that Jesus has power over demons was the best news they ever heard, leading to conversions and great joy! We have found the same in other lands, with villagers identifying demons based on particular symptoms of attacks. Shadowy figures may inhabit the homes, even of people in ministry, and causes them conflict or anguish before they are unmasked as visitations from the enemy.

8. Sexual aberrations are enormously perplexing to godly people, and seem to be one means of the enemy's shock attacks. More than one person has related that every time they would attempt to read her Bible they were overcome with foreign sexual thoughts, sensations, and temptations. A whole team disintegrated in Europe after a witch who had disguised herself as a seeker called down curses on them. On this team, on that day, one team member was hit with seduction, another with disgusting, sexual, obscene phone calls from strangers, another with sexual acting out, and so on—each of them struck down by something sexual. Only after the team had fallen apart did each one discover that every other member had experienced some shameful behavior or thought pattern. Only then did they realize the seriousness of the curse and seek deliverance.

9. Disruptions to devotional life of prayer and Bible reading occur as a result of spiritual harassment. Many persons have told us that whenever they attempt to pray, meditate, or read the Scriptures they are blocked by “brain fog,” and confusion, by sexual thoughts, pain, sudden distractions or other signs of the enemy's prowling. Prayers for deliverance frees them. More insidious is a gradual loss of love for the Word, a forgetting that living in truth is vital to spiritual well-being and fruitful ministry. This may happen due to busyness or doubts about God's intentions for us, so life and ministry are reduced to doing tasks.

10. **Masquerading as mental illness:** In Latin America a young MK (missionary kid) saw a demon in the house subsequent to a friend showing him pornography. This was terrifying and led to several weeks of seeming psychosis until he was delivered through prayer. Another MK in Africa played with village boys, torturing and killing animals for fun so the boys would accept him. He began to draw grotesque pictures of killings and to exhibit psychotic symptoms. The sudden changes in the boy frightened his parents, who sought help for him through consultation and prayer. A woman in ministry began to have episodes of amnesia, during which she shoplifted many valuable items. Both she and her husband were mystified by the bags of merchandise they found in her closet. Her arrest jolted them to seek help. It appeared these episodes related to their having moved into a home inhabited by demons. Furniture which moved “on its own” and other phenomenon puzzled them, but they had no background knowledge to identify the Spiritual Warfare.

The young child of a family on a Pacific island was continually threatened with demons by her local nanny when she misbehaved. Later she developed what appeared to be early onset schizophrenia. It seems that the threats bore ugly fruit, in that the demons had truly stayed with this girl. Another child began laughing in his crib and talking to spirits in his room and gradually became attached to them. The most severe of such stories will be told in a later section of this paper.

Eight Risk Factors Leading to Vulnerability

Many issues and situations give opportunity to the enemy to come after us. Of course sin in our lives is a major attraction to him. He jumps at the chance to subvert us.

1. **Footholds of Satan:** The Scriptures tell us there are many “footholds” of Satan. Through these he gets into our lives as believers. These attitudes and behaviors are listed in the Appendix. They are very specifically identified in the Scriptures as offenses to God and thus openings through which Satan tries to gain control of our lives.

2. **Generational chains:** These are evil patterns and powers brought down to us through parents, grandparents, and other ancestors. One can see this clearly in a contemporary story of a major family in Philadelphia (Teague, 2017). The history begins with the great grandfather who immigrated from Italy. His cruelty towards his son, along with alcoholism and other dysfunctions, was passed on to his grandson and now great-grandson. From a **psychosocial point of view** these family dysfunctions are clear: each new generation learns from the previous one and practices what they have learned. **Physiologically** patterns can persist until they are broken. This was evidenced through the longitudinal study of women and babies in Holland who went through near-starvation as a result of the blockade near the end of WWII. **Cultural and family norms** grow out of such spiritual darkness.

This same kind of patterning can damage the life of a believer, even one who has set out to serve God. If the chains are not broken, the sins of the fathers oppress the children”—i.e., cause great suffering through repetitions of dysfunction (Ex. 20:5). Scripture is clear that children and fathers are responsible for their own sins (Ezekiel 18:17b, 18), yet evil chains can still persist. We found in the

Amazon that if a man had been dedicated in infancy or childhood to be the avenger for his family that designation caused upheaval in his life as a Christian until he was specifically set free from that bond. (See Larsen and Dodds, 1985.)

3. Hidden Heart Messages: The Apostle Paul writes that sin is an alien that makes its home within us. (I Peter 2:11) It is not part of our created selves, which were made in God's image and redeemed to be like Christ. This alien within, it seems to me, is the massive bundle of lies which are embedded in us and lead to faulty perceptions of God and ourselves and lead us to self-defensive and self-defeating behaviors. These lies begin early in life, with all the ugly words and mistreatments everyone encounters, sometimes told to us by parents. As children we do not have the cognitive capacity to sort out truth and we take in whatever adults or older children tell us. (Fritz Perls, noted psychotherapist emphasize this phenomenon of "swallowing whole" in his Gestalt theory. Perls, 1969) Because these are painful, we push them down and may forget them, but they give rise to bad habits, attitudes, and self-denigration until we substitute the lies for the truth of who God says we are. Like toxins in a landfill, they leak out and give rise to hurtful ways. We must ask God to reveal them and heal us (Psalm 139:23, 24). Through redemption we can be "dead to sin" so that these lies are refuted and become powerless when we take our thoughts captive to Christ (II Cor. 10:5).

4. Curses: We may experience a curse from a specifically evil source, such as voodoo or a witch doctor, or receive them by seemingly innocent "curses" such as negative labels from people seeking to diminish or destroy us. The horribly careless words and curses spoken by so many parents become self-fulfilling prophecies which wound and ruin many lives. We all know people scarred, damaged, and ineffective in life because of the lies told them by family members or other key persons. Refuting the lies and the bonds of the enemy and replacing them with the Truth of God and His freedom, bought through Jesus death and blood shed on the cross is the antidote.

5. Engaging in occult activity: God specifically forbids His children to seek advice, guidance, or knowledge of the future from spiritual mediums such as fortune tellers, spirits, diviners, "curanderos" ("healers" who use demonic power to ostensibly do good, sometimes called white magic), and any power that does not come from Him. Many Old Testament passages, such as Jeremiah 27:9 and Deuteronomy 18:9-12, make this clear. Playing with Ouija Boards, Taro Cards or other "playing" is actually playing with the devil and brings evil consequences.

6. Unresolved issues: Personal matters, especially those generating shame and guilt and those which provoke us to harbor unforgiveness or bitterness can give the enemy entrance into our lives. Shame can be totally debilitating, keeping us bound and shrunken. Guilt also. Many believers hang on to shame not knowing that they are set free, that we never have to experience it. (See Psalm 25:3, Psalm 103:3, and II Cor. 12:9-10.) When we fail to let go of sins which God has forgiven and taken away "as far as the east is from the west" and has vaporized like the morning mist, we live in bondage. Satan loves to condemn, and will heighten shame and guilt to make us ineffective. He robs us of the "complete joy" Jesus wants for us (John 15:11).

7. Territorial spirits: Paul speaks of such spirits in his writings. They inhabit specific regions or geographical areas (Wagner, 1991). Even non-Christians in various parts of the world have told us

they sense darkness in some places, and comparatively greater darkness in other places. One does not have to be Christian to feel the chill of demons or the eeriness of profound evil. Many people experience such phenomenon but have no spiritual knowledge to know its source. They feel its ugly power but have no understanding of the remedy—freedom through Christ.

8. **Distortions in our understanding of who God is:** When we misinterpret the Word of God, and He becomes burdensome to us, we are weighed down and do not experience his full joy or His power. The images of Him we carry about are heavy. (See Isaiah 46:1-4 and Luke 10:27.) When we believe legalistic teachings, serving God can seem tedious and troublesome. We need to know Him accurately in order to live fully in truth about *Who HE Is* and *who He has made us to be*. We need to ask, “Am I carrying God or is He carrying me?” If we are carrying Him, to any extent, we are suffering from a distortion.

How Jesus’ Power Can Break Spiritual Chains

The Word of God is rich in imparting God’s heart and His desire for our freedom. His “divine resources have given us everything we need for life and godliness...” (II Peter 1:3, Phillips). These divine resources include:

1. **The Word of God**, living and written. We proclaim its truth. We dispel and refute the lies of the enemy. We claim healing and deliverance. The Word of God is alive, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is one of our divine weapons which demolishes strongholds. Through it “we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (II Cor. 10:4, 5).
2. **The Armor of God**. The Apostle Paul write to us in Ephesians 6 about the equipment we need for battle with the enemy. The armor covers us, head to toe, head to heart. His instructions tell us of the offensive weapons as well as the defensive armor. We must dress for battle every day or we go out unprotected and vulnerable to assault.
3. **Prayer** defeats the powers of evil. The more steadily we talk to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the more in tune with this trinity we are, the stronger we become. Prayer is essential, a fuel for the power at work within us.
4. **Jesus’ power**. He gives us the power to bind on earth whatever He binds in heaven. We can break every chain of evil through exercising the power He gives to us. We can refute lies and bondage, as the enemy has no claim on God’s children. I love to claim the promise, the same mighty power which raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in us. (See Eph. 1:19, 20) and the truth that by faith, Sarah received the power to conceive at age ninety (Heb. 11:11). This is power beyond what we can understand, but it is very real!
5. **Boldness, freedom from fear!** “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and power and a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). This means that any time we experience fear we can reject it. It does not come from God; it comes from Satan. So many missionaries who have come to us say, tearfully, “I think I am going crazy.” They are in so much turmoil and torment they can’t make sense of life. I

love to say to them, “No, you have a sound mind. Jesus gives you a sound mind!” When we are buffeted by the enemy we can feel like we have lost our sanity.

6. **Spiritual disciplines:** When the disciples came back to Jesus they said that some demons were not cooperating when they tried to cast them out. Jesus said that some kinds come out “through fasting and prayer” (Mark 9:29). Dealing with oppression, harassment, and possession is not always easy, as demonic powers may be entrenched in a person’s life. On various occasions we have encountered this reality and have needed to have several sessions of prayer for deliverance. Our own spiritual state also seems to have bearing on this. Practicing spiritual disciplines can enrich and deepen our own spirits so that we are more in tune with the Lord and thus more discerning of spirits.

7. **Confession of sin:** We are exhorted to practice this particular spiritual discipline by the Apostle James: “Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed” (James 5:16). As a result of the Protestant Reformation many churches gave up the practice of spoken confession. Those who still practice this discipline find it to be a powerful tool in refuting the condemnation of the enemy and bringing freedom. We have learned through German friends the practice of “betraying the devil,” something German Lutherans have practiced as long ago as the eighteenth century. It became popular again in the Marburger Kreis movement. “Betraying the devil” breaks the power of blackmail which our enemy uses to keep us in bondage of guilt. Through confessing our sin to a brother or sister in Christ who serves as our confessor, we hear the words of pardon. This person proclaims aloud and pronounces the forgiveness of sin, by the authority of Christ, and reminds us that we need never suffer guilt for it again.

Four Examples of Pervasive Power of Spiritual Oppression

My personal encounters and experience with persons in the vice of spiritual oppression or possession are too numerous to tell. Here are just a few examples which exemplify the extreme.

1. **Two young women fresh out of seminary** went to a far eastern country to serve Christ. They went without benefit of a sending church or mission, with no support system or team. Soon after arrival they visited local temples to learn more about the culture. On a specific visit both felt “something jump onto me—onto my back.” They knew it was evil, but could not get rid of it. They spent two years in torment, experiencing all manner of unexplainable troubles, so horrifying that one of them even tried to bury herself. They were terrified and felt they could not escape. They feared death. Through a visit of a young man acquainted with Spiritual Warfare they learned this was demonic oppression and that there is deliverance in Christ. We got a call one day from the other side of the world, with the plaintive first question, “Do you do Spiritual Warfare and deliverance?” The young women arrived within forty-eight hours. It took many sessions of prayer before she was set free.

2. **A man with a profound ministry** came limping in with a cane. Within two days he left his cane in the corner. The environment of Jesus’ love and prayer were healing him. He had been re-experiencing old devilish influences, aroused by a conflict in his ministry. These began in his

childhood, when by age seven he was sacrificing chickens to demons, and by age ten was hurling his huge stepfather across the room. The terrified parents put him in a psychiatric hospital. He did not learn to read or write and could not attend to school work. His behavior in the hospital was a constant danger to others. At age sixteen, he says, the demons threw him out the window, several stories up. Miraculously, during the fall, he called out “Jesus!” He was not injured. He says that by the time he hit the ground he became a believer in Jesus. His personality and behavior totally changed. His psychiatrist, who later attended his wedding, wrote that he had never seen such an instant recovery. Within three years the teen learned to read and write and completed his high school diploma. Released at age nineteen as “a model patient” he went out into the world, lived with a Christian family, and entered the ministry. Yes, this was in America, not some foreign land!

3. **A teacher spent two years serving in Africa** in an extreme situations and locale. Her ministry was progressing, though hampered by much evil going on in the village, which was steeped in the occult. She found that the incessant beating of the drums, literally yards from her window, had a profound impact on her health, particularly her heart. It developed an extra beat and arrhythmia. She felt the presence of a demon within touch, heard it barking like a dog, and heard its panting next to her. She rebuked it, calling on Jesus. Later, however, a curse railed upon her led to her debilitation, so she left her ministry. Back in the homeland she could not find help. For eight years she suffered perpetual health problem and was unable to return to work. She went to a famous mental hospital seeking healing for the depression that gripped her. She did not get better. Finally she came to Heartstream and was delivered through prayer. Her experience of disturbed heart beat has been recounted by others. In the Amazon, our jungle brothers called hard rock music with incessant drumming, “the music that calls up the demons.” They wondered why some missionaries would allow their children to play it.

4. **A young family almost killed.** One circumstance which seems to have put more of God’s people “into the jaws of the lion” relates to policies created during the emphasis on evangelism of the 10/40 window. In order to keep a low profile many agencies have sent out single persons or one couple or family, rather than having their people work in teams. This lack of support has led to enormous losses. For example, a young couple who were converted in college were sent to a 10/40 window country to “do business as mission.” They were not trained to know the dangers of including a local man in their own household. Without support or mature leadership the husband succumbed to the man’s seduction. Then the wife did also. He was grooming the children for seduction. One spouse attempted suicide in a way that could have killed the whole family—and almost succeeded. The other spouse ran away with the children. Their whole ministry was lost, and it nearly cost them their family and their lives.

Summary

We who serve our Lord Jesus in ministry, whether in missions or the pastorate, must be educated about the reality of Spiritual Warfare. We must never live in fear of the enemy who prowls around seeking to devour us. His work is to destroy us, yet we have the power! Jesus granted to us His divine power to break every bond of the enemy. We use the power of Jesus and claim His conquering power through the shedding of His blood on the cross. We must live godly lives,

saturated by His Word, and avoid all the footholds of the enemy through which he gets into our lives. We must be people of prayer and earnestly seek the gift of discerning of spirits so that we are attuned to the spiritual realities around us. We must learn to be vigilant and not fall into spiritual stupor. We can be assured that Jesus breaks every chain, and that He has imparted to us His power.

Appendix—Footholds of Satan

Satan gains entry into our lives through certain actions or attitudes, such as unresolved anger (Paul writes to us, “In your anger do not sin’. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Eph. 4:26-27). We need to be especially vigilant, acknowledging wrong and hurtful attitudes to God immediately without covering them up or justifying them. Knowing ahead of time how Satan attempts to work his way into our lives in order to undermine us can help us resist his sabotage. Here are some of the footholds by which he gains entry into our lives.

Attitudes

1. Pride, anxiety and despair: I Peter 5:5-9

“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.⁷ Cast all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.”

2. Unforgiving attitude: II Cor. 2:10,11

“If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.” Failure to forgive hurts both parties!

3. Jealousy, envy and selfish ambition: James 3:14-16

“¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

4. Unbelief, discouragement, hardness of heart: Heb. 3:12,13

“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living god. ¹³But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

5. Bitterness: Heb.12:14,15

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

6. Conceit: I Tim. 3:6

“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.”

Trials of life which threaten our faith:

II Thes.3:2,3 “And I pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. ³But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

Behavior

1. Having your own way: James 4:1-10

¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

2. Willful disobedience (following Satan): I Tim. 5:14-15

“So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. ¹⁵Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.”

3. Lying and deception:

Acts 5:3 “ Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’”

II Cor. 11:3 “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

4. Sexual sin:

I Cor. 7:5 “Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

5. A bad reputation:

I Tim. 3:7, 5:14 “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” “So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.”

6. Moral shortcut (the end justifies the means): Luke 4:5-7

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”

I Thes. 3:5 “For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.”

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