

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LIBERATION AND INTEGRATION:
EQUIPPING PASTORS TO HELP PEOPLE DISTRESSED BY DEMONIC
INFLUENCE OR MENTAL ILLNESS

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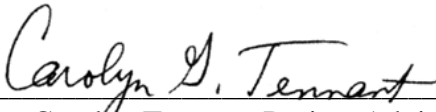
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT APPROVAL

This is to certify that the project entitled

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EQUIPPING PASTORS TO HELP PEOPLE DISTRESSED BY DEMONIC
INFLUENCE OR MENTAL ILLNESS

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ABSTRACT

Healing and deliverance from evil spirits have been catalysts for church growth throughout history. Most Assemblies of God ministers still believe in deliverance ministry, but the growing body of evidence related to mental illness has resulted in a hesitancy to associate psychological symptoms with demonization. This does not necessarily represent a theological shift, but it does signal an acknowledgement that ministers may not be adequately equipped to discern between mental health issues and demonic influence. Those seeking help from members of the clergy for psychological distress may suffer from demonic activity, the internal effects of personal sin, trauma-based reactivity, mental illness, or a combination of factors. Without a nuanced understanding of the potential impact of these various struggles, pastors may wrongly assess the cause of a congregant's distress.

This project focused on equipping pastors to help people with spiritual and psychological struggles. It incorporated principles drawn from substantial research to develop a one-day seminar aimed at assessing the sources of spiritual and emotional distress. The information presented can be applied in various contexts, but the seminar primarily focused on its applicability to pastoral counseling. Research drawn from various disciplines was presented in the form of lectures, a participant's manual, case studies, and peer interaction. Seminar participants demonstrated a marked increase in understanding and confidence related to helping distressed individuals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My earliest memories include conversations with my parents, George and Jeannett Willis, about the value of education. I watched my mother earn a college degree while serving in ministry alongside my father, working full time, and raising a family. She inspired me to pursue higher education, and her example convinced me that I did not have to wait until my own children are grown. I am forever indebted to them both for their prayers, encouragement, and financial investments in my education.

My wife, Anna May, and I celebrated twenty-five years of marriage last May. It would not have been possible to complete this academic journey without her unwavering support. There have been moments when it felt like we would never reach the top of a seemingly insurmountable mountain. Time and again, she took my hand and assured me that we could make it. She and our children have made deep sacrifices that made this doctoral journey possible. I am forever grateful for their love and partnership.

Special thanks go out to the leadership team of Link Church and especially to my lead pastors, David and Brittany Willis. David personally encouraged me to enter this program, read every paper that I wrote, and actively implemented the findings of my research into the ministries of Link Church. In moments when I wanted to quit, he encouraged me and sometimes pushed me to keep going.

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residency weeks. Joe and Denise Bird prayed with me and provided feedback on assignments before they were submitted. Chris and Heather Dickerson helped with some of the practical aspects of my implementation seminars. Michael Willis contributed greatly to my research, offering key insights along the way. Darryl Fitzwater and David Smith recommended study sources and helped me grapple with the project's practical implications. Logan Dixon helped me overcome writer's block at a critical development phase. These individuals, and so many more, have been sources of great encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Context

Link Church is a multi-site congregation in rural Arkansas. About 800 people attend Sunday morning services at the primary location in Clarksville, a city with a population of approximately ten thousand. Another 125 individuals worship at Link Church's other two campuses, located in Lavaca and in Oark. I have served on the pastoral staff of Link Church since 2018 and currently function as the discipleship pastor of the Clarksville campus. The responsibilities of this role include development of discipleship processes and curriculum, staff and volunteer training, and school of ministry oversight.

Along with the above roles, I am a Board-Certified Master Mental Health Coach with an emphasis in suicide prevention.¹ I oversee the pastoral counseling ministry and special interventions for Link Church. These special interventions include helping people who feel they are suffering from demonic influence find freedom and healing. This process typically begins by assessing the pathology of these individuals' distresses and then focusing on designing appropriate paths toward healing and freedom.

Link Church works closely with multiple recovery ministries in the Arkansas river valley. I serve as vice chair on the board of one of them, Stepping Stones Recovery

¹ This certification is through the International Board of Christian Care (IBCC) and was earned through continuing education classes with Light University and the American Association of Christian Counselors.

of Arkansas (SSROA). SSROA offers transitional housing to people in recovery and includes both faith-based and evidence-based pathways. This role provides additional context to my ministry focus and necessitates the ability to differentiate between mental illness, demonic influence, and other kinds of distress.

I also frequently serve as a consultant on matters of spiritual warfare for other pastors in the Arkansas District of the Assemblies of God. Having spent most of my life in northern Arkansas, I have relationships with pastors across denominational lines and find myself in frequent conversations about deliverance ministry. As increasing numbers of people seek freedom from addiction, healing from trauma, and liberation from occult involvement, the need for Spirit-empowered, biblically anchored deliverance ministry likewise increases.

The Problem

While most Assemblies of God ministers believe in deliverance ministry, many are not adequately equipped to discern between mental health issues and demonic influence. Confusion about this distinction sometimes arises when distressed individuals receive prayer during corporate services, but the problem more frequently presents itself in the pastoral counseling setting. Those seeking help from members of the clergy may, indeed, suffer from a spiritual malady. However, this can be the result of demonic activity or simply the internal effects of personal sin.

Further, it is well established among both pastors and mental health professionals that trauma can have a profound impact on the human psyche.² Distress rooted in trauma may require some type of deliverance ministry when demonic activity is evident. At the same time, trauma responses are often better addressed through a combination of professional counseling and ongoing discipleship. Without a solid understanding of the potential impact of both sin and trauma on spiritual and mental health, pastors may wrongly assess the pathology of a congregant's distress. Tragically, some are referred to mental health professionals when they need deliverance ministry while others are subjected to attempts at deliverance when they need medical or psychological intervention.

The problem is further complicated by the increasing prevalence of serious mental health disorders. Many pastors fear that they will attempt to cast a demon out of someone, only to later learn that the person is suffering from schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder, or some other illness. In addition to the devastating personal impact of such an error, pastors are increasingly conscious of the legal liabilities that could be associated with misdiagnosing a mental health disorder as a spiritual disorder.

Still, casting out demons was a central focus of the ministry of Christ and of the apostles in Scripture. As such, neglecting to follow their example may border on spiritual malpractice. Although noted similarities exist between the symptoms of some mental

² Mike Driscoll, "How Catholic Exorcists Distinguish between Demonic Possession and Mental Disorders." Order No. 3569877, Regent University (2013): 181-182, ProQuest; Neal Lozano, *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (South Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2003), 47.

health disorders and certain accounts of demonization in the New Testament, Pentecostals typically reject the claim that biblical exorcism accounts simply reflect the healing of psychological disorders in the ancient world.³ Can training be developed to equip pastors and Christian mental health professionals to recognize the presence or absence of demonic influence in the lives of those who present with psychological distress? Can interventions be designed that simultaneously prioritize liberation from evil spirits and integration of the human psyche? This project will seek to establish an affirmative answer to these questions. Significant ministry impact from such training and intervention is the anticipated result.

The Purpose

This project will equip pastors to distinguish between demonic influence and mental health disorders. I will produce biblically anchored resources, informed by insights from mental health professionals, that I will implement in a seminar setting. In addition to identifying scenarios in which outside referral is needed, it will empower leaders to design effective interventions for distressed individuals without neglecting medical and psychological concerns.

Definition of Terms

Deliverance. An approach to prayer and counseling that prioritizes both liberation and integration.

³ Craig Keener, *Between History and Spirit: The Apostolic Witness of the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 255. Craig Keener's comments on possession represent a commonly held classic Pentecostal position on this issue.

Demonization. The state of being actively influenced by an evil spirit to an extent that results in distress. Demonization occurs on a spectrum that includes oppression and possession.

Dissociation. According to Stephen Diamond, dissociation is “the inherent human capacity to divide and compartmentalize consciousness.”⁴

Distress. A spiritual or psychological struggle that undesirably disrupts someone’s daily function.

Ego. The part of the mind that interprets the range of thoughts, memories, and emotions and then allows people to interact meaningfully with the outside world. The *ego* is perceived by others as an individual’s personality.⁵

Exorcism. The act of liberating someone from demonic control.

Exorcist. A minister that specializes in freeing people from demonic control.

Integration. An intervention focused on helping someone incorporate their various life experiences, emotions, and memories in a way that reduces distress.

Liberation. An intervention focused on setting someone free spiritually or psychologically from something that causes distress.

Oppression. An external demonic attack that causes spiritual, physical, or psychological distress.

Pathology. The root cause of an individual’s distress.

⁴ Stephen Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Paradoxical Power of Rage in Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (Plattsburgh, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), Chapter 4, Location 2208.

⁵ The concept of the *ego* originates in the writings of Sigmund Freud. However, the word is used in a variety of ways within the body of psychological literature.

Possession. This term is used in two ways throughout this project. Regarding biblical/theological viewpoints, possession describes severe, internal demonic control that results in loss of control for the individual. When used clinically, it is a state in which individuals temporarily lose control of their mental or physical function and perceive it to be caused by a force or entity that is alien to them. This latter definition is sometimes referred to as clinical possession or possession syndrome. The distinction in the word's two uses relates more to differences in interpretation by professionals from distinct disciplines than it does to the individual experience of the sufferer.

Psyche. The mind, will, and emotions, including both conscious and unconscious elements.⁶

Preternatural. Abilities that are beyond human capacity but may be seen as natural to angels or demons. Preternatural activity is often called “paranormal” in modern literature, but it is more theologically nuanced.

Trauma. An experience that causes extreme emotional or physical pain and has an enduring effect on the individual, often distorting their sense of reality and decreasing their capacity for healthy relationships.

⁶ See Carl G. Jung et al., *Man and His Symbols* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1964), 5-6; see also James Strong, *Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary of the Bible* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto Publishing, 2016), 1631-1632, 3202-3203. Carl Jung writes at length about the *psyche*. When psychologists use the word, they are frequently referencing Jung. However, *psyche* is also a Greek word that both biblical and psychological writings use to refer to the mind or soul. In Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary, *psyche* is G5590.

Description of the Proposed Project

Methodology

Research

Step one of this project will require a review of both biblical/theological and general literature. The biblical/theological review will examine the Bible's clean/unclean motif and the New Testament's teaching on sanctification, considering their relationship to deliverance ministry. It will further explore patristic insights on demonization, mental illness, and deliverance ministry, investigating early church practices for addressing these matters. The general literature review will examine considerations specific to pastors and to mental health professionals. It will then focus on models of liberation and models of integration, noting how both approaches might apply to the context of deliverance ministry.

Preparation

During step two, I will create curriculum that will be used in step six. This curriculum will include a PowerPoint presentation that will also function as a facilitator's guide. Additionally, I will produce a participant's manual for each minister going through the training. These tools will have a two-fold focus. First, they will enhance learning outcomes during step six's seminar. Second, they will provide tools for ongoing application and learning.

In step three, I will develop a pretest and posttest to determine the level of confidence that pastors have in their ability to distinguish between mental health issues and demonization. This will be a Likert-scale tool with an identical pretest and posttest for ease of comparison. It will evaluate pastors' overall sense of proficiency in

deliverance ministry and their level of preparation for making referrals when needed. I anticipate using this tool at the beginning and closing of the training seminar.

In step four, I will secure permission from the Arkansas district superintendent to host a training seminar for pastors in September 2024. It will be held in a place that is centrally located to the ministers who attend. I will also hold a pilot seminar at Link Church in Clarksville, Arkansas in July 2024. This seminar is essential, as the primary success of this project will be seen in increased confidence and competence among pastors regarding deliverance ministry.

Step five will prioritize the development of promotional materials. These will include flyers, an email campaign to Arkansas Assemblies of God credential holders, and a limited social media release. While the seminar is open to any AG credential holder or staff member, it will have a distinctly pastoral focus.

Implementation

Step six will focus on implementation. This will occur in two phases. In phase one, I will hold a six-hour pilot seminar with the entire pastoral team from Link Church's three campuses. Each participant will receive a copy of the participant's manual that will be created in step two. The pretest and posttest will be used. The seminar will draw from chapter 2 of my project to establish a biblical foundation for deliverance ministry, and it will incorporate insights from chapter 3 to empower pastors to distinguish between demonization and various forms of mental health disorders. I will present case studies in an interactive forum to allow participants to apply the knowledge they gain. The training seminar will also equip pastors to utilize the tools of sanctification that will be discussed in chapter 2.

In phase two of step six, the seminar will be offered again. In this second phase, I will invite Assemblies of God credential holders and staff members from throughout the Arkansas district to participate. The structure of the seminar will mirror that of the pilot—six-hour design using the same curriculum and pretest/posttest. However, insights gained during the pilot seminar will be applied to ensure maximum impact in the second phase.

Evaluation

Step seven will focus on analyzing the data from the pretests and posttests. I will analyze and synthesize the data that is collected at the pilot seminar and the district seminar into a report that reveals the level of effectiveness of the two-phase implementation. I will use it to identify areas where improvement may be needed for future applications of the material. Results and analysis will be included in the writing of chapters four and five.

Writing and Limitations

This project will make a significant contribution to pastoral applications of deliverance ministry; however, its scope is limited. Although it will examine the impact of unclean spirits on the human mind, it will not explore demonology in depth. The origin and manifestation of specific demonic entities is beyond the primary focus of this project. Additionally, although I will shed light on serious mental health conditions and how they might be mistaken for demonization, this project will not include training in professional therapy. Instead, it will include protocol to help pastors know when they should make referrals and how they can continue offering spiritual help while adding a mental health professional and/or medical doctor to the therapeutic team. Finally, while emphasizing

the importance of team ministry in the deliverance context, this project will stop short of offering full-scale team development. The primary focus will remain fixed on empowering leaders to distinguish between demonic influence and mental health issues and on equipping them to design effective interventions based on quality assessment.

CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Exorcism features prominently in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles throughout the Synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts. Significant debate surrounds the proper interpretation of biblical exorcism texts and their application to contemporary ministry. Some scholars accept biblical claims of demons and exorcism at face value, while others claim that these texts more accurately represent the healing of physical or mental illnesses.¹ Furthermore, even among scholars that concede the existence of demons and demonization, consensus does not exist regarding appropriate methodology for liberating humans from demonic control.²

¹ William Alexander Menzies, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations Historical, Medical, and Theological* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 12. On page 247, Menzies summarizes his conclusions with an assertion that genuine demon possession likely existed in the time of Christ in the regions where he ministered, but in his view, the victory of Christ over the powers of darkness brought an end to such phenomena. Menzies also concludes on page 247 that Jesus was healing "mental derangement" as well as accomplishing spiritual liberation. Menzies sees modern claims of possession as being more consistent with mental or physical illness without the spiritual element. See also Assemblies of God General Presbytery, "Position Papers: Spiritual Warfare and the Believer," Adopted July 30, 2019: <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Spiritual-Warfare-and-the-Believer>, accessed April 8, 2024. This position paper states, "The consensus of Assemblies of God thought is that an unseen enemy, the devil, exists and is devoted to opposing God and destroying humanity." Contrary to Menzies' view, the paper acknowledges "[A] spectrum of demonic influence, ranging in the degree of domination over a person's life and in the variety of aspects of life where demonic control has taken place." This spectrum ranges from demonic influence that is "almost undetectable" to "oppression" and "possession." At the same time, the AG Position Paper does caution, "Great care must be taken not to confuse emotional and mental illnesses with demonic activity." The full paper is included as Appendix A.

² Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 293; See also, Graham H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1985), 191. On the cited page in *Christ Triumphant*,

This chapter surveys the relevant biblical/theological literature about exorcism, with a specific focus on texts referring to unclean spirits. It begins with an investigation of the clean/unclean motif in Scripture and its connection with the subject of demonization and deliverance. Liberative and integrative practices in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles are then examined, and the chapter culminates with a consideration of demonization, mental illness, and deliverance ministry in patristic writings and early church practice. New Testament deliverance ministry is deeply anchored in Levitical clean/unclean language and is both liberative and integrative in nature. This chapter reveals God's care and concern for humanity as the one who sets distressed individuals free from malicious spiritual powers while simultaneously offering spiritual, mental, and physical healing, integrating those who are liberated into the community of faith.

The Clean/Unclean Motif in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels and Its Connection With Demonization and Deliverance

The Gospel of Mark's introduction of a "man with an unclean spirit" who is controlled by a "legion" of demons represents perhaps the most dramatic moment in the exorcistic ministry of Christ (Mark 5:1-2).³ Teresa Calpino, describing the Messiah's "mission to the poor and under-represented members of society," rightly observes that this pericope (vv. 1-20) is "the longest, most detailed and literarily complex of the

Twelftree concludes that exorcism is essential for effective contemporary ministry. However, *In the Name of Jesus*, published 22 years later, concludes that while exorcism is a valid approach in ministry to demonized persons, ministers should consider truth encounters as an alternative to power encounters.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

exorcism accounts in the Synoptic Gospels.”⁴ Due to its complexity and its prominence as an exorcism narrative, this passage will be considered at length in the second major section of this chapter. However, because the designation of “unclean spirits” features so prominently in this account, in the Synoptic Gospels in general, and in Mark’s Gospel in particular, it is helpful to first explore the biblical/theological implications of uncleanness as it relates to demonization.

Levitical Roots of the Clean/Unclean Motif

The clean/unclean motif is first introduced in Genesis 7:2 as part of God’s instructions to Noah.⁵ However, the theme is only developed after the tragic death of Nadab and Abihu.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” And Aaron held his peace (Lev. 10:1-3).

The assertion that Yahweh must be sanctified “among those who are near” Him is further clarified through the priestly assignment given to Aaron and his sons. “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean”

⁴ Teresa Calpino, “The Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20): The Pre-Markan Function of the Pericope,” *Biblical Research* 53 (January 2008): 15.

⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 177. Wenham here notes, “It is characteristic of Gen. 1-11 to trace back the fundamental religious institutions to primeval times.” As with the Sabbath, the distinction between unclean and clean is introduced by Genesis but remains undeveloped until later in the Pentateuch. The biblical author thus ensures the reader’s understanding that the clean/unclean motif is a framework which transcends covenants. *Ibid.*

(Lev 10:10).⁶ This verse functions as a thesis statement for the book of Leviticus, with chapters 11-15 detailing how priests should differentiate “between the unclean and clean;” while chapters 17-26 offer guidance on how “to distinguish between the holy and the common” (10:10).⁷

Leviticus 11-15

Leviticus 11-15 is simultaneously a reflection of the holiness of Yahweh and an expression of His desire to be near His people. In the wake of Nadab and Abihu’s death, the priests are given an expanded framework of clean/unclean. Hartley observes,

Decrees regarding ritual purity are found throughout the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch, but the core legislation comes in Lev 11–15. In these chapters cleanness and uncleanness are regulated in regard to meats (chap. 11), births (chap. 12), skin diseases and growths in garments and on walls of a house (chap. 13–14), and bodily emissions (chap. 15). It is the duty of the priests to instruct the people in these rules of ritual purity, interpret specific rules as they apply to complex situations, and inspire compliance.⁸

While some contend that these regulations were enacted for health and hygiene, few modern scholars uphold this view.⁹

The purity laws detailed in these chapters are strongly anchored in the holiness of

⁶ It is difficult to overstate the extent to which these passages frame the entire construct of clean/unclean and holy/common among the Israelites. Although Israel’s purity codes may have also served the purpose of disease mitigation, the primary rationale for them is stated in terms of allowing the Israelites to dwell near God Himself. They are to be clean and holy because God is among them. Nadab and Abihu’s death, which is notably a divine execution, is the immediate precursor to Lev 11-15, and is reiterated in Lev 16’s instructions for the day of atonement, leading into the holy/common passages in Lev 17-26. God’s presence among the Israelites distinguished them from other nations (Exod 3:16). Their way of life, therefore, was an acknowledgment of God’s presence and of their distinct status as His people.

⁷ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 139, Kindle.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹ Jerry E. Shepherd, Tremper Longman III, and Scot McKnight, ed, *Leviticus*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 155, Kindle.

God. Leviticus 11:44-45 offers a summary statement regarding Israel's extensive dietary laws: "For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." In *The Story of God Commentary: Leviticus*, Jerry Shepherd et al. note, "Among the ancient Near Eastern texts, there is nothing that approximates the systematic nature of the distinctions made in this chapter."¹⁰ The "dietary regulations in the surrounding civilizations" tended to be "more ad hoc or haphazard."¹¹ Hartley notes that Levitical purity laws, "teach the people how to govern their living in such a world so that they may approach the holy God at the sanctuary."¹² These laws identified the people with Yahweh Himself.

Although no reference is made in these chapters to demonization or deliverance, Leviticus offers important imagery concerning the separation from uncleanness that is required for mortals to live in the presence of a holy God. In a later reflection on Mark 5:1-20, it is demonstrated that this clean/unclean motif supplies an important backdrop to the New Testament designation of unclean spirits. Some scholars note a correlation between the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and biblical prohibitions against occult activity. Hartley observes that one "class of forbidden animals is those associated with the barren wilderness and ruins, like the wild boar and the birds of prey, the very places the ancients

¹⁰ Ibid, 154.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hartley, *Leviticus*, 141.

considered to be the abode of demons.”¹³ The safeguards granted to Israel through the Levitical laws are even more explicit in the holy/common standards of Leviticus 17-26.

Leviticus 17-26

In recent years, the writings of Michael S. Heiser have gained notoriety among various streams of Christian thought. Heiser’s call to recover the supernatural worldview of the Bible is vital.¹⁴ In his book, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness*, Heiser writes, “The association of the desert wilderness as a place connected to the realm of the dead also lurks behind Leviticus 17:7: “So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore.”¹⁵ Heiser and Hartley’s observations offer intriguing context to the Levitical purity laws.

The assertion that Israel’s dietary laws functioned as a safeguard against occult practices is further noted by Hartley’s comparison of the clean/unclean laws with the holy/common standards established in Leviticus 17-26. He writes,

[E]very kind of sorcery is categorically condemned in the laws for holy living ([Lev] 19:26, 31; 20:6). It is not going astray then to claim that the regulations governing ritual purity are designed to prevent the practice of sorcery by declaring unclean those animals that symbolize a confusion of classes, ugliness, and desolation, the very symbols loved by wizards and sorcerers.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 145.

¹⁴ Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 20.

¹⁵ Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 26, Kindle. Heiser also notes a “conceptual connection” between the “goat demon” and the scapegoat ritual in Lev 16. Ibid. See also, Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 177.

¹⁶ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 145.

The Levitical clean/unclean and holy/common standards thus create a barrier against idolatry and the occult.

Separation from occult activity is, indeed, a central concern of Leviticus.

Leviticus 19:26b-31 warns,

You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes. You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard. You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the Lord. “Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land fall into prostitution and the land become full of depravity. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.

Heiser asserts that English translations weaken the forcefulness of verse 31. He proposes the following translation: “Do not turn to the spirits [’ôbôt], to the ones who have knowledge [yiddē’ônî]; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am Yahweh your God.”¹⁷ People become unclean when they “turn to the spirits.”¹⁸

The same words, *yiddē’ônî* and *’ôb* appear in Leviticus 20:6, 27. Heiser adds the following note to these passages, “The point made here should not escape the reader. While *yiddē’ônî*, ‘knowing (one),’ and *’ôb* may at times be used of human mediums, the failure to note that they also refer specifically to supernatural entities results in missing Old Testament terminology for evil spirits.”¹⁹ Thus, while it is possible to become ceremonially unclean through morally neutral means, association with evil spirits is also a pathway to uncleanness in Levitical thought.

Even those clean/unclean and holy/common standards that appear nonspiritual at

¹⁷ Heiser, *Demons*, 17.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

face value often have a mitigating effect against occult practices.²⁰ Hartley explains,

Among matters classified as common are included some of the most essential aspects of human existence, such as sexual intercourse, parturition, and burial. Participation in any of these activities rendered a person unclean. That does not mean that the purity laws demeaned these practices in any way. Rather they prevented any of them from taking place in the area of the sanctuary; that is, nothing associated with these vital areas of life could ever be used as an approach to worship. Specifically, fertility rites were never to be a means of worshipping Yahweh, and sex could not be deified as it was in polytheism. The potent uncleanness caused by a corpse plus the strict standards for the priests about touching a corpse and mourning the deceased struck a fatal blow against ancestral worship and any veneration of the dead that bordered on worship. Thus, the laws of ritual purity guided Israel in taking the correct approach in seeking Yahweh.²¹

This distinction between holy and common is given by Yahweh as a gift to the Israelites, lest they become like the pagan nations who, “stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods...” (Deut 32:16-17a). While Yahweh’s people are not called to abstain entirely from sexual relations or from touching dead bodies, they are called to maintain a right attitude toward and practice of these experiences and to abhor pagan practices that are associated with demons.

Levitical Responses to Uncleanness

The clean/unclean passages supply expected responses to uncleanness. For instance, those who have certain skin conditions are required to live in isolation:

The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp (Lev 13:45-46).

²⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 230-235.

²¹ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 144.

Likewise, people are required to separate due to certain bodily discharges (15:32-33).

This separation is required specifically because Yahweh dwells among them.

Thus, you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst (15:31).

This standard is reiterated in the book of Numbers, again with the rationale that Yahweh will not dwell among uncleanness.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone who is leprous or has a discharge and everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead. You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell” (Num 5:1-3).

The anticipated response to uncleanness under the Levitical code is that those who are unclean must be separate from Yahweh’s people, Yahweh’s tabernacle, and in at least some sense, Yahweh’s presence. The degree and duration of separation varies based on the cause of uncleanness (Lev 11:28, 31, 39; 12:2, 5; 13:27-28, 46).

Summary of Levitical Principles

Numerous principles from the surveyed passages are relevant to a New Testament understanding of demonization and deliverance:

1. Sanctification is required to dwell in God’s holy presence.²²
2. Uncleanness results in temporary or long-term separation from Yahweh’s people (Lev 13:45-46), His tabernacle/house (15:31), and His presence (Num 5:1-3).
3. Uncleanness is not necessarily the result of moral depravity.
4. Uncleanness, even when morally neutral, results in isolation.
5. Conscious separation from demons, occult practices, and idolatry is essential.
6. The goal of cleansing/sanctification is restoration to the covenant community, the house of God, and the presence of Yahweh.

²² Doug Mangum, “Sanctification,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Within the article, Mangum writes, “Sanctification refers broadly to ... being set apart as sacred.”

Zechariah and the Spirit of Uncleanness

Yahweh's promise to remove "the spirit of uncleanness" is a notable feature of Zechariah's prophecy. The prophet writes,

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. And on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness (Zech 13:1-2).

This passage functions as an interpretive bridge between Leviticus and the Synoptic Gospels. It is the only Old Testament reference to "the unclean spirit," though the term is used twenty-one times in the New Testament.²³

Whereas the Pentateuch primarily speaks in terms of individual as opposed to corporate uncleanness, it explicitly warns against defiling the tabernacle (Lev 15:31) and defiling the camp where Yahweh dwells (Num 5:1-3). Zechariah, writing after the exile, is keenly aware that both these things have now happened. Ezekiel's prophecy records the presence of Yahweh leaving the temple (Ezek 10:1-22), and Lamentations records the desolation of Jerusalem due to uncleanness (Lam 1:8-10).

Zechariah now envisions a "day" when "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" will be cleansed from "sin and uncleanness" (Zech 13:1). The Hebrew word, "*niddāh*," here translated "uncleanness," is "a technical term covering ritual and sexual

²³ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary 32 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 280, Kindle; see also, Steffen Jöris, "The Markan Use of 'Unclean Spirit': Another Messianic Strand," *Australian Biblical Review* 60 (2012): 50. While it could be argued that "spirit of uncleanness" here refers simply to a general state of being, Bruce Baloian notes, "there is a hint of demonic character in ... Zech 13:2." Bruce Baloian, "שָׁטָן (*śātān*), HGK#8477," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), Vol. 3, 1231. The NASB and the MEV both translate this phrase as "the unclean spirit."

impurity.”²⁴ Reflecting on the Greek translation of “*niddah*,” Richard E. Averbeck notes, “The LXX uses several different G[reek] words to render נִדָּה, the most important being ἄφεδρος, menses (11×; see e.g., Lev 15:19), ῥαντισμός (#4823), sprinkling (6×; Num 19:9, 13, 20, 21 [2×]; Zech 13:1), and ἀκαθαρσία (#174), uncleanness, impurity (4×).”²⁵ The clear image is that Yahweh’s people failed to heed the Levitical warnings and have now been overtaken by ritual impurity. No longer are they simply unclean; there is now a “spirit of uncleanness” that must be removed “from the land” (Zech 13:2).²⁶

The Gospel of Mark and Unclean Spirits

Although Zechariah 13:2 is the only Old Testament reference to the unclean (*akathartos*, LXX) spirit, it is noteworthy that “in the Synoptics,” *akathartos* “always refers to unclean spirits.”²⁷ The use of *pneuma akathartos* (unclean spirit) is especially prominent in Mark’s Gospel (Mark 1:23, 26-27; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25). In their book, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology*, John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton make the following observation about this word: “Akathartos is used by the LXX

²⁴ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 280; see also, James Strong, *Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionary of the Bible* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto Publishing, 2016), h5079, 3131, Kindle.

²⁵ Richard E. Averbeck, “נִדָּה (dāwâ), Hebrew GK #1864,” Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), Vol. 1, 928. This article on dāwâ offers insight into *niddah*, Hebrew GK #5614.

²⁶ Ibid., 1231.

²⁷ Moisés Silva, ed., “καθάρως,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 571; see also, Strong, *Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionary*, h7307, 3791 and h2932, 2497. The Hebrew phrase used in Zech 13:2 is “*ruwach tu’mah*.” In the LXX, this is translated as “*pneuma akathartos*,” which is the Synoptic phrase for “unclean spirit.” Other Hebrew words closely related to “*tu’mah*” and often translated “unclean” are h2930, “*tame*” and h2931, “*tame*’.” The portion that is quoted in the main text above is from a subsection within the cited text from Silva in which “*akathartos*” is shown to be the opposite of “καθάρως”.

to translate *ṭāmē*, the same term used to designate unclean animals (also, e.g., Acts 10:14). ‘Unclean’ is a ritual category, not a moral category; the spirit-creature itself is unclean, like a pig, and the person afflicted by one is also unclean, like a person with a skin disease.”²⁸ If one accepts Walton and Walton’s claim that having an unclean spirit belongs to the category of ritual impurity, then the Levitical principles summarized previously can be applied to those with unclean spirits.

Principles 4 and 6 are especially applicable to those who are bound by unclean spirits. Their condition results in isolation, and their cleansing results in restoration to the covenant community.²⁹ This is consistent with the findings of Steffen Jöris’s survey of the usage of “unclean spirit” in New Testament times. Jöris notes, “[T]he application of the term in Second Temple literature is fairly broad and has connotations of sin and impurity as well as probably denoting a demonic being.”³⁰ However, there is no consensus among scholars regarding the connection between the clean/unclean passages in the Old Testament and the unclean spirits of the New Testament. Therefore, another interpretation of references to unclean spirits must be considered.

The Enochic Tradition and Unclean Spirits

The *Book of the Watchers* in *1 Enoch* was well known to at least some New

²⁸ John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 125-126, Kindle.

²⁹ In Mark 1:23-28, Jesus removes the unclean spirit from the synagogue. The readers’ expectation is that the man, now delivered, will be able to fully participate in the synagogue without disruption. In Mark 5, which is considered at length in the later section on “Integrative and Liberative Practices in the Ministry of Jesus and the Apostles,” the man with an unclean spirit moves from total isolation to being reintegrated into his community following his deliverance. Although the idea of “covenant community” may not apply in this instance, he nonetheless moves from isolation to integration through deliverance.

³⁰ Jöris, “The Markan Use of Unclean Spirit,” 59.

Testament authors. Jude and Peter both reference it (1 En 10:11-13; Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4), and in one instance, Jude quotes it directly (Jude 14-15; 1 En 1:9-10).³¹ In his introduction to *1 Enoch*, Paul C. Schneiders notes that the earliest portions of the book were written in the third century B.C.E.³²

The *Book of the Watchers* presents itself as an origin story for demons and for numerous aspects of spiritual warfare. It expounds upon Genesis 6:1-6, narrating the descent of two hundred fallen angels on Mount Hermon.³³ The fallen angels teach violent warfare and sorcery to mortals, and the unholy union of angels and women produces a race of giants.³⁴ The race of giants are called “the bastards and the reprobates” and “the children of fornication.”³⁵ The transformation of these giants into demons is described explicitly,

And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called ... And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger and thirst, and cause offences. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded from them.³⁶

³¹ Paul C. Schneiders, *Complete edition: Including Enoch 1: the Ethiopian Book of Enoch, Enoch 2: the Slavonic Secrets of Enoch, and Enoch 3: the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, translated by R. H. Charles (Las Vegas, NV: International Alliance Pro-Publishing, 2012), 32, 37-38, Kindle.

³² Ibid., 6.

³³ Ibid., (1 Enoch 6:1-6), 35.

³⁴ Ibid., (1 Enoch 7:1-6 – 8:1-3), 35-36.

³⁵ Ibid., (1 Enoch 10:9), 37.

³⁶ Ibid., (1 Enoch 15:1-12), 42.

This unauthorized union of angels and women and its resulting hybrid offspring is, for some scholars, compelling evidence for the origin of unclean spirits.

Heiser sees the Enochic tradition as the definitive backdrop for the *pneuma akathartos* of the Synoptics. He writes, “That the phrase ‘unclean spirit’ is found in the New Testament is clear evidence that New Testament writers stood firmly in the Second Temple Jewish tradition regarding the origin of demons. The idea is isolated to Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament before the second century AD.”³⁷ While Heiser’s observation is worthy of consideration, there are valid critiques of this position.

In a dissertation submitted to Dallas Theological Seminary, Young Kuk Kim offers a detailed evaluation of the themes of the Enochic traditions and their relationship to Christ’s exorcisms in Mark’s Gospel.³⁸ Kim writes,

Scholars from the Enochic influence scholarship argue that Synoptic demonology is discontinuous from Old Testament demonology because the Enochic evil spirits, whose concept reflects the Mesopotamian demonology Jews learned during the Exile, had an influence upon other demonological conversations in the Second Temple Jewish works including the Synoptics.³⁹

Kim dissents from this central claim of Enochic influence scholars.

While not denying that some New Testament authors were influenced by the Enochic tradition, Kim concludes that Mark’s concept of unclean spirits is more directly

³⁷ Heiser, *Demons*, 197; see also, Hans Moscicke, “The Gerasene Exorcism and Jesus’ Eschatological Expulsion of Cosmic Powers: Echoes of Second Temple Scapegoat Traditions in Mark 5.1-20,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41, no. 3 (2019): 363–83, doi:10.1177/0142064x18821558, 365.

³⁸ Young Kuk Kim, “The Enochic Traditions and Jesus’s Exorcism in Mark,” (PhD diss., Department of New Testament Studies Dallas Theological Seminary, 2019).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

associated with Levitical purity codes.⁴⁰ Kim observes,

The Markan concept of uncleanness in association with the Levitical impurity hints at the nature of his unclean spirits; they are spiritual beings that cannot come into the presence of God (Lev 13:46). It is reminiscent of the evil spirits in the fallen angel tradition, whom God designated to stay on earth until the great day of judgment (1 Enoch 15:10; 16:1). However, it is very unlikely that the fallen angel tradition caused the rise of the Markan concept for two reasons, although Mark likely knew of the Enochic tradition. First, the used terms differ from each other. The fallen angel tradition never uses the term “unclean spirit,” nor does Mark the term “evil spirit.” Second, the fallen angel tradition is silent on the evil spirits’ entering the bodies of humans, but Mark uses the expression frequently (1:25–26; 5:8, 13; 9:25–26).⁴¹

Kim’s insights are consistent with the connection previously established between the Levitical purity code, Zechariah 13:2, and the Markan use of “unclean spirit.”

Christological Implications

Regardless of what Mark does or does not affirm about the origin of demons, his use of *pneuma akathartos* symbolizes that demonized individuals are consumed by the uncleanness warned about in Leviticus and are now enduring the pain of separation from God’s presence. This nuance in Mark’s view is vital to his overall theology of demonization and deliverance. While it is not an error to say that Mark sees unclean spirits as demons, it is not accurate to claim that he views the two terms as identically synonymous.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., 160.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Joris, “The Markan Use of ‘Unclean Spirit’,” 66.

Joris notes that “it is always a *pneuma akatharton* and never a *daimonion* that speaks” in Mark’s Gospel.⁴³ Mark’s decision to draw primary attention to the battle with unclean spirits in particular, rather than just to demons in general, is Christological in nature. Jesus is not just another exorcist. Rather, He is the “fountain” that has been “opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1). He is the one who has come to “remove ... the spirit of uncleanness” (13:2). Kim agrees with this assessment,

Mark viewed Jesus’s exorcism ministry as fulfilling the prophecy by Zechariah. Five features support the view. First, Mark views a prophecy of Zechariah as fulfilled in Jesus Christ explicitly (Zech 13:7; Mark 14:27). Second, Mark uses the unpopular term “unclean spirit” as Zechariah did (Zech 13:2). Third, both Zechariah and Mark relate unclean spirits to ritual impurity. Fourth, both Zechariah 13:2 and Mark 1:23–24; 7:27 speak of an unclean spirit being removed from the covenant community. Fifth, both Zechariah and Mark talk about the autonomous unclean spirits that differ from the evil spirits sent by God.⁴⁴

Christ’s exorcism ministry serves a larger purpose than simply healing the distressed. As Kim notes, “Since being rendered clean allows one to participate in the worship of the community again ... Mark very likely says that Jesus’s exorcism was a way of restoring people in God’s chosen community (cf. 1:44).”⁴⁵ Exorcism is not a sideshow for Jesus; it is central to His mission.

⁴³ Ibid., 54. “*Daimonian*” is a Greek word for “demon.” See also, Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 770–772. On these pages, Keener expounds on the meaning and scope of “*diamones*.”

⁴⁴ Kim, *The Enochic Traditions*, 160. “[S]pirits sent by God” references Saul (1 Sam. 16:14–23).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 158.

Summary Principles from the Gospel of Mark and Unclean Spirits

The following principles are drawn from this survey of Mark's Gospel and unclean spirits:

1. Consistent with Levitical imagery, having an unclean spirit denotes a state of impurity that is likely to result in isolation.
2. Cleansing from impurity is central to deliverance from unclean spirits.
3. Restoration to cleanness is a requirement of living in covenant community.
4. Biblical exorcism ministry is tethered to the redemptive work of Jesus and to His fulfillment of Zechariah 13:1-2.

Integrative and Liberative Practices in the Ministry of Jesus and the Apostles

Christ's commission to His disciples reveals the priority He places on both exorcism and healing. "And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction" (Matt 10:1). Exorcism and healing are not incidental occurrences among the apostolic delegation. As N. T. Wright explains, "The battle Jesus was fighting was against the satan. Whatever we think of this theme, it was clearly centrally important for all the gospel writers, and we have every reason to suppose it was central for Jesus as well."⁴⁶ Just as Jesus was "sent" to "proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind," His disciples are now "sent" to proclaim the coming kingdom and "[h]eal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, [and] cast out demons" (Matt 10:5-8; Luke 4:18).

Similarly, Luke records the commissioning of the seventy-two. The conversation between them and Jesus upon their return is instructive:

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do

⁴⁶ N. T. Wright, *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2011), 120, Kindle.

not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17-20).

Graham Twelftree insightfully observes that in the New Testament, “little interest is shown in demons and demonology except where it relates to soteriology.”⁴⁷ Jesus engages in exorcism and commissions His disciples to do the same, but what He celebrates is salvation, not power encounters. Exorcisms and healings are sanctifying tools in Christ’s ministry to cleanse people from the things that separate them from Himself, His house, and His people.

Sanctification Through Exorcism and Healing

The language of the Synoptics differentiates between exorcism and healing, even though the former frequently results in the latter.⁴⁸ Mark’s account of the apostles’ ministry records, “And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them” (Mark 6:13). In his book, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought*, Pentecostal theologian John Christopher Thomas concludes, “In contrast to claims made both at the scholarly and popular levels, the New Testament writers generally make a clear distinction between demon possession and illness.”⁴⁹ This is true of all the Gospels (Matt 4:23-24; Luke 4:40-41; John 9:1-3).

⁴⁷ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 294.

⁴⁸ Synoptic exorcism accounts include healing from epilepsy, muteness, deafness, an arthritic-type condition, and what today would be classified as mental illness (Mark 5:1-20; 9:17-18, 25-29; Luke 13:10-17).

⁴⁹ John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 297.

Concerning Christ's early ministry, Matthew writes, "So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them" (Matt 4:24). Thomas expounds on this passage,

[I]t appears that each of these disorders presented extraordinary challenges: illnesses which resulted from demon possession because their origin was supernatural; lunacy/epilepsy because the condition was widely thought to be caused by the moon; and paralysis because there was no known cure in antiquity.⁵⁰

Although the New Testament understanding of disease pathology differs from many twenty-first century perspectives, it is nonetheless clear that the New Testament does offer distinct categories of illness rather than assigning all of them to a demonic origin.

Healing Through Integrative Teaching

Christ utilizes diverse tools in His healing and deliverance ministry. One of His most powerful tools is integrative teaching—that is, He speaks words of truth and life to His followers which allow them to see the world in a new light, leading to internal peace within themselves and external peace with others (Matt 5-7; John 14:27). This is considered further in a later section on sanctification through truth. After the healings and exorcisms in Matthew 4, no other miracle is mentioned by Matthew until chapter 8. However, He addresses things in the intervening chapters that modern mental health experts would do well to consider.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 160; see also, Anthony Ossa-Richardson, "Possession or Insanity? Two Views from the Victorian Lunatic Asylum," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 4 (2013): 553–75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43290161>. Ossa-Richardson offers a multi-disciplinary evaluation of Matt 4:24 and the question of whether there is a distinction in the text between possession and insanity.

Christ's Sermon on the Mount is revolutionary.⁵¹ He reframes existence for His followers, declaring among other things that they are blessed if they are "poor in spirit," "mourn," and are "persecuted" (Matt 5:3-4, 10). He tells common people that their "good works" can provoke others to "give glory" to God and that it is possible for them to be "great in the kingdom of heaven" (vv. 16, 19). He teaches how to understand and respond to anger (vv. 21-26), lust (vv. 27-30), divorce (vv. 31-32), and to their enemies (vv. 38-48).

Jesus offers direction on the integrative practices of giving (Matt 6:1-4), prayer (vv. 5-13), offering forgiveness (vv. 14-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18). He calls for an eternal perspective on success and finances (vv. 19-24) and gives guidance on managing anxiety and trusting in God (vv. 25-34). Before returning to miracle working, Jesus cautions His followers against developing a judgmental attitude (7:1-5), warns them to be intentional about who they trust (v. 7:6), encourages them to persist in prayer (vv. 7:7-11), instructs them to treat others as they wish to be treated (vv. 12-14), and emphasizes that prophecy, exorcism, and miracle working do not authorize people to be "workers of

⁵¹ Jesus ascending the mountain to teach His followers calls to memory Moses's reception of the law on Mount Sinai. Sinaitic imagery includes "thunders and lightnings," a "thick cloud," and "the sound of a trumpet" (Exod 19:16). Moses receives the ten commandments (31:18). Notably, he returns from receiving the law to find Israel worshipping a golden calf (32). Christ's own ascent to the mountain and His "lawgiving" are equally supernatural. When He comes "down from the mountain," He immediately cleanses leprosy and tells the one He heals to do what "Moses commanded" (Matt 8:1-4). A series of miracles and exorcisms follows, culminating in the liberation of the Gerasene/Gadarene demoniac (vv. 5-34). Luke's gospel makes a further connection between the sermon on the plain and deliverance. In Matthew 6:9-13, the giving of the Lord's prayer is set within this mountain discourse. Luke 11:2-4 places the Lord's prayer immediately before an exorcism that results in Jesus being accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul (Luke 11:15). Jesus responds with a phrase that's a clear call back to Moses receiving the law "by the finger of God" (Exod 31:18). He says, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). Moses returns from the mountain to deal with idolatry; Jesus returns from the mountain to cast out demons "by the finger of God."

lawlessness” (vv. 21-23).⁵²

Just as Jesus speaks to dark powers and forces them to flee, He speaks to mortal men and women and teaches them to live at peace with God and with each other. He declares the coming of God’s kingdom with miracles and exorcisms but warns people not to trust in miracles and exorcisms. Christ does not simply drive out uncleanness; He promises those who are cleansed and “pure in heart” that “they will see God” (Matt 5:8). Matthew 8 continues with the previous focus on Christ’s ministry of healing and casting out demons, almost as if it flows straight out of chapter 4.⁵³ Chapters 5-7, then, function as a sort of parenthetical balance, painting a fuller picture of the ministry of Jesus. Exorcism may serve as an initiation into the discipleship process, but the end goal of such liberation is inner peace and healthy integration of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23).

Healing Through Liberation

In addition to numerous passing references to exorcisms, the Synoptic Gospels include narrative accounts of the liberation of seven individuals from demonic entities.

They are as follows:

1. The man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37).
2. The blind and mute demoniac (Matt 12:22-29; Luke 11:14-22).

⁵² Keener notes that the miracles Jesus references “are not necessarily false; it is possible to prophesy by the Spirit’s inspiration and yet be disobedient to God and unsaved (1 Sam. 19:20-24).” Craig Keener, *The IVP Background Commentary: New Testament, 2nd Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 63, Kindle. Twelftree notes that this warning is in the closing lines of the Sermon on the Mount, which is Christ’s “interpretation of the law for his community.” Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 163. He then notes that Matthew’s account welcomes traveling exorcists into the community, but “their legitimacy depends on their submitting to the regulations of the Matthean community, notably in relation to behavior, for truth and ethics are inseparable.” Ibid. In other words, Matthew 5-7 establishes the standards that govern the Christian community, and exorcists are expected to abide by them, lest they be marked as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt 7:15) who “prophesy,” “cast out demons,” and “do many mighty works” in God’s name (v. 22).

⁵³ Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance*, 162.

3. The Gerasene demoniac (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39).
4. The Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30).
5. The epileptic boy (Matt 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43).
6. The mute demoniac (Matt 9:32-34).
7. The woman with a disabling spirit (Luke 13:10-17).⁵⁴

The story of the Gerasene demoniac stands out as particularly significant, with both liberative and integrative elements.

Demonic Influence in Second Temple Judaism

The demoniac's suffering is consistent with Second Temple Judaism's conceptions of demonic influence. In the apocryphal book of Tobit, the demon Asmodeus kills seven men who marry Sarah before the marriages are consummated.⁵⁵ Sarah is left fearful and depressed; she contemplates suicide and prays for God to take her life.⁵⁶

In the *Book of the Watchers*, evil spirits "afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble...."⁵⁷ Likewise, The *Book of Jubilees* is believed to be written by a Pharisee in the early 100's B.C.E. and further

⁵⁴ Michael Williams, "Not Your Average Exorcist: Jesus's Dialogue with Legion (Mark 5:7-9) in Light of Ancient Power Rituals," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* (Online) 50 (1-4) (2020): 4-5; see also Opal Reddin ed., *Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College Press, 1989), 125-132. Williams omits the woman with a spirit of infirmity from his list of exorcisms, which is indicative of disagreement among scholars over the precise nature of her condition. Reddin omits the same account from her list of power encounters but does make note of it under a subsection titled, "Other Deliverances." The nature of this account is admittedly different from other exorcisms, as there is no reference to casting anything out and no sort of dialogue with the spirit. Still, the language of Luke 13 seems consistent with a form of demonization, and Jesus explicitly refers to her as one whom "Satan bound for eighteen years" (Luke 13:16). In vs. 11, the ESV says she had a "disabling spirit." The NIV translates it, "crippled by a spirit;" while the KJV states that she had "spirit of infirmity."

⁵⁵ A. Neubauer, trans., *Book of Tobit* (public domain, 1878), Tobit Ch. 3, https://www.sefaria.org/Book_of_Tobit.1.1?ven=The_Book_of_Tobit_English_translation_by_A._Neubauer_1878&lang=bi, Accessed April 12, 2024. Tobit was written in the 2nd or 3rd century BCE.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Schneiders, *Complete Edition*, 37-38.

expands the storyline from the *Book of the Watchers*.⁵⁸ *Jubilees* describes evil spirits being subservient to “Mastema,” a Satan-type figure.⁵⁹

Although *Jubilees* is clear that humans have a choice about whether to sin, it also says that “malignant spirits assisted and seduced (them) into committing transgression and uncleanness.”⁶⁰ It is the nature of these spirits to “to do all manner of wrong and sin, and all manner of transgression, to corrupt and destroy, and to shed blood upon the earth.”⁶¹ With the watcher’s tradition from 1 Enoch as its interpretive lens, *Jubilees* lays out a robust recapitulation of much of the Pentateuch that is likely in the collective consciousness of the original recipients of Christ’s ministry. Jesus neither affirms nor challenges this tradition. He demonstrates that regardless of the origin and nature of demons, their captives can be liberated.

Exegesis of Mark 5:1-20

Jesus did not coin the concept of demonization, and He was not the first to exorcise a demon. However, His ministry of liberation sent shockwaves that rippled far beyond Israel’s borders. After Jesus frees the man in the synagogue from his unclean tormenter, people proclaim, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27b). Jesus is clearly not the kind of exorcist they are familiar with. His “new teaching” liberates demoniacs and restores

⁵⁸ R. H. Charles, trans., *Book of Jubilees* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), introduction, <https://ccel.org/ccel/c/charles/otpseudepig/files/jubilee/index.htm>, Accessed April 12, 2024.

⁵⁹ Ibid., *Jubilees* 10:8-9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., *Jubilees* 11:3.

⁶¹ Ibid., *Jubilees* 11:4.

peace to the synagogue. What is new about His “teaching” and its subsequent effects?

Exegesis of Mark’s Gerasene demoniac pericope will help answer this question.

Mark writes, “They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes” (Mark 5:1). The referenced area is in the region known as Decapolis—Gentile territory.⁶² Joy Vaughn, assistant professor of New Testament at Asbury Seminary, notes that “the variance in manuscript tradition (Gadara, Gergesa, Gerasa) is likely due to the attempt to situate the story in a region closer to the lake.”⁶³ “And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit” (v. 2). Before describing his maniacal condition, Mark describes him as a man. Even in his deeply demonized condition, his identity has not completely disappeared. He is a man, but he has an unclean spirit. Christ’s exorcistic command echoes this truth. He says, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit” (v. 8). Jesus separates the demonic identity from the human identity, and the man is restored to “his right mind” (v. 15). Kim offers this insight:

[T]he phrase ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ ([Mark] 1:23; 5:2) shows the ritually impure character of the unclean spirits. The phrase is often translated literally as “a man with an unclean spirit.” However, it may be misleading. Many unclean spirits were in the Gerasene demoniac (5:9), so he should not be a man with one unclean spirit. The ἐν phrase states that the man was in an unclean state due to contact with the plural unclean spirits. The phrase is better translated as “a man in an unclean state with reference to his own spirit.”⁶⁴

⁶² N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Volume 2: Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996), Loc. 4328, Ch. 5, sec. 4, (iv), (b) ‘Mighty Works: Interpretation.’

⁶³ Joy L. Vaughan, *Phenomenal Phenomena: Biblical and Multicultural Accounts of Spirits and Exorcism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023), 445-46.

⁶⁴ Kim, *The Enochic Traditions*, 158.

Jesus does not show up screaming at demons. He sees the man in an unclean state and chooses to cleanse him. Recognizing demons is vital for liberation, but acknowledging the individual is essential to integration.⁶⁵

The language of “unclean spirit” has already been thoroughly exegeted in this chapter. With the previous observations in mind, notice the “unclean” imagery in the following verses.

He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:3-5).

Levitical echoes are clearly present. Contact with the dead makes people unclean; he lives “among the tombs” and is thus continually unclean (Mark 5:1, 5; Num 19:11-22). Those who are unclean from leprosy must “cry out” (Lev 13:45); He is “always crying out” (Mark 5:5). Unclean lepers wear “torn clothes” (Lev 13:45); Luke’s account notes that the demoniac has not worn clothes “for a long time” (Luke 8:27). When considered alongside the nearby herd of pigs and the story’s location in Gentile territory, the need for cleansing appears overwhelming.

If this man is indeed a Gentile, he is not bound by clean/unclean laws, but this does not undermine Mark’s clear use of Levitical language. In fact, it sends a stronger message—Christ is now cleansing the Gentiles. The promise of Zechariah 13:1-2 overflows beyond Israel’s borders and blesses the nations as the “fountain” is “opened.”

⁶⁵ Integration is used throughout this chapter to describe the restoration of the individual to a place of peace and order with God, himself, and society. The concept of integration is expounded on at length in chapter 3 of this project.

Signs of psychological dis-integration are clear in the demoniac alongside clear preternatural signs.⁶⁶ He cuts himself with stones (Mark 5:5), possesses hidden knowledge (vv. 6-7), has unnatural strength (vv. 3b-4), and displays multiple personalities (vv. 7, 9-10, 12).⁶⁷ Ben Witherington posits, “We may even be meant to think that he was impelled to be involved in satanic rituals (slashing oneself with rocks?). ... He was so little in control of himself that he could not keep from injuring himself.”⁶⁸ The devastation of his condition is overwhelming.

The spirit pleads with Jesus not to torment it (Mark 5:7). During Christ’s dialogue with the spirit, it vacillates between individual and plural pronouns (vv. 7, 9, 12). This may indicate that the many spirits are under a singular leader as in *Jubilees* and is consistent with the self-description of the demons as “legion” (v. 9).⁶⁹ It also illustrates a significant level of psychological distress on the part of the demonized man.

One of the most notable features of this story is the transfer of unclean spirits into pigs. This is the only exorcism narrative in which Jesus asks a spirit’s name. It identifies

⁶⁶ Vaughan, *Phenomenal Phenomena*, 135-174. Vaughan’s analysis of the Gerasene demoniac’s enormous strength in light of anthropology and cross-cultural considerations demonstrates that this account is consistent with reports of possession states throughout the majority world and across multiple cultures and religions. This supports the historical veracity of Mark 5:1-20.

⁶⁷ Moscicke, “*The Gerasene Exorcism and Jesus’ Eschatological Expulsion*,” 365-366. As noted in this article, Enochian echoes are also likely present in this Mark 5 account. See also, Nicholas A. Elder, “Of Porcine and Polluted Spirits: Reading the Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) with the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2016): 430–46. Elder sees the Book of the Watchers as the undeniable backdrop to this entire pericope. While Enochian imagery is likely present, some of this is accounted for by allusions to Levitical purity codes that are found in 1 Enoch. Reading this pericope in light of 1 Enoch has value. However, making too much of this connection may undermine the Levitical allusions and their Christological focus that is tethered to Zechariah 13:1-2.

⁶⁸ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 181.

⁶⁹ Charles, *Jubilees* 10:8-9.

itself as “Legion,” which is a Latin loan-word designating a unit of 5,600 soldiers.⁷⁰

When Jesus grants permission, the demons immediately drive 2,000 pigs to their death (Mark 5:13) This clearly demonstrates the spirits’ destructiveness and gives the impression that they were under divine restraint while in the man.⁷¹ It appears, however, that the pigs’ death sent a larger message. “[D]ocumentary evidence indicates that Gerasa served as a regional centre for Roman presence in the Decapolis represented by a Roman procurator with his staff, an imperial cult, and military presence by the early and mid-first century C.E.”⁷² The symbol of the wild boar is found on coins and inscriptions about the Roman legion, *X Fretensis*, that occupied the Gerasenes at the time.⁷³ The death of the pigs sends a clear message—the kingdom of God, with Jesus as its King, is greater than Rome.⁷⁴

The liberated man is now seen “sitting there, clothed, and in his right mind,” and the people of that region are “afraid” (Mark 5:15) and ask Jesus to leave (v. 17). Joshua Garroway offers a fitting synopsis of this account in his article, “The Invasion of a Mustard Seed.” He writes,

The first thirteen verses (w. 1-13) portray the violent destruction of that ruling kingdom, achieved through synecdoche by the annihilation of an occupying legion. The ensuing seven verses (w. 14-20) portray the peaceful invasion of a

⁷⁰ Vaughan, *Phenomenal Phenomena*, 148.

⁷¹ They kill 2,000 pigs, but the man survived with all of them inside him. This may suggest that they were unable to take his life.

⁷² Albert L. A. Hogeterp, “Trauma and Its Ancient Literary Representation: Mark 5,1-20,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 111, no. 1 (2020): 11, doi:10.1515/znw-2020-0001.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁴ This is especially significant since tradition holds that Mark wrote his Gospel based on sermons Peter preached in Rome.

new and different kind of kingdom, the kingdom of God. The invaded becomes the invader as the cured demoniac, like a solitary mustard seed, reenters the community from which he has been expelled and preaches a message that rapidly proliferates. The colonial ideology of invasion is thus mimicked and invoked, but also subversively altered. The might of an occupying kingdom is conquered, as expected, with even greater might, yet against expectations the ensuing kingdom invades in a most unmighty manner—through the planting of a single, meager seed.⁷⁵

Jesus liberates the man, reintegrates him into his own community, and thus paves the way for the entire region's liberation. The unclean becomes clean; the common becomes holy.

Sanctification by the Blood, the Spirit, and the Truth

Among the seven exorcism narratives and various other references to deliverance provided by the synoptics, none explain how individuals initially became demonized. The same is true of the book of Acts (Acts 5:16; 8:5-8; 16:16-18; 19:11-20).⁷⁶ However, a significant indication is given by Christ in the Gospel of Mark about the roots of demonization.

Jesus “called the people to him again and said to them, ‘Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him’” (Mark 7:14-15). The disciples are confused by this statement and, assuming this is a parable, ask for clarification in private (Mark 7:17). Jesus explains,

⁷⁵ Joshua D. Garroway, “The Invasion of a Mustard Seed: A Reading of Mark 5.1-20,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32, no. 1 (2009): 59–60, doi:10.1177/0142064X09339138.

⁷⁶ While not stated explicitly, the cause of demonization may be implied in Acts chapters 8 and 19. In Acts 8, the text indicates that Simon the sorcerer had previously bewitched the Samaritans (KJV). It is possible that his sorcery and their obsession with it played a role in demonization (Acts 8:9-11). In Acts 19, converts who previously practiced “magic arts” burned their books, valued at “fifty thousand pieces of silver” (Acts 19:19). This degree of occult involvement likely played a role in their previous demonization. It is certainly noteworthy that these two passages mention the prevalence of witchcraft alongside the need for exorcisms.

‘Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?’ (Thus, he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person (Mark 7:18b-23).

Jesus does not discard the clean/unclean framework, but cutting past the historic boundaries, He reveals the true source of uncleanness—the heart.⁷⁷ Food does not make people unclean; sin does.

Sanctification by the Blood

Jesus lists thirteen kinds of sin that defile people, and it appears throughout Mark that being defiled (or unclean) makes people vulnerable to unclean spirits. What, then, can be done about “evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, [and] foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22)? Those who are defiled by these things must be sanctified, that is, separated from sin and to God—made clean.⁷⁸ This is only possible through Zechariah’s eschatological “fountain” (Zech 13:1), which is the blood of Jesus.

Reflecting on sanctification in the book of Hebrews, Silva writes,

Christ has entered the sanctuary once for all with the gift of his blood and has achieved eternal redemption ([Heb] 9:12; 10:14). His self-offering renders obsolete the animal sacrifices of the temple. By the will of God “we have been

⁷⁷ These are referenced as “boundaries” due to the earlier explanation that food laws, etc. were meant to mitigate against sin and idolatry.

⁷⁸ An interesting corollary to the Mark 7 list and the concept of spiritual defilement is found in Hebrews 12:15-17. When someone “fails to obtain the grace of God” and lives in their own power, a “root of bitterness” may “spring up and cause trouble.” When bitterness is not quickly dealt with, people become “defiled” or unclean. Uncleanness separates you from God’s presence, and the next step is an increased tendency toward being “sexually immoral or unholy like Esau” who was driven by fleshly desires. Eternal benefits (birthright) are traded for temporal pleasure (a single meal); the person is “rejected” by God, and their existence becomes one of “tears.” This progression is loaded with relevance for deliverance.

made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10). But “since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place” (10:19), the author warns us not to defile the blood of the covenant, through which each one has been sanctified (10:29).⁷⁹

Sin must be confessed, repented of, and surrendered to God (1 John 1:9).

In his *Pentecostal Theology*, Wolfgang Vondey writes,

Sanctification as a tarrying practice contains the confession of sin and the surrender of one’s sinful nature to God, not only as an act of the mind but, in the concrete space of the altar, as a physical and sometimes violent struggle of the flesh. Believers tarry for Jesus, both in an active separation from the world, and through participation in the sanctifying presence of Christ. There is no Pentecostal tarrying without Jesus, since believers are sanctified by his blood (1 John 1:7; Heb 10:10; Rev 1:5).⁸⁰

The opportunity for sanctification by the blood is epitomized in the cross of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Jesus is more powerful than an exorcistic command, for while the latter may drive out demons, the former cleanses the heart from conditions that allow demonization.⁸¹

Sanctification by the Spirit

The Apostle Paul expresses his desire, “that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16b). He goes on to boast of “what Christ has accomplished ... to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed” (v. 18b). The next verse says, “by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit

⁷⁹ Moisés Silva, ed., “ἁγιος, G43,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 131.

⁸⁰ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 64, Kindle.

⁸¹ In the Gospel of John, Twelftree sees the cross epitomized as “the complete defeat of the evil ruler of this world.” Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 282.

of God” (v. 19a). This includes the Spirit’s activity in exorcism and healing, by which He breaks the power of uncleanness and restores people to the covenant community within which He dwells.⁸²

Another aspect of sanctification is that people become more holy through “association with ... the Holy Spirit.”⁸³ Following a detailed list of defiling sins, the apostle writes, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Vondey reflects on this truth, “[T]he Pentecostal experience of the Lord is accompanied by the witness of the Holy Spirit in physical manifestations that can range from the inward sense of deliverance from sin to the dramatic exorcism of a demonic spirit. Christians are sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Pet 1:2).”⁸⁴ The Holy Spirit sets people free and makes them holy (2 Cor 3:17).

Sanctification by the Truth

It is significant that the Gospel of John contains no exorcism narratives. This editorial decision on the part of the apostle has profound implications. Twelftree writes, Satan is not confronted in the form of sickness caused by demons but in the form of unbelief inspired by the father of lies. So, exorcism is not the response to demon possession; truth is its antidote.”⁸⁵ Jesus speaks boldly to those wishing to kill Him,

⁸² Kim, *The Enochic Traditions*, 158.

⁸³ Silva, ed., “ἅγιος, G43” in *NIDNTTE*, 130.

⁸⁴ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 64.

⁸⁵ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 282. Twelftree’s reflection is here focused on John’s Gospel.

saying “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires” (John 8:44). Still, His promise to them is, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (vv. 31-32). Truth has an exorcistic function; it liberates.

Jesus prays for His disciples, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Sanctification by truth has a powerful, integrating effect on the mind and spirit. Those who are separated from God “are darkened in their understanding” (Eph 4:18), while followers of Christ are urged to “be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (v. 23).⁸⁶ This sanctifying renewal enables believers to “put away falsehood” and “speak the truth” (v. 25), to “be angry” and “not sin” (v. 26), and to “give no opportunity to the devil” (v. 27). It transforms the way that Christ-followers act and speak (vv. 28-29) and protects them against grieving the Spirit (v. 30). It equips people to let go of “bitterness,” “wrath,” “anger,” “clamor,” “slander,” and “malice,” and to embrace kindness, forgiveness, and tender-heartedness (vv. 31-32).

Vondey envisions sanctification as a supernatural force in the lives of believers.

He writes,

[T]he fullness (not a portion) of sanctifying grace is poured out by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals speak of this aspect of sanctification as ‘deliverance’ and being ‘set free’, code words that can indicate the experience of justification, typically at a person’s conversion, or the affirmation of justification in a subsequent experience, and that refer to a concrete and repeated sense of liberation from sin, addiction, sickness, and even demon-possession.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Silva notes, “The mind is also the locus of spiritual struggle: as the true inner self that distinguishes between good and bad.” Moisés Silva, ed., “*νοῦς*, G5706” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 431.

⁸⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 79-80.

In the New Testament, sanctification is received by the blood of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and by the truth of the Word. Individuals are transformed from unclean to clean. The mind is renewed; the heart is purified, and true deliverance is realized.

Summary Principles from Integrative and Liberative Practices of Jesus and the Apostles

1. Christ emphasizes, not just the act of casting out demons or curing diseases, but the broader process of sanctification—cleansing people spiritually and restoring them to wholeness.
2. Jesus uses His teachings to heal, integrating spiritual truths that promote internal peace and reconciliation with God and others.
3. The New Testament differentiates between demonization and other disease states.
4. Healthy deliverance practices differentiate between human identity and demonic identity.
5. Christ endows His disciples with authority over unclean spirits and all forms of affliction, underscoring the battle against spiritual darkness as central to the Christian mission.
6. Believers should not focus on power, but rather on identity and relationship with God, which is the true source of purity and wholeness.
7. The process of holistic sanctification cleanses individuals from the inside out, addressing the root causes of spiritual and moral defilements and establishing a foundation for a life transformed by divine grace.

Demonization, Mental Illness, and Deliverance in Early Church Practice and Patristic Writings

The primary focus of the New Testament authors is not on neatly categorizing people's distress as either spiritual, physical, or psychological. Nonetheless, "lines of demarcation" between demonization and other disease states do exist in Scripture, as previously noted.⁸⁸ It is a mistake to attribute all illness to demons, a mistake that is neither representative of early church practice nor of patristic writings.

The Early Church valued the Old Testament text, which is replete with examples of psychological distress without reference to evil spirits. Job, Elijah, Jeremiah, and

⁸⁸ Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance*, 297.

Jonah long for death (Job 6:8; 1 Kgs 19:4; Jer 20:19; Jonah 4:3). Their mindset has been described as “the debilitating contemplation of death characteristic of a depressed state of mind.”⁸⁹ In Job’s case, psychological distress is connected to loss and physical suffering; Elijah and Jeremiah’s death wish is related to life and ministry pain, and Jonah’s is due to a rebellious heart.⁹⁰

Two kings, Saul and Nebuchadnezzar, experience psychological decomposition as the result of divine judgment (1 Sam 16:14-16; 18:10-11; Dan 4:30-33). Saul becomes homicidal, and Nebuchadnezzar goes completely insane.⁹¹ King David’s prayer describes his own struggle with depression. He writes, “I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. ... My soul also is greatly troubled. ... I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping” (Ps 6:2-6). Depression, insanity, and suicidal ideation are therefore not exclusively tied to demonization in biblical thought. In the synoptics and in Acts, some physical and psychological conditions are healed through exorcism, while others are healed without regard to demons.

⁸⁹ Devora K. Wohlgeleirnter, “Death Wish in the Bible.” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 19, no. 2 (1981): 131.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹¹ Not all scholars understand Saul’s torment as being from a demon in the New Testament sense. Heiser comments that “by ‘evil spirit’” the writer may mean that God was the source of an undesirable mental affliction or psychological disposition. As it relates to these and other Gospel passages, the ‘evil spirit’ may therefore be some sort of physical malady or mental illness.” Stated another way, separation from God may very well cause psychological decomposition even in the absence of direct demonic torment. Heiser, *Demons*, 197.

Apostolic Perspectives

Paul

There is no shortage of perspective on spiritual warfare given in Paul's writings.

Keener offers a robust summary,

Paul's letters mention his signs and wonders (2 Cor 12:12; Rom 15:19) but do not specify what particular experiences these included. Given his belief in demons among pagans (1 Cor 10:10) and what we know of his context in early Judaism and Christianity, there is no reason to dispute that the signs could have included exorcisms. ... But Paul is writing letters to the converted, for whom exhortation is more directly relevant than exorcism. The letters emphasize the cosmic role of demonic powers more than Luke-Acts does; the narrative genre is more apt to emphasize exorcism whereas Paul's letters appear better equipped to address a theology of cosmic evil.⁹²

Throughout Paul's writings, he demonstrates consciousness of demonic opposition, and he responds to it by encouraging believers to wear spiritual armor (Eph 6:10-20) and use spiritual weapons (2 Cor 10:3-6). He also employs integrative teaching to promote inner peace with God and self and to mitigate against anxiety (Phil 4:4-9), and he places priority on "renewal of your mind" to bring about deep transformation (Rom 12:2).

Luke's chronicle of Paul's ministry in the book of Acts includes exorcisms performed in Philippi, where he casts the "spirit of pythones" from a female slave, and in Ephesus where an abundance of occult material is burned by those who are converted.⁹³ In the Ephesus account, there does appear to be a textual link between exorcism and healing (Acts 19:12). However, this connection is notably absent in other accounts of

⁹² Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1-23:35, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2464.

⁹³ Ibid., 2422-2429. Keener describes the semantic connection between the "spirit of pythones" and Apollo's Pythian oracle of Delphi. Keener notes on pg. 2429 that John Chrysostom later reads this "narrative as a confrontation with Apollo, here recognized as a demon (*Hom. Acts* 35)."

healing through Paul in the same book (14:10; 20:9-12).

James

James's epistle warns believers, saying "if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts" then it "is earthly, unspiritual, [and] demonic" (Jas 3:14-15). He warns of the dangers of infighting among believers, of unbridled "passions," and of covetousness, adulterous tendencies, and "friendship with the world" (4:1-4). Still, James does not call for exorcism as a response to these "demonic" struggles (3:15). Rather, he instructs believers, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (4:8-9). Believers engage in warfare, but they do so from a posture of victory.

James addresses suffering and sickness, which logically includes mental suffering and illness, yet he notably does not make a connection between it and the demonic.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed (Jas 5:13-16a).

James's language calls for integrative healing. Believers are to pray, sing, welcome church leaders to pray "over" them, practice confession, and pray for others.⁹⁴

Peter

Peter demonstrates a robust demonology that alludes heavily to the Enochian

⁹⁴ Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance*, 5, 12, 22.

tradition. Notably, the first reference he makes to evil spirits is in a reflection on their defeat through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Pet 3:18-22). Peter envisions believers participating in the victory of Christ through baptism, noting that Jesus “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (v. 22).

Peter’s call to action against demon powers is strikingly like James’s admonitions. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” (1 Pet 5:6; see Jas 4:10). In a highly integrative exhortation, believers are told to cast “all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pet 5:7). Anxiety disorders can be debilitating; Peter does not attribute anxiety to demons but encourages believers to trust in God’s care.

In a call to mental soundness and spiritual awareness, Peter writes, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8). The recommended response again echoes James, “Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pet 5:9; see Jas 4:7). This passage has a powerful integrative message in that it offers spiritual victory through conscious resistance while grounding believers in a global perspective of suffering.⁹⁵

Peter’s second epistle carries a sharp tone of rebuke. He calls to memory the judgment against the Enochian watchers, warning false teachers and apostates within the

⁹⁵ While calling on believers to resist the devil, who seeks an opportunity to devour them, Peter also reminds them that they are not alone in their suffering. Although he is writing about the devil in particular rather than about unclean spirits or demons in general, this passage nonetheless offers strong integrative direction to all who are under spiritual attack.

church that they are in danger of the same judgment (2 Pet 2:4-10).⁹⁶ Peter condemns those who lack restraint regarding spiritual beings, saying, “they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones” (4:10). Peter warns that those who live in bold, unrepentant sin are in danger of returning to their former “defilement” (2:18-20). They risk becoming demonized and suffering ultimate judgment (vv. 20-22).⁹⁷

Jude

Like Peter, Jude offers sharp rebukes of those who indulge sensual desires, blaspheme, and despise authority, clearly comparing them to the fallen watchers (Jude 6-8; 2 Pet 2:2, 10). Like Peter, Jude warns about people who “defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones” (Jude 8b). Part of Jude’s warning appears to be an admonition not to associate with spiritual beings in inappropriate ways, using Michael the archangel as an example of how to deal with the devil.⁹⁸ As in Leviticus, inappropriate contact with spirits risks defilement (Lev 19:26-31; 20:6, 27; Jude 8-10), and in this case, possibly demonization and destruction.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Schneiders, *The Complete Collection*, (1 Enoch 10:4-16; 21:10), 36-38, 46.

⁹⁷ Reddin, *Power Encounter*, 57-58. Reddin notes that backsliders may forfeit divine protection.

⁹⁸ Heiser notes that *doksas*, “glorious ones ... probably refers to divine beings of the council close to God’s glorious presence, since Second Temple period texts describe such beings. ... The wording suggests some distinction between angels and ‘glorious ones’ in rank (and perhaps power).” Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 331-32.

⁹⁹ In the interest of space and because the themes in the Johannine epistles are conceptually similar to what has already been noted from John’s gospel, they will not be treated here. A leading theme is the victory of truth over the powers of darkness. John’s use of “light” and “life” are also relevant (1 John 1:1-2, 5-8). The book of Revelation is also not handled in this chapter, though its imagery of the total defeat of Satan’s kingdom and the shutting out of all that is unclean is breathtaking (Rev 16:13; 22:15).

Patristic Perspectives

Those who emerge as stewards of the apostolic witness in the generations following the apostles' death are tasked with the sacred responsibility of world evangelization and preservation of the apostles' teaching and practice. Their insights on demonization, deliverance, and mental illness are worthy of serious consideration. Although space does not allow for a comprehensive survey, the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Cyprian of Carthage, and John Chrysostom demonstrate how Christian thought developed regarding this subject during the first three centuries after the death of the apostles.

Justin Martyr—100 - 165 C.E.

The earliest Christian writings after the New Testament are typically called the writings of the apostolic fathers. Exorcism is not a prevailing theme in this body of literature, though as Twelftree notes, “none of their pieces of literature of this period had purposes that would require exorcism to be a central theme.”¹⁰⁰ Justin Martyr emerges after them, as part of a group known as the apologists. Justin speaks out strongly against the persecution of believers and, within this context, has much to say about demons.

Far from viewing the name of Jesus as some sort of magical formula, Justin envisions the incarnation itself as “the destruction of the demons.”¹⁰¹ Describing the prevalence of exorcism, Justin writes,

¹⁰⁰ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 285.

¹⁰¹ Justin Martyr, 2nd Apology, Ch. 7, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 503, Kindle.

For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.¹⁰²

Justin here asserts that Christian exorcism is effective when all other attempts have failed, and its approach is distinct from other forms known in that time.¹⁰³

Justin affirms the Enochian tradition, claiming that the demons, the offspring of the watchers,

subdued the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions; and among men they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness.¹⁰⁴

Justin envisions demons as inspiring all kinds of sin. However, his rebuke is aimed squarely at the Christians' persecutors, who are serving demons. "For if they are even now overthrown by men through the name of Jesus Christ, this is an intimation of the punishment in eternal fire which is to be inflicted on themselves and those who serve them."¹⁰⁵ The name of Jesus is greater than demons, so it is certainly superior to those who serve demons.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ William Whiston, translator, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), Ant. 8:2.5, pg. 214. The first century historian, Josephus, describes the actions of a Jewish exorcist in the presence of the emperor, Vespasian. The exorcist "put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac; after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils, and when the man fell down, he adjured him to return no more."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2nd Apology, Ch. 5, 502.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2nd Apology, Ch. 8, 505.

Irenaeus of Lyon—130 – 202 C.E.

Irenaeus emerges in the second century C.E. as an important defender of the Christian faith against heresy. Irenaeus heard Polycarp preach on numerous occasions, who was closely associated with the Apostle John. Thus, Irenaeus is sometimes called the spiritual great-grandson of John. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus writes,

For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ] and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ....¹⁰⁶

Two generations after the Apostle John, Irenaeus maintains the language of cleansing from evil spirits, a clear callback to the Old and New Testament framework of clean/unclean.

He notably differentiates between exorcism and healing, separating his discussion of them with a reference to visions and prophecy. While Irenaeus does not discuss mental illness, he maintains a framework that allows for healing from illnesses without regard to demons. Further, the last sentence in the above quote identifies these signs and wonders as being performed in the name of Christ “throughout the whole world.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 2, Ch. XXXII.4, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 1082, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Cyprian of Carthage—210 – 258 C.E.

Cyprian was born in northern Africa and became bishop of Carthage in 249 C.E., where he served until his death as a martyr. Cyprian celebrates baptism in water as a powerful moment of deliverance for those who are converted. He records how exorcists battle with demons but are sometimes unable to prevail. He writes, “[T]he devil is scourged, and burned, and tortured by exorcists, by the human voice, and by divine power; and although he often says that he is going out, and will leave the men of God, yet in that which he says he deceives....”¹⁰⁸ Cyprian offers no explanation for this struggle, but he confidently asserts that the demons are overthrown by baptism.

The imagery of baptism overthrowing demon powers is consistent with the apostolic witness. Paul writes,

having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead ... by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Col 2:12-15).

The imagery of baptism includes believers participating in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, through which demons were conquered.

This is consistent with the witness of John’s Gospel, where no demons are exorcised from individuals, but assurance is given that Satan himself will be cast out. John writes, “‘Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said

¹⁰⁸ Cyprian, *Epistle LXXV.15-16: To Magnus, on Baptizing the Novatians, and Those Who Obtain Grace on a Sick-Bed*, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 7432, Kindle.

this to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (John 12:31-33). Satan is defeated through the cross, and that victory over darkness is symbolized in baptism.

Cyprian continues,

When, however, they come to the water of salvation and to the sanctification of baptism, we ought to know and to trust that there the devil is beaten down, and the man, dedicated to God, is set free by the divine mercy. For as scorpions and serpents, which prevail on the dry ground, when cast into water, cannot prevail nor retain their venom; so also the wicked spirits, which are called scorpions and serpents, and yet are trodden under foot by us, by the power given by the Lord, cannot remain any longer in the body of a man in whom, baptized and sanctified, the Holy Spirit is beginning to dwell.¹⁰⁹

Cyprian sees, in baptism, a supernatural release of God’s presence that confirms what was first experienced through repentance and faith in Jesus.

He does not, however, see baptism as absolute assurance that one cannot backslide and again become demonized. Cyprian writes, “[I]f subsequently they begin to sin, [they] are shaken by the return of the unclean spirit, so that it is manifest that the devil is driven out in baptism by the faith of the believer and returns if the faith afterwards shall fail.”¹¹⁰ The language of cleansing and driving out unclean spirits through baptism is consistent with the clean/unclean motif of Leviticus and its application in Mark’s Gospel. Further, the possibility of defilement through compulsive, post-baptismal sin, and the threat of reinfestation by demons is consistent with what has been examined from 2 Peter 2:19-22.

John Chrysostom—347 – 407 C.E.

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch, Syria and became the bishop of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Constantinople in 398 C.E.¹¹¹ Chrysostom clearly differentiates between demonization and mental illness. In a dissertation submitted to Durham University, Claire Elayne Salem offers a detailed analysis of Chrysostom's views on insanity.¹¹² Salem writes, "Chrysostom understood mental illness, 'classic' demonic possession, and sin (which is also truly a type of demonic possession) all as types of insanity. Of the three, sin is clearly the most serious."¹¹³ Chrysostom discusses these three kinds of "madness" in numerous places, but it features most prominently in his homilies on Matthew and 2 Corinthians.¹¹⁴

Chrysostom writes that demonized individuals are "troubled by evil spirits [and] deserve rather our pity and our tears."¹¹⁵ He does not view demon possessed people as fully responsible for their own actions, but those who willfully live in sin "are frantic while they reason, keeping their orgies in the midst of cities, and maddened with some new kind of madness."¹¹⁶ Chrysostom says he "would sooner consent to dwell with ten

¹¹¹ Chrysostom means "Golden tongue." It was a nickname given to him due to his eloquence.

¹¹² Claire Elayne Salem, "*Sanity, Insanity, and Man's Being as Understood by St. John Chrysostom*," (PhD diss., Durham theses, Durham University, 2020), <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3269/>.

¹¹³ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homily on Matthew, XXIX.6, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 29952, Kindle.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Homily on Matthew, XXVIII.4, 26778.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

thousand demoniacs, than with one diseased in this way.”¹¹⁷ Chrysostom has more hope for the demonized than he does for compulsive sinners.

Salem explains, “Nowhere in the Matthew homilies does Chrysostom state unequivocally that a mental illness is natural in origin. However, he does do this in his homilies on II Corinthians... .”¹¹⁸ The reference here noted by Salem is worthy of inclusion, as it references Chrysostom’s three types of madness at some length,

For to pursue shadows is a madman’s (μαινόμενου) part. ... For there is yet another madness (μανία), sorer than that caused by devils, than that from frenzy (φρενίτιδος). For that admits of forgiveness (συγγνώμην), but this is destitute of excuse (ἀπολογίας), seeing the soul itself is corrupted and its right judgment lost; and that of frenzy (φρενίτιδος) indeed is an affection of the body (σωματικὸν πάθος), but this madness (μανία) hath its seat in the artificer mind.¹¹⁹

Chrysostom believes that some madness is demonic, and some is caused by a natural illness, but willful sin corrupts the soul and “right judgment is lost.”¹²⁰

Chrysostom recognizes that it can be difficult to differentiate among these three kinds of madness. He writes, “Mark the eyes of demoniacs (δαιμονώντων), and those of drunkards (μεθύοντων) and madmen (μαινόμενων); in what do they differ from each other? Is not the whole madness (μανία)?”¹²¹ The Holy Spirit’s gifts and guidance are

¹¹⁷ Ibid. To clarify, “diseased in this way” refers to those who willfully and compulsively live in sin.

¹¹⁸ Salem, “*Sanity, Insanity, and Man’s Being*,” 11.

¹¹⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, XXIX.6, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 29950, Kindle.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ John Chrysostom, *Homily on Acts*, XVII, Acts VII.35, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37*

essential for distinguishing among demonization, some kinds of mental illness, and addiction to sin.

Finally, Chrysostom speaks favorably of medical treatment for those who are mentally ill. “[T]he physicians, when they are kicked, and shamefully handled by the insane, then most of all pity them, and take measures for their perfect cure, knowing that the insult comes of the extremity of their disease.”¹²² Today’s leaders are also wise to welcome the wisdom and cooperation of medical doctors and mental health professionals while determining how to best help someone who is distressed.

Summary Principles from Apostolic and Patristic Perspectives

1. Christian exorcism celebrates the authority of the name of Jesus over all demons.
2. Although evil/unclean spirits actively oppose followers of Christ, it is the responsibility of every believer to turn from sin, resist temptation, and submit to God.
3. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the defeat of Satan was ensured; believers participate in Christ’s victory through faith and baptism while anticipating its full consummation of at His return.
4. Psychological distress can result from demonization, mental illness, or personal sin; much care should be taken in assessing the root of someone’s distress.

Conclusion

The Bible is the story of redemption. Old Testament symbolism of clean versus unclean was given as a guide to the Israelite people to emphasize the importance of sanctification when worshipping the one true God. The Synoptic Gospels utilize this imagery to emphasize humanity’s desperate need for Jesus Christ. The world does not

Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 27853, Kindle.

¹²² Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew*, XVIII.6, 26617.

simply need another exorcist. It needs the one who truly cleanses and takes away the unclean spirit.

Although liberation through the name of Christ certainly has private benefits, it serves the larger purpose of integrating those who are set free into the covenant community and helping them find peace with God, themselves, and others. As Twelftree writes, “[W]e should pay as little attention to the demonic as is pastorally possible. Yet we should confront the demonic as much as is pastorally required.”¹²³ Therefore, faith leaders should carefully weigh all factors when assessing the source of an individual’s distress, seek godly counsel and divine guidance, and respond boldly through faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

¹²³ Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*, 294.

CHAPTER 3: GENERAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors....”¹ C.S. Lewis penned those words in 1941, but they still ring true today. This is nowhere more evident than in a comparative study of possession states found in sacred and secular literature.

Anthropologist Erika Bourguignon’s global study on dissociation and altered states of consciousness finds that among 488 researched societies, possession states exist in at least 437, or 89 percent.² Although Bourguignon’s research was later expanded and republished, there have been no subsequent attempts “to compare rates.”³ This chapter examines the global phenomenon of possession through the lens of considerations relevant to both pastors and mental health professionals.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1941), ix.

² Erika Bourguignon, “Hallucination and Trance: An Anthropologist’s Perspective,” in *Origin and Mechanisms of Hallucinations: Proceedings of the 14th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychiatric Research Association held in New York City (November 14–15, 1969)* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1970), 184, 187.

³ Erika Bourguignon, *Possession* (San Francisco, CA: Chandler and Sharp, 1976); Vishal Bhavsar, Antonio Ventriglio, and Dinesh Bhugra, “Dissociative Trance and Spirit Possession: Challenges for Cultures in Transition,” *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 70, no. 12 (December 2016): 551-59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pcn.12425>.

Spiritual and psychological interventions need not be considered conflicting approaches. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck explains, “In my mind, psychology and theology are so integrated as to be interdependent branches of the same science.”⁴ While Peck offers a compelling case for this claim, it is not indicative of the prevailing tone found in the writings of either discipline regarding possession.⁵

In a dissertation submitted to the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Alexander DiChiara documents the divorce of theology from secular psychology. He notes, “Exorcisms were plentiful in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this upsurge of cases created a great urgency to come up with answers. Throughout time, individuals looked to the Church ... to help with this matter, but more recently, the tide has turned to science and psychology, to detrimental results.”⁶ This chapter surveys the literature from both camps, noting areas of commonality as well as areas of disagreement. It ultimately seeks to address how the insights of pastors and mental health professionals can be integrated into healthy therapeutic interventions for those who suffer from some type of possession.

Considerations for Pastors

William Peter Blatty’s film, *The Exorcist*, made its cinematic debut in 1973, terrifying audiences across the globe. The movie, while fiction, is based loosely on the

⁴ M. Scott Peck, *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist’s Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption* (Washington, DC: Free Press, 2005), 1.

⁵ Peck personally performed two exorcisms in his practice as a psychiatrist and shares his hopefulness that demon possession and exorcism will one day be given serious scientific consideration.

⁶ Alexander DiChiara, “Dissociation, Possession, Or Otherwise? A Post-Critical Analysis of Exorcism” (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2021), 11, ProQuest.

story of a teenage boy exorcised by a Jesuit priest, William S. Bowdern.⁷ Although Blatty's depiction differed from the true account, "the devil-plagued girl of the book and movie became the image of a human being in the grip of demons."⁸ It is doubtful that anyone foresaw the explosion of purported cases of demonic activity and the numerous deliverance ministries that were spawned in the years following the release of *The Exorcist*.⁹ Modern media continues fueling conversations and assumptions about possession and exorcism, resulting in demands for answers being continually brought to pastors.¹⁰

Although pastors and scholars writing about exorcism know that most cinematic depictions of possession are inaccurate, the fact remains that the imagery and ideologies displayed in movies are deeply attached to the concept of possession in the minds of many people.¹¹ For this reason and others, pastors and exorcists often prefer the word "demonized" over the word "possessed."¹² Pastors recognize varying degrees of

⁷ Thomas B. Allen, *Possessed: The True Story of an Exorcism* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, 2000), x.

⁸ Ibid., xi-xii.

⁹ Michael Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 5-13.

¹⁰ William S. Chavez, "Modern Practice, Archaic Ritual: Catholic Exorcism in America." *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 5, 22, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100811>. While Cuneo's research used data leading up to 1998, Chavez notes on page 5 (referenced above) that from 1998 forward there have been "more than thirty exorcism films."

¹¹ Michael S. Rose. "Diagnosing the Spectrum of Diabolic Attacks." *New Oxford Review* 88, no. 3 (April 2021): 21.

¹² Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 73-74. It is commonly noted in the literature by pastors and exorcists that the word "possession" denotes some kind of ownership and is therefore not preferred. Interestingly, literature by mental health professionals demonstrates a preference for the word "possession," as it demonstrates a condition in which

demonization, noting an observable spectrum of psychological impact. Further, the potential pathologies of distress attributed to demons are numerous. Understanding these realities is key to empowering pastors and mental health professionals to bridge the gap between theological and clinical understandings of possession.

Degrees of Demonization

While different classifications exist regarding degrees of demonization, pastors and exorcists generally agree that demonic activity occurs on a spectrum. Pablo Bottari, a deliverance minister in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition, states that people may be “oppressed,” “tormented,” or “possessed or demonized.”¹³ Anglican exorcist Mark Quay identifies “five types of demonic attack: oppression, obsession, possession, haunting, and curses.”¹⁴ Anglican pastor and psychologist T. Craig Isaacs recognizes “temptation, oppression, and possession.”¹⁵ Francis MacNutt, a Charismatic Catholic deliverance minister frequently referenced in Pentecostal and Charismatic works on the subject, divides demonic activity into that which comes from the “outside” and that which comes from “within us.”¹⁶ This division closely corresponds to the common teaching of

the individual has at least temporarily lost control. This will be explored at length in the review of literature by mental health professionals.

¹³ Pablo Bottari, *Free in Christ: Your Complete Handbook on the Ministry of Deliverance* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2000), 87-88.

¹⁴ Mark Allen Quay, *A Minister's Manual for Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 5.

¹⁵ T. Craig Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2009), 147.

¹⁶ MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits*, 74-77. MacNutt is from a Roman Catholic background but emerged as a prominent author and speaker among Charismatics and Pentecostals after receiving the baptism in the Spirit. While they come from various theological traditions, MacNutt, Quay, Isaacs, and Bottari are all Spirit-filled.

Pentecostals regarding oppression versus possession.¹⁷ MacNutt's framework will be used throughout the remainder of this examination of degrees. Throughout the available literature, however, "demonization" is often used to describe the entire spectrum of attacks discussed in this paragraph.

Oppression

Demonic oppression is a focused external attack that is experienced in varying ways. MacNutt asserts that "there is what we might call emotional oppression, which comes when our spirit and emotions are weighed down by heaviness or depression. Many human psychological factors produce depression, but sometimes we find a demonic force bearing down on us to slow us up or prevent us from acting...."¹⁸ This demonstrates the complexity involved in categorizing a struggle as either purely spiritual or exclusively psychological.

Chris Hayward makes a similar observation in *God's Cleansing Stream* regarding oppression and followers of Christ:

Once indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a Christian cannot be possessed in his or her spirit by a demon. However, his or her soul (i.e., mind, will, and emotions) can be demonically harassed in many ways and with varying degrees of torment. These attacks from demons can be initiated because of personal trials (see 2 Cor. 12:7), by believing the lies of the enemy (see 2 Cor. 10:4–6) or by engaging in sinful activity (see Eph. 4:27).¹⁹

Most Pentecostals will readily agree with Hayward's observations about oppression. His

¹⁷ In popular preaching, Pentecostals tend to reference oppression as an external attack while possession is almost always seen as internal.

¹⁸ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 75. Though MacNutt only addresses spiritual and psychological factors in this section, depression may also result from a variety of biological or situational circumstances as well.

¹⁹ Chris Hayward, *God's Cleansing Stream: Developing a Life-Changing Deliverance Ministry in Your Church* (Fort Collins, CO: Arns Publishing, 2020), 31.

book was written as part of a deliverance ministry, Cleansing Stream, which originated under the leadership of the influential Pentecostal pastor Jack Hayford. While oppression is distinct from possession, the psychological impact of these external attacks may still be profound.

Pastors recognize that oppression is more than a mere nuisance in the lives of believers. Bottari explains that “through temptations and persecutions,” demons use “oppression to exert pressure on Christians ... to go back to their old sinful lifestyles.”²⁰ The effects of oppression may be experienced emotionally, physically, or spiritually. In *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance from Evil Spirits*, Neal Lozano writes, “Many Christians allow for demonic activity in theory but think it has no practical consequence in the life of a believer.”²¹ The consequences can be serious indeed.²² Through oppression, Satan seeks to wear people down to the extent that they willingly submit to his purposes.

Possession

Despite the potentially inaccurate images that the word “possession” evokes, it remains an important word for explaining the most severe form of demonic influence. In *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look*, David Lim explains, “In true cases of demonic possession, a person has surrendered his will to demons ... Those who are possessed project a new

²⁰ Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 88. Bottari references James 4:7 in conjunction with this statement.

²¹ Neal Lozano, *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (South Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2003), 42.

²² This research naturally raises questions regarding demonization and believers. For added perspective on this subject, see Appendix B, “Demonization and Believers.”

personality and voice, experiencing an obliteration of their own personalities for a time. Deliverance is absolutely necessary in these cases.”²³ The surrender of free will is a common explanation of exorcists regarding the distinction between oppression and possession.²⁴ Serious consequences follow when people surrender their wills, allowing demonic attacks to transition from external to internal.

In addition to the loss of their own personality and the devastating psychological effects discussed in the next section, demonic possession presents with clear preternatural signs.²⁵ The *Rituale Romanum*, originally published in 1614, requires that one of the following signs is present before proceeding with an exorcism: 1) the ability to speak or understand languages that the individual has not learned, 2) knowledge of “future or hidden events,” or 3) “display of powers which are beyond the subject’s age and natural condition.”²⁶ The presence of one or more of these signs helps objectively differentiate between demonic possession and medical or psychological disorders.

Psychiatrist Richard Gallagher is considered by many to be the foremost medical expert in the world on demonic possession. He notes the following additional symptoms that are often present in possessed persons:

²³ David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 84.

²⁴ Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2015), 91-92.

²⁵ Although the signs that will be described in the following sentences would be recognized by most as supernatural, the writings of exorcists and deliverance ministers typically use “preternatural” to explain the activity of demons but reserve the word “supernatural” to reference miracles that come from God. Preternatural signs are beyond nature, but they are distinct from divine activity.

²⁶ Philip T. Weller, trans., *The Roman Ritual, Part 2* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), Part XIII: Exorcism, chap. 1, accessed January 15, 2024, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/roman-ritual-part-2-11883>.

expressions of hatred of the sacred, blasphemous and vituperative language, the ability to discern (and recoil from) blessed objects, the phenomenon of levitation, and, most importantly, a trance-like state interrupted by the presence of what appears as an independent, intelligent entity (or entities), and the expressed desire of this intelligence not to leave the afflicted.²⁷

While all those suffering from demonization need compassionate and competent help, pastors should be cautious not to underestimate the seriousness of possession cases. As Bottari writes, “We have the right answer to the problems of the soul.”²⁸ Pastors must remember that liberation through the name of Christ is often the only hope for the possessed.²⁹

Psychological Impacts of Demonization

The psychological impact of demonization is devastating. While it may be more dramatic in cases of possession, the pain of oppression is no less real. MacNutt writes, “Some hear voices, which typically impel them toward suicide or hate (especially hatred of themselves). ... Others see visions or have nightmares that seem more real and convey more terror than ordinary nightmares. Still others feel impelled to do things they would never ordinarily think of doing.”³⁰ While not everyone who is demonically harassed hears voices, the sense of feeling driven by some outside force is nearly universal.

Isaacs warns of the danger of surrendering to this compulsion: “Giving in to the experience of being excessively driven to action is the final road to possession: to be

²⁷ Richard E. Gallagher, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” *New Oxford Review* 75, no. 3 (March 2008): 24.

²⁸ Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 77.

²⁹ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 24; Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 80.

³⁰ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 80.

caught in a mood of haste.”³¹ Donald Gee offers a similar warning while describing the necessity of self-control: “It should be solemnly remembered that nothing opens the door to backsliding and demonic oppression so surely as continual self-indulgence in that which is physically unlawful.”³² Pastors must help those they lead understand the importance of spiritual resistance against psychological compulsions.

Another common psychological effect of demonization is an over-inflated ego. Lozano writes, “Along with pride often come spirits such as superiority, arrogance, self-righteousness, self-justification and self-reliance, affecting a whole pattern of thinking.”³³ One does not need to view each item on Lozano’s list as individual demons, even if that may be what Lozano himself intends. Rather, the list describes the overall mindset of demonized persons. Isaacs observes that “the person in a possessive state fluctuates in mood due to internal cues.”³⁴ He goes on to describe these fluctuations in detail:

The emptiness and depression can be seen in periods of sad affect, inappropriate feelings of guilt and worthlessness, a perceived loss of energy, loss of interest in usual activities, suicidal ideation, threats, and even suicide attempts. The person may also express these feelings of emptiness as a feeling of inner darkness, a feeling of being depleted or drained by the one controlling them, or as a void within. The periods of inflation are marked by an egocentric, self-indulgent behavior and attitude. The person may seem vain and demanding, have a grandiose sense of self-importance, and be preoccupied with fantasies of power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.³⁵

³¹ T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil: A Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Possession* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 169.

³² Donald Gee, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1934), chap. 10, Kindle.

³³ Lozano, *Unbound*, 36.

³⁴ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 123.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

While many individuals struggle with some of the aforementioned issues, demonized people consistently embody these characteristics.

Pathologies of Distress

Mental health professionals sometimes view possession states as an “idiom of distress.”³⁶ If this premise is accepted, then significant distress may create a phenomenon that presents as demonization, even if it does not meet the criteria listed in the previous sections.³⁷ This section explores three of the possible pathologies of such extreme distress from a pastoral viewpoint.

Personal Sin

First, pastors should consider the possibility that personal sin is the root of the sufferer’s distress. Bottari notes that “the consequences of sin are bondage, a broken heart, oppression, and captivity.”³⁸ Isaacs observes, “There can be a spiritual sickness because of personal sin: the person has gone against the law of God and so has lost the directing power toward wholeness that the Spirit can give to the soul.”³⁹ Mike Driscoll echoes this observation in his discussion on how Catholic exorcists differentiate spiritual illness from psychological disorders. He writes, “The terminology may differ between the

³⁶ Marjolein Van Duijl et al., “Dissociative Symptoms and Reported Trauma among Patients with Spirit Possession and Matched Healthy Controls in Uganda,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 34, no. 2 (2010): 381.

³⁷ This is not to suggest that from a theological viewpoint this would be the same as demonization. Clinical possession states will be explored more fully later in this chapter. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that an individual may appear demonized when he or she is simply in major distress.

³⁸ Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 62.

³⁹ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 112.

fields of moral theology and mental health; however, there is much overlap regarding patterns of sin being a cause of problems in both realms.”⁴⁰ When individuals continually act against their own sense of morality, the resulting distress is profound.

In *Dominion: The Nature of Diabolic Warfare*, Chad Ripperger explains how sin affects the human psyche. He notes,

In effect, every time we sin, we diminish the intellect’s ordering toward prudence, which is the virtue which knows the right thing to do at the right time to attain the right end. ... [T]he will cannot will evil in itself but only under the appearance of good, when the object of conscience is presented as something sinful. ... [T]he will moves the intellect to engage in an act of ignorance and error in which it ignores the evil and only looks at the object by considering it under the aspect of the good, which is not what it truly is. ... [W]e do violence to our intellect every time we choose something sinful.⁴¹

Stated another way, sin wounds the mind, thus predisposing it to what Isaacs calls “spiritual sickness.”⁴² Lozano concurs and sees this as a key reason why sin tends toward demonization. He writes, “We have all internalized lies from the master of deception.... As a pattern of thinking is built based on the foundational lie, he finds a place to dwell and exerts greater influence on our emotions and will.”⁴³ Personal sin leads to deception. This leads to distress and possibly demonization.

⁴⁰ Mike Driscoll, “How Catholic Exorcists Distinguish between Demonic Possession and Mental Disorders” (PhD diss., Regent University, 2013), 182, ProQuest. Driscoll’s insights are here drawn from the consensus of the exorcists interviewed for his dissertation. On page 181 they note three possible roots of demonic possession: personal sin, occult activity, and trauma. Driscoll’s comment quoted above reveals that he also sees personal sin as a possible root of some mental illness.

⁴¹ Chad Ripperger, *Dominion: The Nature of Diabolic Warfare* (Keensburg, CO: Sensus Traditionist Press, 2022), 438-39.

⁴² Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 112.

⁴³ Lozano, *Unbound*, 40.

Trauma

The role of trauma in dissociative states will be further explored in a later section. However, due to the frequency with which it is mentioned in pastoral literature, it receives treatment here as a pathology of distress that some say can lead to demonization. MacNutt asserts that two-thirds of all cases of demonization are trauma-related.⁴⁴ Likewise, Bottari observes that demonization is commonly connected to extreme fear due to past experiences.⁴⁵ Ripperger and Driscoll recognize trauma as a common root of psychological distress, noting that it can lead toward either mental illness or demonization.⁴⁶ The literature overwhelmingly supports the hypothesis that trauma is a common pathology of distress among those who appear demonized.

Peck's reflections on one of the two exorcisms that he performed as a psychiatrist offers some insight. During a follow-up session with his patient, she inadvertently revealed that she had been sexually abused by her father.⁴⁷ However, she constructed a story in her mind that kept her from believing that what she endured was abuse. Peck believes that responding to trauma with self-deception led to her demonization. He recalls, "I repeatedly told her that God is truth, and truth is what is real. The choice to believe her father's lie because it was the less painful alternative was a choice to believe unreality. And unreality belonged to the devil."⁴⁸ Whether or not one accepts Peck's

⁴⁴ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 93.

⁴⁵ Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 120-26.

⁴⁶ Ripperger, *Dominion*, 440; Driscoll, *How Catholic Exorcists Distinguish*, 182.

⁴⁷ Peck, *Glimpses*, 77.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

explanation, it is indisputable that trauma often distorts one's sense of reality and becomes fertile soil for extreme distress.

Occult Activity

While it can be reasonably argued that occult activity is subsumed under the category of personal sin, it presents unique issues worth mentioning. Virtually all literature written about exorcism or deliverance makes special note of occult involvement.⁴⁹ Gabriele Amorth, former chief exorcist for the Vatican, claims to have performed more than 100,000 exorcisms in his life and attributes above 90 percent of these possessions to occult activity.⁵⁰ Isaacs summarizes the issue well: "One of the most common explanations for possession today lies in a person naively approaching evil or the arcane powers of the universe. Many people who are seen to be either oppressed by demons, or to be possessed, have taken part in some aspect of the occult...."⁵¹ In Gallagher's documentation of a case of demon possession, he writes, "Julia revealed a long, disturbing history of involvement with explicitly Satanic groups (an obvious, historical antecedent to her then-present condition and to her accompanying 'psychic'

⁴⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the particularities of these terms, anyone wishing to research this subject further should know that the words "exorcism" and "deliverance" are used differently depending on the religious tradition of the author. Most Charismatics and Pentecostals use the terms interchangeably. However, Catholics and Anglicans use "exorcism" to denote an official ceremony that is sanctioned by a bishop for cases that are clearly identified as possession. These groups typically use "deliverance" to describe an informal prayer that is used to liberate people suffering with a lesser form of demonization.

⁵⁰ Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic: The Antics of Satan and His Army of Fallen Angels* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 2016), 79. While Amorth attributes these possessions to the occult, he does not necessarily attribute this occult activity to the afflicted individual in every case. Amorth writes at length about the phenomenon of curses, but he nonetheless attributes the issues cited above to "some spells or evil eye."

⁵¹ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 115.

abilities, as they might be characterized).”⁵² Gallagher’s words, “an obvious, historical antecedent,” reveal his expectation that most readers will naturally make the connection between occult activity and demonic harassment.⁵³

Psychiatrist Basil Jackson raises insightful concerns worthy of consideration:

In connection with the current interest shown in occult activity in this country, I have noted that there is an increased tendency for attraction to the occult in those Christians who have a basic paranoid personality structure. ... I have noted that Christians who claim to be soundly evangelical and who demonstrate this particular personality position often become fascinated with the occult ... Another question we must ask concerns the relationship between participation in occult activities and the possibility of subsequent demonization or, perhaps, subsequent psychiatric decompensation. A frequently stated objection to dabbling in the occult is that such an activity tends to make the individual more susceptible to invasion by outside agencies. ... In view of what has just been noted regarding certain types of personality being attracted to the occult, the question arises as to which is the cart, and which is the horse.⁵⁴

Occult activity is a common pathology of distress and demonization. This may be due to the detrimental effects of direct contact with the demonic among occult practitioners, or it may be that a certain personality type is more attracted to the occult and therefore more susceptible to these struggles. Regardless of the root cause, there is consensus among exorcists that occult activity must be avoided by those desiring to remain spiritually and psychologically healthy.⁵⁵

⁵² Gallagher, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” 23.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ John Warwick Montgomery, *Demon Possession* (Irvine, CA: NRP Books, 2015), 268-69.

⁵⁵ MacNutt notes that occult spirits only account for 10 percent of what he deals with in deliverance ministry. However, he also states that “they are the most difficult, dangerous group—the true demons from Hell.” MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 91.

Bridging the Gap Between Pastoral and Clinical Understandings of Distress

Pastors fill an indispensable role in bridging the gap between church ministry and the mental health field. MacNutt asks, “How do you tell if the person asking for help is really troubled by an evil spirit or (since the symptoms of demonic infestation are often the same as the symptoms of psychological sickness) suffering from a psychological problem?”⁵⁶ The observations contained throughout the previous pages offer valuable insight for answering this question. However, while ministers should remain conscious of the limits of their qualifications, they should not restrict their role to helping the distressed only in clear cases of demonic influence.

Research demonstrates that among those who battle mental health disorders, one-fourth choose to contact a member of the clergy when reaching out for help.⁵⁷ There are certainly times when it is appropriate to connect parishioners with a psychiatrist or psychologist. However, rather than simply referring people in distress to someone else, pastors should actively expand their therapeutic team.⁵⁸

Pastors certainly should not engage in services for which they are not qualified. However, even if someone is mentally ill and not demonized, that individual’s illness does not render him or her incapable of receiving pastoral guidance. Exorcism should

⁵⁶ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 79.

⁵⁷ Philip S. Wang, Patricia A. Berglund, and Ronald C. Kessler, “Patterns and Correlates of Contacting Clergy for Mental Disorders in the United States,” *Health Services Research* 38, no. 2 (2003): 647, <https://doi:10.1111/1475-6773.00138>.

⁵⁸ Chavez, “Modern Practice, Archaic Ritual,” 5-6. Chavez notes that Fr. Gary Thomas “is perhaps the most famous Catholic exorcist in the country...” His ministry team includes a medical doctor, a clinical psychologist, and two psychiatrists. Pastors should certainly use referrals when needed, but they should not then abdicate their role as a spiritual leader. Instead, they should view those to whom they refer parishioners as part of the therapeutic team.

only be recommended when the pastor possesses the “moral certainty” that it is needed.⁵⁹ Much damage is done by careless suggestions that someone may be possessed. However, an equal amount of damage is likely done by careless suggestions of mental illness. Writing as a mental health professional about those in distress, DiChiara observes, “The pathologizing of a person’s experience into such a disorder has detrimental effects on the person and alienates them further.”⁶⁰ Neither pastors nor mental health professionals should hastily attach labels to an individual.

Spiritual leaders are increasingly aware of their limitations and of the need to incorporate the findings of medicine and psychology into their efforts to help those in distress.⁶¹ Some mental health professionals are likewise realizing the limitations of their discipline and desire to understand the effectiveness of ancient practices like exorcism. A 2013 study in India documented a “case of Possession syndrome in a young girl at 4575 m/15000 ft....”⁶² After undergoing exorcism, the girl was cured and showed no relapse a year later.⁶³ In a surprising admission, the study authors note, “Exorcism has been seen, by doctors as well, to bring profound mental and physical improvement leading to total remission as seen in this case. In true Possession syndrome, exorcism appears to be the

⁵⁹ Richard Gallagher, *Demonic Foes: My Twenty-Five Years as a Psychiatrist Investigating Possessions, Diabolic Attacks, and the Paranormal* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2020), 33.

⁶⁰ DiChiara, “Dissociation, Possession, or Otherwise,” 5.

⁶¹ Nicole M. Bauer, “The Devil and the Doctor: The (De)Medicalization of Exorcism in the Roman Catholic Church,” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (February 2022): 3. Atla Religion Database with AtlaSerials.

⁶² I. D. Khan and A. K. Sahni, “Possession Syndrome at High Altitude (4575 m/15000 ft),” *Kathmandu University Medical Journal* 11, no. 3 (2013): 253.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

only help possible.”⁶⁴ All who desire to help suffering people must be willing to take a serious look at the findings of faith leaders and mental health professionals.

A study in Uganda examined more than one hundred cases of possession using this kind of integrative approach.⁶⁵ The research established a connection between the individuals’ current distress and their past trauma.⁶⁶ However, 99 percent reported significant improvement after undergoing a culturally sanctioned exorcism without addressing their trauma, with more than half claiming complete healing.⁶⁷ Reflecting on this study and others like it, Psychotherapist Michael Sersch observes that exorcism may actually prove more effective than conventional treatments for conditions like DID and Schizophrenia among patients that are culturally conditioned to believe in it.⁶⁸ In light of such weighty findings, Khan and Sahni’s observations merit serious consideration:

There is a wide gap between the medical and theological ideology regarding Possession syndrome. There is a serious lack of understanding of medical pathology by laymen including theologians who tend to think in their own sphere of belief. Similarly, it is possible that doctors lack theological information constraining them to diagnose in their sphere of knowledge. Drug resistant cases of Possession syndrome have been cured by exorcism as well as people have died in the hands of exorcists for want of medical attention. ... The concept of possession should be observed as a disease condition and a harmonizing approach advocated. Theological perspective can be amalgamated with current scientific theory and practice, thereby complementing existing concepts. Possession syndrome and exorcism may be incorporated into some paradigm of illness.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ibid., 254.

⁶⁵ Van Duijal et al., “Dissociative Symptoms,” 380.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 395.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Michael J. Sersch, *Demons on the Couch: Spirit Possession, Exorcisms and the DSM-5* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 130-38.

⁶⁹ Khan and Sahni, “Possession Syndrome at High Altitude,” 255.

While pastors and mental health professionals may have concerns that distinguish their disciplines from each other, the distinctions between spiritual matters and psychological issues are often not as clear as those in either field of study prefer. The importance of bridging the gap between pastoral and clinical understandings of distress cannot be overstated.

Considerations for Mental Health Professionals

It is undeniable that psychologists and medical doctors have brought necessary balance to the discussions surrounding possession and exorcism. Quay writes, “A large variety of medical conditions can cause behavioral disorders that may appear to be spiritual in origin. Untreated diabetes, neurological diseases, disorders of the thyroid, and a host of other illnesses can make distinguishing between what is of the natural world and of the supernatural world extremely difficult.”⁷⁰ This section examines the clinical definition of possession, followed by a brief survey of medical conditions that may be confused with this syndrome.⁷¹ Further, it pays particular attention to the proposed parameters for dissociative trance disorder-possession type, even though it does not ultimately appear in DSM-5. Finally, this section culminates with an examination of the potential application of exorcism for dissociative disorders.

⁷⁰ Quay, *A Minister's Manual*, 4.

⁷¹ Whereas many exorcists prefer the term “demonized” because it can refer to a spectrum of demonic activity, clinicians use the word “possession” to denote a psychological syndrome in which a person’s identity appears to be replaced by an ego-alien entity. Many, though not all, mental health professionals see this as a purely psychological phenomenon.

Possession and the DSM-5

A working comprehension of the clinical meaning of possession is essential to understanding the issues at hand. While there is debate among clinicians regarding how possession should be understood, the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) identifies possession as an expression of dissociative identity disorder (DID).⁷² The diagnostic criteria for DID are as follows:

- A. Disruption of identity, characterized by two or more distinct personality states, which may be described in some cultures as an experience of possession. The disruption in identity involves marked discontinuity in sense of self and sense of agency, accompanied by related alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, memory, perception, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning. These signs and symptoms may be observed by others or reported by the individual.
- B. Recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting.
- C. The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- D. The disturbance is not a normal part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice.
- E. The symptoms are not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance ... or another medical condition.⁷³

The DSM-5 notes that “over 70% of outpatients with dissociative identity disorder have attempted suicide, multiple attempts are common, and other self-injurious behavior is frequent.”⁷⁴ The description of the “possession-form” of DID states,

Possession-form identities in dissociative identity disorder typically manifest as behaviors that appear as if a “spirit,” supernatural being, or outside person has

⁷² Emmanuel H. During et al., “A Critical Review of Dissociative Trance and Possession Disorders: Etiological, Diagnostic, Therapeutic, and Nosological Issues,” *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 4 (2011): 235-42; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 329.

⁷³ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 329.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

taken control, such that the individual begins speaking or acting in a distinctly different manner ... an individual may be “taken over” by a demon or deity, resulting in profound impairment ... followed by more subtle periods of identity alteration.⁷⁵

The DSM-5 does not weigh in on the actual existence of demons, as this belongs to the field of theology rather than psychology. Nonetheless, its description of possession bears a significant similarity to that given by many pastors.

Medically Treatable Disorders that Mimic Clinical Possession

Bipolar

Isaacs describes how the mood of those in a state of possession swings between “periods of inflation” and times of “emptiness and depression.”⁷⁶ While this is true, the same description can be given of those suffering from bipolar disorder. Psychiatrist Todd Clements writes,

The saddest case I’ve ever seen involved a bipolar college student who was a friend of mine. “Sally” had been a beautiful, straight-A, high school student who was a popular cheerleader and a professing Christian. Sally suffered a few depression episodes in high school, then had her first manic episode during her freshman year of college. Sally lost her virginity during this manic period, which is common because the mania often drives a person to crave sex with whoever happens to be available. Two months later she found out she was pregnant. This devastating blow sent her into a depression racked with so much false guilt that she wrote a suicide note.⁷⁷

There are an estimated three hundred million people in the world who live with bipolar.⁷⁸

Untreated bipolar disorder may lead to “psychosis, uncontrolled spending, ... hostility,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 330.

⁷⁶ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession*, 123.

⁷⁷ Paul Meier, Todd Clements, Jean-Luc Bertrand, and David Mandt Sr., *Blue Genes* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), chap. 8, Kindle.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

sexual affairs,” and even suicidal or homicidal ideation.⁷⁹ Thankfully, bipolar is typically responsive to medication, with patients showing dramatic improvement within weeks of beginning treatment.⁸⁰ Although bipolar may mimic possession, it is entirely a medical condition.

Neurological Conditions

An article published in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* documents the case of a forty-three-year-old woman diagnosed with Central Nervous System lesion but initially suspected of having “trance and possession disorder.”⁸¹ She is described as follows:

She would start shaking her body and head in gyrating movements; she would be unaware of what was going [on] around her [;] she would say that she is sent by her husband's dead sister-in-law to kill her husband; at other times, she would claim that she was a demon.... At times, she would utter completely irrelevant and incomprehensible speech.⁸²

The authors' summary of the EEG and MRI results concludes that the symptoms resulting from “gross neurological lesions” may present similarly to possession syndrome.⁸³ Organic conditions should be ruled out before diagnosing possession.

Tourette's syndrome is another neurological condition that might be mistaken for possession. It “is a disease whose clinical manifestations are the occurrence of multiple motor tics and one or more vocal tics, lasting over one year, with onset of symptoms

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Soumya Basu, Subhash C. Gupta, and Sayeed Akthar, “Trance and Possession Like Symptoms in a Case of CNS Lesion: A Case Report,” *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 44, no. 1 (2002): 65-67. The authors here reference “culture bound syndrome,” which is another label for possession syndrome.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

during childhood....”⁸⁴ Francisco M. B. Germiniani et al. attempt to retrospectively diagnose historical cases of possession with Tourette’s.⁸⁵ The limitations of retrospective analysis are beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the authors’ final remarks are worth pondering. They conclude that although Tourette’s syndrome was previously believed to result from “demonic possession and witchcraft,” it is now recognized as a medical diagnosis with a “complex pathogenesis.”⁸⁶ The importance of thorough neurological examination in cases of suspected possession cannot be overemphasized.

Schizophrenia

It is not difficult to see how schizophrenia might be confused with possession, either by pastors or clinicians. There are, however, notable differences between the two conditions. Isaacs offers a detailed comparison:

- In schizophrenia “voices may be incoherent ... or keeping a running commentary on the behavior of the person.”⁸⁷
- In possession “voices are usually coherent and speak about religious or moral matters.”⁸⁸
- In both schizophrenia and possession “obsessions and compulsions” are common.⁸⁹
- Possessed persons often see “dark figures and apparitions” and “hear audible and coherent voices.”⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Francisco Germiniani et. al., “Tourette’s Syndrome: From Demonic Possession and Psychoanalysis to the Discovery of Gene,” *Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria* 70, no. 7 (2012): 547, Directory of Open Access Journals.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 549.

⁸⁷ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession*, 119.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 124.

- Schizophrenics may also experience visual or auditory hallucinations; however, they tend to be experienced as “dream-like.” These experiences “begin to lose their independent quality and slowly become more internalized as the person’s processing of external reality improves.”⁹¹
- Possessed persons except when in a trance, experience hallucinations that often do not interfere with their ability to process “external reality,” and the experiences remain clear over time, being experienced as “completely alien and separate from him- or herself.”⁹²

Through intentional observation and thoughtful dialogue with those who are suffering, it is possible to clearly differentiate between schizophrenia and possession.⁹³

Dissociative Trance Disorder-Possession Type

While the DSM-5 ultimately classifies possession as a form of dissociative identity disorder (DID), many clinicians believe that it should be understood as a distinct condition.⁹⁴ Although DID and possession have similar clinical presentations, possession is better explained by what some clinicians call dissociative trance disorder (DTD). Unlike those with DID, people suffering from DTD do not typically suffer from multiple psychiatric disorders.

Emmanuel H. During and his four coauthors’ dissent from the decision of the DSM-5 as explained in their article, “A Critical Review of Dissociative Trance and Possession Disorders: Etiological, Diagnostic, Therapeutic, and Nosological Issues.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ibid., 124-25.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Although it is probable that readers will make this connection, Isaacs does believe in true “demonic possession.” As he holds a PhD in psychology, he is here referenced as an expert who also understands possession as a syndrome, which he notes on pg. 121.

⁹⁴ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 329-32.

⁹⁵ During et. al., “A Critical Review of Dissociative Trance,” 235-42.

They write, “From a phenomenological standpoint, possession and DID are two different conditions that may require different treatments.”⁹⁶ The study includes data collected about DTD over the course of twenty-two years.⁹⁷

The MEDLINE, CINAHL, and PsycINFO databases were searched from 1988 to 2010, seeking case reports of DTD according to the DSM or the International Classification of Diseases definitions ... Results: We found 28 articles reporting 402 cases of patients with DTD worldwide. The data show an equal proportion of female and male patients, and a predominance of possession (69%), compared with trance (31%). Amnesia is reported by 20% of patients. Conversely, hallucinatory symptoms during possession episodes were found in 56% of patients and thus should feature as an important criterion.⁹⁸

Key findings from this study are noted below:

- “Cases of patients with DTD are mostly reported in Asian countries (19 articles). Other cases are reported in Europe (5 articles), America (2 articles), and Africa (2 articles).”⁹⁹
- “The age of onset, acknowledged in 188 patients, reveals a mean age of 25.2 years for the occurrence of the first episode of DTD.”¹⁰⁰
- Hallucination is reported in up to 56% of patients with DTD. This is “closely related to the perceived presence of an invisible entity and the ability of the person to communicate with it.”¹⁰¹
- “Patients with DTD are found in every continent and culture, including indigenous populations living in industrialized societies, as illustrated in Pentecostal and Catholic communities in North America and Italy.”¹⁰²
- “Only three patients with DTD showed evidence of psychiatric comorbidity.”¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Ibid., 241.

⁹⁷ The DSM-4 listed DTD separately from DID, as noted on page 235 of this article. It should also be noted that the research this study is based on was limited to articles written in English.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 236.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 239.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

The final bullet point above stands in marked contradistinction to DSM-5's observations about DID where the authors note, "Individuals with dissociative identity disorder usually exhibit a large number of comorbid disorders."¹⁰⁴ This variation is worthy of serious consideration, as DTD may offer a closer parallel to the pastoral understanding of demonic possession than what is observed in DID.

Although it is not in the DSM-5, the study's authors recommended this inclusion for the possession type of dissociative trance disorder:

Possession type: a single or episodic alteration in the state of consciousness characterized by the replacement of customary sense of personal identity by a new identity, identified by the patient or his entourage as the spirit of an animal, a deceased individual, a deity, or a power, evidenced by at least one of the following:

- a) determined behaviors, movements, speech, or attitude that are experienced or recognized as being controlled by the possession agent.
- b) visual or auditory hallucinations relating to the possessing agent.¹⁰⁵

This narrower clinical definition of possession is helpful for interpreting the following articles documenting possession states.

Possession: A Clinical Enigma

Amin Gadit, who works in the area of transcultural psychiatry, documents a twenty-one-year-old female who presents with "extreme aggression," "extraordinary strength," and the ability to speak Arabic without having learned it.¹⁰⁶ This was observed

¹⁰⁴ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 298.

¹⁰⁵ During et al., "A Critical Review," 238.

¹⁰⁶ Amin Gadit, "Possession: A Clinical Enigma," *Case Reports* 2011 (2011): 1, <https://doi:10.1136/bcr.01.2011.3725>. Her father acknowledged that she had learned to recite the "Holy Book" in Arabic but did not speak and understand Arabic. During her trance episodes, she was able to carry on full conversations in Arabic that mostly consisted of "cursing and blaming" and contained no recitations from their "Holy Book"; See also Fatemeh Saki and Abdoljavad Ahmadi, "Spirit Possession, Mental Suffering, and Treatment by Theurgic Flight Anthropological Study of a Culture-Bound Syndrome among

once in the clinic.¹⁰⁷ These episodes typically “last fifteen to twenty minutes” and happen “at least three times” weekly.¹⁰⁸ The patient had no psychiatric comorbidities and no history of mental disorder.¹⁰⁹ She was treated with multiple medications, but none resulted in remission.¹¹⁰ Gadit refers to “possession by jinni” as a possible pathology.¹¹¹

Najat Khalifa and Tim Hardie document the purported symptoms of jinn possession, which are consistent with the observations made by Gadit.¹¹² Khalifa and Hardie describe traditional treatments for this condition: “Some faith healers strike the possessed person, claiming that it is the jinn that suffer the pain. This practice, however, is deplored by Muslim scholars as being far from the principles of Islam and the instructions of the Prophet.”¹¹³ This is an important note, as it reflects the truth that just because a particular exorcistic practice is documented, it is not necessarily encouraged by the sect’s leaders. Abhorrent practices in deliverance ministry may likewise be seen among Christians, but it is the role of faith leaders to establish biblical best practices. Khalifa and Hardie state that “the patient’s own interpretation must be taken into

the Turkmens of Iran,” *Culture & Psychology* 28, no. 4 (2022): 567-92. Saki and Ahmadi’s article mentions jinn possession on the next page. This footnote references a study from Iran that also addresses jinn possession. It is included here to expand the context of this phenomenon.

¹⁰⁷ Gadit, “Possession,” 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Najat Khalifa, and Tim Hardie, “Possession and Jinn,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98, no. 8 (2005): 351-53.

¹¹³ Ibid., 351.

consideration.”¹¹⁴ This is an important observation, as some treatment modalities strip away the spiritual significance of the patient’s suffering.

The case documented by Gadit is significant in many respects. 1) It meets many criteria for DID, though there is no evidence of childhood trauma. 2) It meets the criteria for “Possession Syndrome,” but all medical and mental health treatments failed.¹¹⁵ 3) The patient displays clear preternatural signs. 4) If exorcists were viewed as professionals in this case, the patient clearly meets referral criteria. 5) Exorcism is the only rational treatment at this point and could only be argued against based on anti-supernatural presuppositions.

Remove These Chains

Collin Weintraub and Melissa P. Bui document a fifty-three-year-old man, “Mr. A,” who presents with frequent episodes during which “he would speak in a demonic voice, exhibit superhuman strength, and engage in profound non-suicidal self-injury....”¹¹⁶ The episodes are short in duration and are followed by “retrograde amnesia.”¹¹⁷ Other symptoms include a bad smell and “visual hallucinations of a demon face covered in erotic imagery which occurred separately from his dissociative

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ This is the diagnosis that was given as mentioned on pages 1 and 2. See Gadit, “Possession,” 1-2.

¹¹⁶ Collin Weintraub and Melissa P. Bui, “‘Remove These Chains!’ Spiritual Possession Syndrome as an Example of Cross-Cultural Psychiatry,” *Journal of the Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry* 62, no. 6 (November-December 2021): 661, MEDLINE PubMed.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

episodes....”¹¹⁸ Mr. A is from a Southern Baptist background. The following encounter happened in the clinic:

Toward the end of the psychiatric evaluation, it became apparent that he and his wife were not reassured by our team’s suggestion that his diagnosis may be primarily psychiatric. He then began to growl and exclaimed in a gravelly voice, “[Mr. A] isn’t here anymore!” He began hitting himself with an ice pack, which broke open, throwing ice all around the room. He pulled at the electroencephalogram (EEG) leads affixed to his scalp, yelling, “Remove these chains!” Security was called; however, before their arrival, he lay down on his hospital bed and appeared to fall asleep. His EEG did not demonstrate any signature pattern consistent with sleep, seizure, or other neurological abnormality at any point before, during, or after the episode.¹¹⁹

Mr. A’s condition was unresponsive to medicine, and he showed no improvement, even after ten inpatient psychiatric stays.¹²⁰ The authors of this study observe that “a spiritually focused modality of care should be considered to meet patients where they are and can be incorporated as an unconventional component of a multidisciplinary treatment plan.”¹²¹ Pastoral intervention in cases like this might very well prove lifesaving.

A Case of Possession Syndrome

Although there is no proven pharmaceutical treatment for the possession type of DID or DTD, there are specialists who believe pharmaceutical intervention may have some effectiveness as part of a broader treatment regimen. A twenty-eight-year-old

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 662.

¹²¹ Ibid.

woman in Pakistan was admitted to the hospital “due to multiple burns inflicted by a spiritual healer.”¹²² Saad Asim Choudhry et al. observe,

She started exhibiting aggressive behavior towards her family members, abusing, cursing and hitting anyone who came near her. She muttered strange language which one of her neighbors recognized as Pushto. There were no complete sentences, but it was merely curses. She never learned this language, and no one in her family knew the language. She developed immense strength during the episodes, and she could lift heavy objects and throw those objects around. It was impossible to hold her and keep her calm.¹²³

This patient did not have a personal history or family history of psychiatric disease. There were no medical issues documented and no history of abuse other than what she suffered at the hands of the “healers.”¹²⁴

The individual was treated with a combination of psychotherapy and the antipsychotic medication, olanzapine, showing “some improvement.”¹²⁵ The study notes that “she is on regular follow-up with no remission.”¹²⁶ The researchers conclude that “the patient’s symptoms decreased upon introduction of an antipsychotic in her regimen which could be due to an overlap syndrome with psychotic features.”¹²⁷ No specific overlapping syndrome is named within the study.

¹²² Saad Asim Choudhry et al., “A Case of Possession Syndrome,” *International Journal of Advanced Research* 5, no. 12 (January 2018): 543, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1154734>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. This study’s assertion that the patient had “no remission” leads one to conclude that there was never a full resolution of symptoms. While the decrease in symptoms observed in the study are noteworthy, it is reasonable to conclude the possibility that adding a spiritually focused treatment modality to her plan would have been worth consideration, especially given the study’s acknowledgement that she was able to speak languages she had not learned and displayed extraordinary strength, features that are not fully explained by a purely psychiatric disorder but that are consistent with a diagnosis of spirit possession.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 544.

This woman was diagnosed with DID. However, as with the previously noted cases, the description of DTD by During et al. seems to describe this patient more accurately. She had no psychiatric comorbidities and no history of trauma.¹²⁸ Her suffering at the hands of supposed healers is tragic. While the authors state that “DID is pretty much curable,” her situation appears quite like the previously mentioned cases documented by Gadit and Weintraub.¹²⁹ These heartbreaking accounts reveal that more effective interventions are desperately needed.

Models of Liberation and Integration

Dissociation and Exorcism

As noted earlier in the discussion of pastoral considerations, MacNutt cautions against performing an exorcism on someone with DID, fearing that it might cause irreparable damage.¹³⁰ MacNutt’s words of caution are important. However, the survey of mental health literature demonstrates that the parameters laid out in the DSM-5 for DID, and those proposed by During et. al for DTD, might easily include those who, from a pastoral perspective, are demon possessed.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ibid., 543-44. Although the study authors state that the effectiveness of antipsychotics “could be due to an overlap syndrome,” they never offer a diagnosis of any specific overlapping syndrome. The study states that “there was no history of psychiatric disease” and that “she did not have any medical issues.” The only trauma noted in the study is what she experienced at the hands of her “healers,” so while it was tragic, it clearly was not the cause of the onset of symptoms. The absence of any clearly defined comorbid disorder in a patient with the possession type of DID is significant, as the previous observations from During et.al have demonstrated. See also During et. al, “A Critical Review,” 238-39.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 544; See also Gadit, “Possession,” 1-2; Weintraub and Bui, “Remove These Chains,” 661-61.

¹³⁰ MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 234-35.

¹³¹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 329-32; During et. al, “A Critical Review,” 238-39.

In fact, the available information in the studies presented by Gadit, Weintraub, and Choudhry suggests that these cases might very well rise to the level of moral certainty required by some of the oldest available guides on the ministry of exorcism. The devastating reality that these patients often receive no meaningful help demands serious consideration. Further, if the narrower parameters are observed as recommended by During et al. for dissociative trance disorder-possession type, then the possibility of comorbid psychiatric disorders is virtually eliminated, supplying a much clearer clinical picture. Is it possible, then, to implement standards by which exorcism might safely be used as a therapeutic intervention for carefully selected individuals despite a DID diagnosis? The following section explores this question.

A Qualitative Analysis

Alyson Barry's study on dissociation includes interviews with seven people who "experienced possession trance states, which they believe to have been caused by demons."¹³² Using narrative analysis, the study found that six out of seven participants experienced childhood trauma.¹³³ This is consistent with Barry's predictions regarding trauma and dissociation. They were all treated by exorcism, and all reported marked improvement through this treatment.¹³⁴ Although Barry questions whether the participants in this study could accurately be diagnosed with DID, it is evident that they

¹³² Alyson M. Barry, "A Qualitative Analysis of Reports of Dissociative Trance Experiences in the United States" (PhD diss., Seattle Pacific University, 2012), 55, ProQuest.

¹³³ Ibid., 82.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 55, 98. It should be noted that experiencing relief through exorcism was a selection criterion for this study.

were experiencing some degree of dissociation.¹³⁵

Three key factors contributed to the success of these exorcisms. First, spiritual intervention restored a sense of personal power.¹³⁶ Stephen Diamond notes the importance of standing up to violent inner powers. He writes, “No matter how ‘possessed’ or ‘pushed’ or ‘driven’ we may be by the ‘shadow’ or the ‘daimonic’ at any given moment, there is always potentially some degree of freedom—minuscule as it might seem—to consciously choose one’s personal response or one’s attitude toward these awesome powers.”¹³⁷ Deliverance ministry provides a way for these participants to do exactly that.

Second, the deliverance models they were exposed to emphasize integration as well as liberation. Barry explains,

The deliverance team, made up of specially trained church members and generally led by a pastor, meets with the person with demonization in a private room, usually in a church. If this person has alters, the pastor will ask any alter who needs to speak to come forward. The pastor then provokes the demons to manifest.... This process can be difficult, as demons prefer to remain in hiding so that they will not be cast out of their host.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 108, 128.

¹³⁷ Stephen Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Paradoxical Power of Rage in Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (Plattsburgh: State University of New York Press, 2013), chap. 4, Kindle. The word “daimonic” is central to the thesis of Diamond’s book. He uses the word to describe energies of varying etiologies that have the ability to overtake the human psyche. “Daimonic” powers include love, hate, fear, and more. He makes much of the word’s usage in classical Greek. Diamond writes from a nonreligious, psychological perspective but sees value in directly confronting the daimonic powers that possess people in some cases.

¹³⁸ Barry, “A Qualitative Analysis,” 95.

After the process of liberation is complete, attention is turned to integration. Barry writes, “If there was an alter involved, the alter can be joined with the individual again.”¹³⁹ The minister in this situation drives out all “demons” and then focuses the remaining time on inner healing.¹⁴⁰

Third, the participants discovered the healing power of community. Their experience of deliverance is not a secret, hidden affair. On the contrary, they willingly talk about it and draw strength from others who understand what they have been through. DiChiara observes that “the pathologizing of a person’s experience into ... a disorder has detrimental effects on the person and alienates them further.”¹⁴¹ In the deliverance setting, however, “possession carries no stigma, unlike mental illness.”¹⁴² Barry reflects,

Feeling as if they are a part of a supportive group of people may facilitate healing for these individuals. This shared understanding seems to have led to the development of what I might call a deliverance culture. There is a language and a set of beliefs that are shared and even made explicit. There are communities dedicated to the process and this shared meaning. This culture allows these individuals, who may feel outcast from mainstream Christianity as well as mainstream culture in general, a way to connect and feel understood and accepted.¹⁴³

Those who once dissociated due to trauma and victimization have discovered a reality

¹³⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁰ These may be true demons or inner struggles that are perceived as demonic.

¹⁴¹ DiChiara, “Dissociation, Possession, or Otherwise,” 5.

¹⁴² S. M. Channabasavanna, C. R. Chandrashekar, and M. Venkataswamy-Reddy, “Hysterical Possession Syndrome: A Retrospective Study,” *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* 3, no. 1 (2020): 40, SAGE Publications. This quote originated in the above study that focused on possession syndrome in the context of cultures where possession is accepted and mental illness is not. Barry’s reflections on “deliverance culture” (cited below) reveal that such a safe setting for expressing distress can be intentionally created.

¹⁴³ Barry, “A Qualitative Analysis,” 129-30.

where they are no longer isolated and where others share their pain and their victory.¹⁴⁴

Concerning the power of such a community, Peck writes, “It also has an almost mystical healing power that often plays a more important role in a successful exorcism than does the exorcist him- or herself.”¹⁴⁵ Healing communities help facilitate the restoration of personal power and supply an environment that is conducive to both liberation and integration.

Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession

Unlike Barry, who celebrates the effectiveness of exorcism for dissociative states, Jose Magallanes Meza views it as a destructive practice that has no place in the field of mental health. Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), as it is referred to by Meza, is now called DID. Meza’s observations leave no room for any distinction between possession and MPD. He writes, “An estimable difference was not found in actual experience between those individuals who believed they were possessed by a demon and those affected by, in their estimation, a diagnosis of a physically-situated MPD or dissociative disorder.”¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, rather than offering an evidence-based argument against the use of exorcism, Meza resorts to strawman attacks in an effort to undermine the credibility of ministers and Christian therapists. He asserts that exorcism is a tool that is employed by

“fundamentalist Christians” in “the southern United States” that is used to control unbelievers and women.... Therefore, if psychiatric professionals allow for

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 82.

¹⁴⁵ Peck, *Glimpses of the Devil*, 191.

¹⁴⁶ Jose M. Meza, “Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession” (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2010), 1, ProQuest.

interpretation of specific diagnoses as demonic possession, they could, in fact, be supporting the prevalence of gendered power structures that further disempower female members of that religious community.¹⁴⁷

This claim represents a serious oversimplification of the issues as already described.

Meza's claim that exorcism supports "gendered power structures" is based on a lower rate of MPD diagnosis among men alongside a higher prevalence of male exorcists.¹⁴⁸ Although his concerns are understandable, his research offers no compelling evidence to support the assertion that exorcism is consistently used to control women. Meza continues, "I believe that MPD can be empirically determined to be a psychological disorder and is not a result of some sort of possession."¹⁴⁹ While professionals are divided about the existence of demons, the word "possession" is used in clinical literature to denote a particular expression of DID (or MPD).

The World Health Organization released the *ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders* approximately eighteen years before the publication of Meza's dissertation. It defines trance and possession disorders as "disorders in which there is a temporary loss of both the sense of personal identity and full awareness of the surroundings; in some instances, the individual acts as if taken over by another personality, spirit, deity, or 'force.'"¹⁵⁰ In culturally appropriate settings, possession is as real of a clinical diagnosis as MPD.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 2-4. Meza equates MPD and possession.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁰ World Health Organization, *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders: Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines* (Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Publications, 1992), 156.

Meza expresses deep concern that harm is perpetrated by belief in possession and exorcism:

In the Bottoms et al. (1995) study, which took place in the United States, although psychological abuse was the most common factor in the act of ridding a child of evil, extant in 68% of cases, physical abuse occurred almost as much, in 66 % of cases (p. 95). In the most startling of statistics, however, 48% of cases involving religious families who were treated by the almost 20,000 therapists surveyed demonstrated sexual abuse as a means for dispelling evil forces or demonic activity in children (Bottoms et al., 1995, pg. 95).¹⁵¹

Meza's interpretation of the Bottoms et al. study is misleading, but as it represents one of his strongest criticisms of exorcism for dissociative persons, it merits a response in the following paragraphs regarding the study's methodologies.

Researchers in the cited study initially sent out a survey by mail to 19,272 professionals. In a footnote, the authors state, "To increase the likelihood of finding clinicians who had worked with child abuse victims, we oversampled certain subcategories of the professions ... 2995 child psychiatrists, 1908 dissociative disorder specialists...."¹⁵² Ultimately, only 720 detailed surveys were returned by clinicians that could be deemed valid. From among these surveys, 69 cases of purported child abuse related to exorcism attempts were identified, "41 reported by children, 28 by adults."¹⁵³ The statistics cited by Meza in the previous paragraph focus only on these sixty-nine individuals.

It is not at all clear if these sixty-nine cases of abuse had a clear connection to

¹⁵¹ Meza, "Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession," 70-71.

¹⁵² B. L. Bottoms et al., "In the Name of God: A Profile of Religion-Related Child Abuse," *Journal of Social Issues* 51, no. 2 (1995): 85-86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1995.tb01325.x>.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 93.

religion or exorcism. Bottoms et al. note, “The respondents sometimes resisted emphasizing the religious nature of their cases ... several clinicians hesitated to classify cases of beatings to rid children of evil as truly ‘religion related,’ noting that the perpetrators were psychotic. We, however, had no hesitation in classifying them so....”¹⁵⁴ Bottoms et al. continue, “Dissociative disorders ... were fairly common in our sample, being diagnosed in over 20% of adult cases of ridding evil....”¹⁵⁵ For reference, this means that about six adults were identified as having dissociative disorders related to exorcism after attempting to survey nearly 20,000 clinicians.¹⁵⁶ While each case of abuse is tragic, these numbers were irresponsibly misrepresented. Neither Meza’s nor Bottoms’s criticisms of exorcism are supported by the statistical data they provide. Their inclusion in this section demonstrates the importance of listening to valid critiques while not bowing to those that are built on faulty premises.¹⁵⁷

A Phenomenological Model of Therapeutic Exorcism for Dissociative Identity Disorder

The construct of phenomenology empowers clinicians to help patients address their “demons” without regard to the clinician’s personal beliefs about demons.¹⁵⁸ Rather than relying on objective signs, phenomenology relies on the subjective experience of the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 91-94.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 93. The Bottoms et. al study identified twenty-eight adults who reported abuse from “ridding evil.” Twenty percent of this number is about six. Also, as previously noted, the actual number of respondents was 720, though nearly 20,000 surveys were initially distributed.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix C, “An Expanded Response to the Arguments Cited Against Exorcism” for further explanation about this source’s inclusion in this review.

¹⁵⁸ Dennis L. Bull, “A Phenomenological Model of Therapeutic Exorcism for Dissociative Identity Disorder,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 29, no. 2 (2001): 131.

patient. It allows their lived experience to establish the therapeutic framework. Dennis Bull writes, “The distinction between alter [personality] versus demon is left to the patient.”¹⁵⁹ The fear of further splintering a mentally ill person’s psyche is addressed by letting patients determine what is part of them and what is truly ego-alien.

Unlike Meza, who condemns exorcism as damaging, Bull supplies essential insights into why it could be harmful but offers counsel on how to avoid causing damage.¹⁶⁰ He writes,

Exorcisms appear to cause problems for two main reasons. First, exorcisms tend to be done by religious people with little or no understanding of dissociative disorders and/or psychological dynamics. It is damaging when psychological constructs such as alter personalities are assumed to be demons by those doing exorcism. Second, when done by some in Christian ministry, exorcisms tend to be practiced in controlling and demeaning ways; they tend to be done “to” the patient with little or no cooperation on the part of the patient. This is often experienced as revictimization by the patient.¹⁶¹

These are valid observations. Exorcistic techniques should only be used for DID by those with a solid understanding of dissociation, and any exorcism’s effectiveness depends largely upon the active cooperation of the one seeking freedom. Bull writes, “There is a growing movement of those who encourage the church not to ignore deliverance ministries. This article is supportive of that movement in general; however, it differs with those in the deliverance movement who believe most problems are spiritually caused and

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ “Some Christians prefer the word deliverance or spiritual warfare; however, the distinctions of these terms are not well-defined. Exorcism is used here because it has been the term derogatorily used by others in the literature. The term is meant here only as a word to describe a non-coercive expulsion technique.” Ibid., 134.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 132.

thus act in ignorance of the psychological dynamics of dissociation.”¹⁶² This statement needs to be read by every minister who desires to liberate people from demonization.

After emphasizing the need to be gentle and non-coercive, Bull lists three steps to therapeutic exorcism:¹⁶³

1. “Collaborate with the patient...”¹⁶⁴ Deliverance ministers and therapists should work with patients to determine what needs to be cast out and what needs to stay. This is a good time to discuss what the patient feels, hears, and sees. There may be images that do not appear demonic to the patient but do appear that way to others. When dealing with DID, it is vital to trust the patient’s sense about things.
2. Ask the patient if he/she believes in a power that is stronger than their demon.¹⁶⁵ Those with DID typically believe that their tormenter is supernatural. Therefore, it must also be confronted supernaturally. For ministers, this is an excellent time to encourage the individual to call on the name of Christ. Bull writes, “It seems ironic that calling on a higher power is standard fare for work with patients who have addictions, yet it is frowned upon and somehow seen as illegitimate for other kinds of psychiatric disorders.”¹⁶⁶ This is a vital insight.

¹⁶² Ibid., 136.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 134.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 135.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 134.

3. Encourage “the patient to take control of expelling the demon.”¹⁶⁷ While the one leading this deliverance session may offer help when needed, the primary goal is to offer encouragement and guidance to the patient. Bull learned from “experience that when an alter is banned, patients report that it feels like a part of themselves is missing, but when an entity is banned, they feel relief. The ultimate decision must be the patient’s.”¹⁶⁸

Bull’s model of therapeutic exorcism offers a way forward for ministers and therapists who want to help but also recognize the risk of harm. By recognizing DID as a mental illness that may alternatively be viewed as a possession state, Bull’s model paves the way for a healthy blend of liberation from demons and integration of the human psyche. The remaining pages offer an overview of tools that may be incorporated into models of deliverance.

Tools of Liberation and Integration

Ten Steps

At the time of *Free in Christ*’s publication, Botarri claimed that one million people had already passed through Carlos Annacondia’s deliverance tent in Argentina, thirty thousand of whom Bottari prayed with personally.¹⁶⁹ Describing a typical scene from Annacondia’s crusades, Bottari writes,

In the crusade services, Evangelist Carlos Annacondia rebuked demons, and individuals who appeared completely insane began to shriek, howl and collapse to the ground, exhibiting spectacular manifestations. They were taken away by

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 135.

¹⁶⁹ Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 19.

groups of stretcher-bearers and ushers who carried them out in convulsions, spasms, crying, vomiting and, in some cases, violent fits. It looked like a scene from Dante—an invisible battlefield. . . . In the deliverance tent, I watched those who entered screaming and disfigured leave with a radiant glow of peaceful calm.¹⁷⁰

There are many deliverance models, but Bottari's has a tender beauty. While demons can certainly devastate the mind, God has raised up people like Bottari to bring peace to the chaos through the power of Christ. Bottari's ten steps are listed below. The first four only apply if demons are actively manifesting.

1. Make sure the person is manifesting.
2. Take authority in the Name of Jesus and bind the spirit.
3. Bring to consciousness.
4. Ask if they want to be free.
5. Present the plan of salvation.
6. Discover the areas of bondage as consequences of sin.
7. Renounce the ties that cause oppression.
8. Take authority in the Name of Jesus, casting out the spirit.
9. Give thanks to God for deliverance.
10. Lead the person to pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹

Bottari's ten steps have been taught throughout the world and have helped bring freedom to countless thousands of people. He is well-known for his gentle approach. While it may seem small to many, a note from Ripperger's writings offers one subtle correction.

Ripperger notes that the phrase "take authority" is not biblical.¹⁷² Individuals should exercise the authority that Christ has given them, but to "take" is tantamount to

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 5-7.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 87, 97, 102, 106, 110, 113, 140, 147, 152. Concerning step 1, it is possible for other things to be mistaken for demonic manifestations. While it sounds basic, it is important to be certain of what you are dealing with. In step 2, Bottari instructs people to exercise authority in Christ's name to bind evil spirits and restore the individual to consciousness. In step 3, Bottari encourages people to quickly try to restore those who are manifesting to consciousness and talk with them about what is happening. Step 8 parallels step 2, except in this step, authority is exercised to cast out, rather than bind, the spirit.

¹⁷² Ripperger, *Dominion*, 128.

usurpation, which is never biblically sanctioned.

Five Keys

Lozano was profoundly impacted by Bottari. He writes,

Pablo did three important things for me. First, he prayed for me. As he spoke words of blessing over me, I once again embraced the gifts God had given me, the gifts of understanding and compassion. Second, Pablo taught his ten-step method. His teaching was characterized by love and compassion. He taught me how to pray for people so that, if they did not get free right away, they would still feel loved. He taught me how to minimize the physical manifestations of evil that people are often subjected to in deliverance. Third, he took me alongside him and let me watch, and then he sent me out to pray using his model for deliverance.¹⁷³

Since his encounter with Bottari, Lozano has emerged as a global voice on deliverance and has taught his *Unbound* method in many nations. Lozano's deliverance ministry is organized around five keys:

1. Repentance and faith
2. Forgiveness
3. Renouncing the work of your enemies
4. Standing in the authority you have in Christ
5. Receiving God's blessing on your identity and destiny¹⁷⁴

Lozano understands each of these keys to carry profound significance in the realm of deliverance.

Four Doors

Another global deliverance ministry, Sozo, was birthed in direct connection to Bottari's ministry. In their book, *Sozo: Saved—Healed—Delivered: A Journey into Freedom with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, Dawna De Silva and Teresa Liebscher

¹⁷³ Lozano, *Unbound*, 177.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

recall,

When the Sozo Ministry began in 1987, the only tool we knew to use was Pablo Bottari's Ten Steps to Freedom. Since then, we have moved away from using the Ten Steps and have instead developed the Four Doors. This tool is used to identify strongholds in a person's life and to bring needed deliverance from demonic bondage. According to Bottari, a person's physical, spiritual, and emotional issues can be traced back to the opening of any one of these four doors: fear, hatred/bitterness, sexual sin, and the occult. Without using his method, Sozo retains the categories he identified as entrances in a person's life for the demonic realm.¹⁷⁵

As mentioned, Sozo uses the illustration of four doors to help people understand how to break free from bondage. The doors are

1. Fear: Inside this door is worry, unbelief, need for control, anxiety, isolation, apathy, and drug and alcohol addictions.
2. Hatred/Bitterness: Inside this door is bitterness, envy, gossip, slander, anger, and self-hatred (low self-worth).
3. Sexual Sin: This is the door that includes adultery, pornography, fornication, lewdness, molestation, fantasy, and rape.
4. Occult: Inside this door is astrology, fortune-telling, tarot cards, séances, Ouija boards, manipulation, participation in covens, casting curses, and witchcraft practices.¹⁷⁶

The four doors offer a pathway to understanding what sins may be holding a person in bondage.

While the pastoral approach to demonization typically focuses more on liberation, and the mental health model for addressing possession focuses more on integration, there is much that the two disciplines may learn from each other. The ten steps, five keys, and four doors are valuable tools in the hands of all who desire to bring relief to those in distress. They can be used in liberation, integration, or both.

¹⁷⁵ Teresa Liebscher and Dawna De Silva, *SOZO Saved Healed Delivered: A Journey into Freedom with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2016), 109.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 109, 112, 116, 120.

Conclusion

In C. S. Lewis's classic children's tale, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, an arrogant, self-serving boy named Eustace is transformed into a dragon. Lewis writes, "Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself."¹⁷⁷ As the reality of his transformation sets in, Eustace gives in to despair. "He wanted to get back among humans and talk and laugh and share things. He realized that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race. An appalling loneliness came over him."¹⁷⁸ Famished, he feasts on dead dragon flesh "though his mind was the mind of Eustace, his tastes and his digestion were dragonish."¹⁷⁹

Like Eustace, demonized people experience a devastating transformation that corrupts their identities and appetites, trapping them in a self-contained world of loneliness and heartache. Despite desperate attempts to free himself from the dragon's dominion, Eustace's situation only changes when he encounters the lion, Aslan, a Christ-figure. Aslan offers to liberate him, and though Eustace is terrified of the impending pain, he agrees. Describing the moment of liberation, Eustace says, "The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. ... Then he caught hold of me ... and threw me into the water ... [and] I found that all the pain had gone from my

¹⁷⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956; repr., New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2017), 670.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 671.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

arm. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again."¹⁸⁰ Like Eustace, the demonized can only be liberated through Christ's intervention and cleansing. They cannot save themselves from the dragon.

Numerous insights arise that pastors and therapists desiring to help restore people's identity should note. First, the ability to recognize preternatural signs is important. However, apart from these signs, there appears to be no functional difference between demonic possession and the possession type of dissociative trance disorder. Second, for all the talk of culturally conditioned syndromes, diagnosed cases of possession syndrome present very much the same across cultural boundaries. The twenty-eight-year-old woman from Pakistan, the fifty-eight-year-old Southern Baptist man, the twenty-one-year-old Muslim, and the young female researcher at high altitude all present essentially the same, even in the absence of a shared culture or religion. Third, the primary areas of disagreement exist, not in the diagnosis of possession, but in the therapeutic approaches employed to help the possessed. Fourth, more research is needed into models that marry the approaches of liberation and integration. A blended model may offer significant hope to those who feel hopelessly bound by distress. Finally, believers in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition have historically led the way in bringing hope and healing to the sick and oppressed.¹⁸¹ The integration of multi-

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 682.

¹⁸¹ John York, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2000), 206; See also Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God*, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2014), chap. 1, Kindle; Jeff Oliver, *Pentecost to the Present: The Holy Spirit's Enduring Work in the Church, Book Three* (Newberry, FL: Bridge Logos, 2017), 260; William J. Seymour, ed., "Testimonies of Healing," *The Apostolic Faith*, February-March 1907, 6.

disciplinary dialogue and therapeutic exorcism offers profound possibilities within this tradition.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF FIELD PROJECT

Introduction

This project aimed to equip pastors to help people who are distressed by spiritual or psychological struggles. It incorporated principles drawn from chapters 2 and 3 to develop a one-day seminar focused on a pastoral approach to assessment and intervention. While the information presented can be applied in various settings, the seminar primarily focused on application within a pastoral counseling context.

Preparation of the Project

Although pastors in the Pentecostal tradition often acknowledge that demonic influence can cause people to experience substantial distress, many feel unprepared to differentiate between demonic activity and mental health disorders. I recognized that this problem presented a roadblock to effective intervention, so I designed a project to help remove this obstacle for pastors. After identifying the problem, I took numerous steps to address it.

Project Research

First, I developed a prospectus that outlined my anticipated areas of research along with initial concepts for the implementation seminar. This included a plan for a biblical/theological literature review in chapter 2 and a general literature review in chapter 3. The prospectus also identified various academic sources including books, journal articles, and dissertations.

Second, I presented my prospectus to a panel of AGTS faculty members who evaluated its strengths and weaknesses. They encouraged me to pay attention to nuances and to diversify my sources to include various perspectives. One faculty member recommended interacting with Opal Reddin's book, *Power Encounter*, as well as with the Assemblies of God's position paper on "Spiritual Warfare and the Believer." Their encouragement and critiques emphasized the importance of including broad perspectives while maintaining a narrow focus.

Third, I conducted research that examined the clean/unclean motif in the Old and New Testaments, evaluated the New Testament's teaching on deliverance ministry and sanctification, and investigated patristic insights on demonization, mental illness, and deliverance. This research guided my writing for chapter two. Further, I examined considerations specific to pastors and to mental health professionals and focused on models of liberation and integration, noting their applications in the context of deliverance ministry. This prepared me to write chapter 3.

Development of Training Materials

The research that was incorporated into chapters 2 and 3 revealed numerous principles. I applied these principles to design a training seminar that offers practical guidance for pastors. The seminar is six hours and fifteen minutes long, consists of eight sessions, and includes instruction through lectures, small group discussions, and printed materials.

Sessions 1 and 2 establish a pastoral perspective on demonization and mental illness. This foundational information provided the basis for teaching people to apply what they learn in practical ways during the later sessions. Session 3 consists of a

conversation with a pastor or district official about why this training is necessary.¹

Session 4 expands on the material shared in session 1 and focuses on diagnosing demonic oppression or possession.² Session 5 includes four case studies that were written to be discussed in a small group setting. These allow participants to apply the knowledge they gain in a practical way. Session 6 examines the healing power of community, and sessions 7 and 8 focus on introducing a ministry model that can be used to help people experience spiritual and emotional healing.

I developed a PowerPoint presentation to serve as a facilitator's guide.³ It does not include session 5, as the case studies are designed to be distributed and discussed in small groups. I also created a participant's manual that includes assessment tools for pastors.⁴ Although the material contained in the participant's manual corresponds to the facilitator's guide, it does include some unique features and resources.

Pretest and Posttest

I developed a pretest and posttest that evaluates the level of knowledge and confidence relative to my topic among ministers before and after the seminar.⁵ The tests

¹ My pilot seminar focused on training the Link Church staff, so I invited Lead Pastor David Willis to dialogue with me for session 3. The district seminar focused on training ministers throughout the Arkansas District of the Assemblies of God, so I asked District Superintendent Ronnie Morris to speak. Session 3 answers the question, "Why does it matter?" When I developed this material, I decided that creating space for the local leader to give context about why he/she chose to host the seminar would be beneficial.

² This session is titled, "Diagnosing the Demonic." For the district seminar, I substituted this session for a conversation with a mental health therapist about the issues raised in session 2. Much of the "Diagnosing the Demonic" material is contained within the participant's guide.

³ See Appendix D, "Facilitator's Guide."

⁴ See Appendix E, "Participant's Manual."

⁵ See Appendix F, "Pretest, Posttest, and Seminar Schedule."

use a Likert-scale that allows participants to answer thirteen questions on a scale of 1 – 5, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” It also includes demographic questions that assess people’s age, gender, and credential level. I also developed an informed consent form to be given out with the pretests in both seminars.⁶

Securing Local Church and District Approval

Link Church Approval and Facilities Reservation

I contacted Link Church’s lead pastor, David Willis, to present the idea of hosting the pilot seminar for the church’s pastoral team. Link Church’s staff consists of about twenty individuals, and many of them are directly involved in ministry that includes some form of pastoral counseling. Pastor David agreed to host the seminar, and the date was set for July 27, 2024.

I reserved the Link Kids’ room for the pilot seminar. The space is small enough to allow for a personable atmosphere with the expected group size. It is equipped with two large televisions for the PowerPoint presentation, and it has sufficient space to divide people into small groups during the case studies.

Arkansas District Approval and Facilities Reservation

After securing a date and location for the pilot seminar, I reached out to the Arkansas Assemblies of God District Superintendent, Ronnie Morris, to present the idea of a district seminar. We met for breakfast in Conway, AR, and I shared my vision for training pastors. After we discussed my research and training model, the superintendent agreed that this seminar would be beneficial to Arkansas ministers.

⁶ See Appendix G, “Informed Consent Form.”

The superintendent and I decided that the district seminar would also be hosted at Link Church in Clarksville, AR, and we set a date of September 14, 2024. I contacted Pastor David Willis for approval to reserve the facilities for that date, and he gladly consented. Further, we agreed to a registration fee of twenty-five dollars per person to cover the cost of food, printed materials, and honorariums for the superintendent and for the mental health therapist whom I asked to be part of a panel discussion.

Since a larger group of ministers was expected for the district seminar, I decided to hold it in the Link Church sanctuary. The church has enough tables to convert the sanctuary into a workshop space. It also has a large screen for PowerPoint presentations and a sound system to ensure that each of the speakers can be clearly heard.

Promotional Materials and Seminar Registration

Invitations to the pilot seminar were given exclusively by email and text message. Promotional materials for the district seminar were developed through a cooperative effort of Link Church secretary, Heather Dickerson, my wife, and myself. These included an online flyer with a clickable registration link and direct emails to pastors.⁷ The flyer was shared on the Arkansas District Lead Pastors' Facebook page, on my personal page, and on Link Church's website.

Link Church agreed to host registration for the district seminar on their Push Pay service. Heather Dickerson set up the online form and gave me access as a form manager.⁸ This allowed me to monitor registration and to communicate with registrants

⁷ See Appendix H, "Seminar Flyer, Letter to Pastors, and Registration Form." The emails informed pastors that the seminars were part of my doctoral research.

⁸ See Appendix H, "Seminar Flyer, Letter to Pastors, and Registration Form."

as needed.

Meal Planning and Additional Staffing

Meal planning for the pilot seminar was led by my wife, Anna May Willis. The menu included donuts and fruit for breakfast and chicken salad sandwiches for lunch. It was determined that flavored water, tea, and coffee would be made available throughout the day. A morning and afternoon snack would also be provided, consisting of meats and cheese served on charcuterie boards.

Meal preparation for the district seminar was overseen by Thomas and Delancey Willis. The menu included pancakes, bacon, and eggs for breakfast. The lunch menu consisted of smoked chicken and twice baked potatoes. Delancey's catering business, Serving Up Celebrations, agreed to donate various dessert items. A morning and afternoon snack of charcuterie style meats and cheese was planned for this seminar as well.

In addition to meal planning, various other positions needed staffed for the district seminar. Leaders from throughout Link Church volunteered their time and abilities. Samantha Palmer and Chelsea Brasel agreed to oversee the registration table. Chris Dickerson and Payton Palmer offered to run sound and media, and Michael Mize and John Hodge volunteered to serve as door greeters.

Execution of the Project

Execution of the project took place in two phases as planned. Although the content of instruction in each seminar was essentially the same, the pilot had a stronger element of interaction among participants. This difference in dynamic is attributable to

the smaller registration size of the first seminar.

Pilot Seminar

Facilities Preparation

Facilities preparation for the pilot seminar began on Friday, July 26, 2024. My family and I set up eight tables in a U-shaped pattern. All chairs we placed on the outside of the tables so that participants would be able to see each other's faces. Food tables were set up in the back of the room, and a lectern and two televisions for the PowerPoint display were set up in the front of the room.

Implementation Day One, The Pilot Seminar

The pilot seminar included fifteen participants. Several other staff members were invited but were unable to attend due to prior obligations. A packet that included the pretest, the informed consent form, and the handouts for the morning sessions was placed on the table at each seat before the participants arrived. Instructions were given to fill out the pretest and consent forms upon arrival.

The seminar began with a fifteen-minute introductory session. The other eight sessions were forty-five minutes each. After establishing a pastoral perspective on demonization and mental illness during the first two full blocks, I asked David Willis to spend the third session discussing a lead pastor's perspective on why this training is needed.⁹ David shared that someone close to his family suffers from schizophrenia, and he powerfully illustrated the importance of good medical care for such conditions. He

⁹ James David Willis (Link Church Lead Pastor), interview by author, July 27, 2024, Clarksville, AR.

further explained how the assumption of demonic possession in cases of severe mental illness can be damaging and may prevent individuals from receiving effective treatment. Equipping ministers to differentiate between demonization and mental illness is, in his view, vital to good pastoral leadership.¹⁰

The fourth session, “Diagnosing the Demonic,” was included in the pilot but not in the district seminar. This time was devoted to explaining at length how to use some of the diagnostic tools that are included in the participant’s manual. I also discussed how to establish a healthy atmosphere for pastoral counseling and deliverance sessions. The inclusion of this teaching session appeared to boost the confidence of participants during the discussion of case studies in the subsequent session.

During the fifth session, the room was divided into four groups of three to four people. Each group was given a different case study and instructed to spend fifteen minutes assessing the situation and discussing their recommendations. Afterward, individual groups appointed a speaker to explain their case, their assessment, and their plan of action. Immediately following this explanation by the group leader, I shared how I originally addressed the case, and we conversed about potentially better approaches.¹¹ The case studies include some people who suffered from demonization, some who suffered from mental illness, and some who experienced a combination of both spiritual and psychological struggles.

It became evident that forty-five minutes was not sufficient to discuss the case

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ All case studies were used by permission of the clients, and all names and identifying details were changed to ensure that their identities were protected. Link Church staff members were not aware of the scenarios or identities of those involved.

studies, so I expanded the conversation to include the healing power of community, the planned focus of session 6. This adjustment happened organically, as the community element was a significant part of the healing experience in some of the case studies. Participants were encouraged to consider the benefits of team ministry for healing and deliverance. They were also challenged to recognize the local church as a healing community.

The final two sessions focused on equipping participants to use the Intensive Sanctification Model (ISM), which was included in sessions 7 and 8 of the participant's manual. This is a relational process that I designed to help guide people into sanctifying encounters with Christ. The process involves biblically based inquiry and Spirit-led prayer that can lead to emotional healing and spiritual deliverance. In addition to PowerPoint and oral instruction, participants received detailed guidance through the participant's manual, and we dialogued about how to use the process in various scenarios. At the conclusion of our time together, I distributed the posttest and asked everyone to fill it out before leaving.

District Seminar

Facilities Preparation

Facilities preparation began Wednesday, September 11, 2024. Following Link Church's midweek service, students and adult volunteers helped move all the sanctuary chairs into stacks. Fifteen folding tables were set up in the room, with four chairs placed at each of them for a total of sixty seats. The remaining chairs were placed in a storage room.

On Friday, September 13, food tables were set up for snacks in the back of the sanctuary and serving tables for breakfast and lunch were positioned in the foyer. A registration table was placed near the sanctuary doors, with name tags, lanyards, and printed materials for attendees. Additionally, a marker board was set up on the platform at the request of one of the guest presenters, and a flash drive containing the PowerPoint slides was delivered to the media booth. Everything except the meal was fully in place by that night.

Implementation Day Two, The District Seminar

The district seminar was attended by fifty-eight people, including pastors and lay ministers. Although its basic format was the same as the pilot, it did include some unique features. Registration and breakfast were made available from 8:00 to 8:45 a.m. Participants received their printed materials, including the pretest and informed consent form at registration.

The first two sessions mirrored the pilot seminar. During the third session, however, Superintendent Ronnie Morris shared personal experiences of ministry to people who showed some signs of demonization but primarily suffered from trauma-based reactivity.¹² He powerfully expressed the importance of distinguishing between emotional struggles and demonic activity.

During the fourth session, mental health therapist, Jonathan Seubold responded to

¹² Ronnie Morris (Arkansas District Superintendent), interview by author, September 14, 2024, Clarksville, AR.

a series of questions related to mental illness and demonization.¹³ He spoke at length about depression and anxiety, asserting that ministers can guide those who suffer with these conditions by helping them rediscover hope for the future and by encouraging them to forgive those who betrayed them in the past. He also answered questions about schizophrenia, bipolar, and dissociative identity disorder, affirming the research that I presented about these conditions in chapter 3. Further, he explained that in his view, demonic possession requires the surrender of free will.¹⁴

Participants were again divided into four groups for case studies during the fifth session. Due to larger group sizes, I chose to limit the small group discussion to ten minutes to allow for extended large group dialogue. As in the pilot seminar, each group selected a speaker to present their findings. After each speaker, I explained how the situations were originally handled, and we discussed what could have been done better as a group. Participants were able to share significant insights, while also growing in their awareness of the complex nature of spiritual and emotional distress.

The sixth session's focus on the healing power of community was communicated through a panel discussion that included Jonathan Seubold, David Willis, and myself. Ronnie Morris was originally scheduled to be part of this discussion, but unforeseen events resulted in him leaving early. I chose the panel approach because I felt that it would demonstrate to pastors how various professionals offer unique perspectives and can work together as a healing community. Local churches can function as powerful

¹³ Jonathan Seubold (Mental Health Therapist), interview by author, September 14, 2024, Clarksville, AR. The participant's manual included the exact questions that were asked to Seubold.

¹⁴ Ibid.

healing agencies, but it can also be helpful to form therapeutic alliances with other professionals. We discussed how to know when pastors should refer a congregant to another specialist and how this collaborative approach can help people achieve holistic freedom and healing.

Posttests were distributed during the break between sessions 6 and 7. I unfortunately did not manage time as effectively as in the pilot seminar. This resulted in a need to expedite the final two sessions. Although I did introduce the ISM, I did not allow sufficient time to explain the process. However, while those who attended the pilot received photocopied handouts of the material, district seminar attendees were given the participant's manual in a professionally bound booklet. The new format provided a more accessible tool for ministers to use within their own context, so this offered some balance to the shortened public explanation of the ISM.

Results of the Project

This project was developed with lead pastors in mind. However, as multiple leaders expressed a desire to bring staff members to the seminar and numerous lay ministers heard about the training and wanted to learn, I realized its potential benefit was broader than I originally anticipated. Leaders with diverse ministry focuses from diverse age groups ultimately attended and found the seminar beneficial within their various contexts.¹⁵ Although some had to leave the seminars early and others did not complete the pretest and posttest properly, I was able to collect data from forty-two individual, consisting of twenty-one men and twenty-one women. Twenty-two (52.38 percent) had

¹⁵ Age demographics were diverse. 8 individuals were age 18-25, 4 were 26-35, 14 were 36-45, 6 were 46-55, 3 were 55-65, and 5 were over age 65.

experience praying with people to be liberated from demonic control, and fourteen had training in mental health counseling or coaching (33.33 percent).

The pretest and posttest were designed to measure knowledge, confidence, and ministry readiness as they relate to helping people that are distressed by demonic influence or mental illness. This measurement is drawn from responses to thirteen prompts, with “1” representing the lowest level of readiness and “5” indicating the highest level. Each prompt in this section will include the mean pretest and posttest scores for both seminars combined.

Prompt # 1

The first prompt was, “I am confident in my ability to recognize demonic activity in the lives of individuals.” The mean pretest score for this prompt was 3.64, and the mean posttest score was 4.28. This represents an increase of 15 percent on the posttest.

Prompt # 2

The second prompt was, “I understand the ways that living in sin can impact the human mind.” This statement had the second highest pretest score, with a mean of 4.59. This suggests that surveyed ministers likely recognized the need to address sin as part of their efforts to help people. Still, the posttest revealed a new mean score of 4.78, a 5 percent increase.

Prompt # 3

The third prompt was, “I feel prepared to guide believers into deeper levels of sanctification as part of their discipleship process.” My proposed model for intervention relies heavily on leading people into sanctifying experiences as part of their spiritual

growth, so it was important to know if ministers had given sufficient thought to the practical aspects of sanctification. The mean pretest score was 3.85, and on the posttest, it increased by 10 percent to 4.28.

Prompt # 4

The fourth prompt was, “I am confident in my ability to recognize potential signs of mental illness.” The level of ministry readiness in this area was slightly lower, with a pretest score of 3.54. Following the seminar, the confidence of leaders showed a 17 percent increase, with a new mean score of 4.26.

Prompt # 5

The fifth prompt was, “I can identify the patterns/actions in people’s lives that may lead to spiritual bondage.” Identifying these patterns is essential for leaders who wish to help people learn to break cycles of bondage. The surveyed ministers showed a reasonable aptitude for this skill. The mean pretest score was 4.00, and the seminar produced a 12 percent increase. The posttest score was 4.50.

Prompt # 6

The sixth prompt was, “I am familiar with psychological and biological conditions that can mimic demonization.” This knowledge is vital. Mistaking a natural illness for a spiritual illness or vice versa can prevent distressed people from receiving the help they need. The pretest suggests that training was needed, as the mean score was only 3.11. The posttest demonstrated significant growth. The score increased by 26.5 percent, for a new mean of 4.23.

Prompt # 7

The seventh prompt was, “I am comfortable working with medical doctors and mental health professionals to help those I lead.” The pretest score of 3.73 was higher than I expected and may indicate that these leaders were already forming therapeutic alliances in their efforts to help people. The new score of 4.30 represents an increase of 13.3 percent. This indicates that the seminar successfully moved participants from the upper end of the neutral zone into a place where they are now at least somewhat comfortable working with other professionals to offer help.

Prompt # 8

The eighth prompt was, “I am confident in my ability to differentiate between mental illness and demonic activity.” The mean pretest score of 2.88 indicates that these leaders were not confident in this area prior to their seminar attendance. This data underpins the importance of this project. The seminar notably produced a 27.6 percent increase in confidence. The new mean score was 3.97.

Prompt # 9

The ninth prompt was, “I know the right questions to determine the root cause of someone’s distress.” Responses to this statement yielded the lowest mean score among all thirteen prompts. This score of 2.52 suggests that the average participant did not know what questions to ask when trying to help someone prior to the seminar. Post-seminar scores increased by 36.6 percent, with a new mean of 3.97.

Prompt # 10

The tenth prompt was, “I am adequately prepared to lead a demonized person

through a deliverance process in a pastoral counseling setting.” The mean of 2.59 makes this the second lowest score and indicates that most people did not feel adequately prepared prior to this training. An increase of 34.4 percent was observed, and the mean posttest score was 3.95.

Prompt # 11

The eleventh prompt was, “I can distinguish between demonic oppression, demonic possession, and other kinds of spiritual distress.” The mean pretest score for this statement was 2.80, which is the third lowest on the test. The low scores on prompts 8 through 11 clearly indicate that training among ministers is needed. There was a 28.1 percent improvement for prompt 11 on the posttest, with a new score of 3.90.

Prompt # 12

The twelfth prompt was, “I understand how liberation from evil spirits fits within the larger context of Christ’s redemptive work in humanity.” Participants had a mean pretest score of 4.35. This suggests that their theology of deliverance and redemption was fairly strong coming into this training. There was a 7.6 percent increase on the posttest, with a new mean score of 4.71.

Prompt # 13

The final prompt was, “I understand the value of teaching as it relates to equipping believers for spiritual warfare.” This statement received the strongest agreement among all thirteen prompts both before and after the seminar. The pretest score was 4.61, and the posttest was 4.80, which is a 4 percent increase. This indicates

that the participants have a strong understanding of the role that teaching plays within the larger context of their helping ministry.

Analyzing the Data

The pretest data revealed an interesting pattern. The participants scored the highest on questions related to theology and the lowest on questions about helping spiritually and psychologically distressed individuals in practical ways. For example, before the seminar, they demonstrated understanding of how sin affects the mind, how deliverance from demons fits within the larger plan of redemption, and how teaching can be used to equip people for spiritual warfare. However, there was a significant need for growth relative to distinguishing between mental illness and demonization, differentiating between different degrees of demonization, and leading demonized people through deliverance.

Questions regarding practical discipleship and collaboration with other professionals indicated a confidence level that was in the mid-range. This is encouraging because it suggests that even without advanced training, spiritual leaders may possess a willingness to develop therapeutic alliances and a desire to disciple people in ways that will likely yield spiritual and psychological benefits. Further, the cumulative posttest scores reveal an overall increase of 17.4 percent from the pretest.¹⁶ This supports the theory that a one-day, targeted seminar on these various topics can substantially improve ministry readiness.

¹⁶ To clarify, this percentage represents the increase of the mean of the scores from all thirteen questions combined.

The Project's Contribution to Ministry

This project's contribution to ministry is substantial. It is anchored in multi-disciplinary research that supplies the foundation for a broad range of applications. Some of these applications were field tested as part of my implementation. However, the groundwork has already been laid to utilize this material in other contexts.

Local Church Staff Training

First, the pilot seminar demonstrated its value for equipping staff members in a local church context. Link Church has been blessed to see approximately six hundred people come to faith in Jesus Christ during the last eighteen months. A significant percentage of these individuals are part of the recovery community. Just as this revival has given the local church's leadership cause to rejoice, it has always presented significant challenges. We face the need to distinguish between mental illness, demonic influence, and simple matters of discipleship on a weekly basis.

This project gave Link Church's leadership team the opportunity to have vital conversations with all staff members and to develop best practices for assessment and intervention among people who are distressed by spiritual or psychological struggles. It has helped the local church maximize its ministry impact while minimizing its risk of unintentional harm. Further, by equipping numerous staff members with tools that can be used in pastoral counseling, it has reduced the lead pastor's personal counseling load, freeing him to focus on his role as a visionary leader. This model was first implemented at Link Church and can now be replicated to bless the leadership teams of local churches throughout the nation, multiplying ministry effectiveness.

District-Level Equipping for Pastoral Teams

Second, the district seminar introduced a way to equip numerous lead pastors and their teams. It employed a collaborative approach that offered a fusion of scholarly research, pastoral insight, mental health expertise, and a district superintendent's perspective. It established guidelines for making referrals to other professionals, gave practical advice for the formation of therapeutic alliances, offered diagnostic tools that aid in discernment, and introduced a ministry model that helps people experience spiritual and emotional freedom and healing. The Intensive Sanctification seminar that was offered in the Arkansas District of the Assemblies of God can now be presented in other districts as part of their efforts to equip pastors and ministry leaders.

Faith-Based Recovery Applications

Third, the leaders of a faith-based recovery ministry in Johnson County, AR were invited to attend the district seminar. Their executive director later asked that I adapt the training into a four-week series for their house directors and other staff members. They already offered counseling and various other services to the recovery community, but the door is now open to partner with them for increased ministry effectiveness. This four-week modular approach will employ an interactive learning model that will aid recovery leaders in assessment and intervention for people who experience spiritual or psychological distress. This ministry model can also be offered to other faith-based recovery ministries as a form of professional development for their leaders.

Academic Formation

Fourth, this project is synergistic in terms of its research foundations. It brings together insights from psychology, psychiatry, neurology, pastoral ministry, and various

exorcism and deliverance ministries. While remaining firmly anchored in the biblical text and the Pentecostal tradition, it evaluates research from numerous faith traditions, offering a robust understanding of the psychological impact of demonization. Further, it offers clear guidelines for differentiating between demonization and various mental illnesses. Given these unique features, this project could be adapted to an academic setting and utilized to teach undergraduate or graduate students a biblical theology of liberation and integration. It offers a pathway for teaching an often-controversial subject in a balanced and biblically sound manner. In this way, this project offers a substantial contribution to the field of practical theology.

Pastoral Enrichment Through Publication

Finally, I recognize that some pastors may not be able to attend a district or local church seminar. Although in-person instruction offers a kind of formation that cannot be reproduced in print, this material can be adapted to provide a practical written guide for pastors. The participant's manual that was distributed during the seminar represents an early version of this tool. However, I intend to expand it to include key findings that were shared throughout the seminar to provide maximum benefit to leaders.

Pentecostal leaders know that there is no substitute for the Holy Spirit's voice in the context of ministry. However, the research that has been expounded throughout this project can provide a powerful supplement to be used as part of the process of discernment and assessment. The contextual applications of this project are diverse, but its true contribution to ministry is the intentional equipping of Spirit-empowered leaders to bring freedom and healing wherever they are needed.

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT SUMMARY

Introduction

This project demonstrated that training is important and effective for helping pastors navigate the complexities involved in spiritual and emotional healing. Striking similarities sometimes exist in the distress that results from demonic influence and that which is associated with mental illness. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish between them through targeted education and spiritual discernment.

The research presented in chapters 2 and 3 established a solid foundation for understanding aspects of both demonization and mental illness. The seminar then applied that research to train ministers through lectures, printed materials, case studies, and group discussions. The result was that seminar participants demonstrated a marked increase in understanding and confidence regarding assessment and intervention.

Evaluation of the Project

Keys to Project Effectiveness

This project was effective in at least two significant areas. First, it exposed the limitations of a single-lens approach for helping distressed individuals, demonstrating the necessity of multidisciplinary assessment. Second, it revealed that targeted training related to demonization and mental illness increases ministry effectiveness and decreases the risk of harming those seeking spiritual and emotional healing. Four factors contributed to this success: substantial multidisciplinary research, long-standing ministry

relationships, local church and district support, and significant personal experience in deliverance ministry and pastoral counseling.

Multidisciplinary Research

The project's effectiveness flowed out of the substantial body of multidisciplinary research that was undertaken in its early phases. I consulted the published writings of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, neurologists, anthropologists, theologians and exorcists from various faith traditions, the biblical text, and the writings of the church fathers. This included extensive documentation from the medical community about dissociative states.

Many authors from the medical community readily acknowledged the limitations of a secular approach to treating certain conditions. Likewise, writings about deliverance and exorcism commonly noted the need for medicine and mental health therapy. Familiarity with this body of research and diverse perspectives was essential when calling for a harmonized approach to assessment and intervention. It provided the framework to equip leaders to offer quality pastoral care and, when needed, to make good referrals.

Long-standing Ministry Relationships

Relationships that were formed in the Arkansas district throughout the last twenty-seven years of ministry were vital to this project's success. The church in which I serve is in the same Assemblies of God section and district where my father has pastored for my entire life and where I began in ministry in 1997. I have had countless conversations about demonization and deliverance with pastors, evangelists, and counselors in the area throughout the last few decades. This aided my understanding of

the relevant issues and gave me the relational capital necessary to execute certain aspects of this project.

Local Church and District Support

Support from Link Church's lead pastor, David Willis, was central to the project's success. He allowed Link Church to serve as a living laboratory for practical research implementation, actively contributed to conversations about best practices and resource development, hosted the pilot and district seminar in the church's facilities, and sponsored numerous individuals whom he felt would benefit from the training. Further, Link Church's staff and other members helped develop promotional materials and staffed numerous areas for the seminars.

Support from Ronnie Morris, Arkansas District Superintendent, was also of inestimable value. During the months leading up to the seminar, he met with me for breakfast twice to discuss ways that this project could benefit the district. He spoke at the seminar personally, gave his blessing to invite ministers from throughout the district, and shared his own experiences about the role of deliverance ministry and pastoral counseling in the local church setting.

Personal Experience

I have been actively involved in deliverance ministry for more than twenty-five years and in pastoral counseling for about twenty years. Additionally, I have completed certifications in mental health coaching and in suicide prevention through Light University and the American Association of Christian Counselors. This project is not

simply anchored in theory; it is the outgrowth of my practical life and ministry experience.

I realized years ago that although many people who appeared to suffer from demonization received help through deliverance approaches, there were others with similar symptoms who did not. This observation ultimately led to the realization that mental health struggles are a common blind spot among deliverance practitioners. Increased understanding of mental health principles greatly multiplied my own ministry effectiveness, which led me to the belief that a harmonized approach of deliverance and counseling could be taught to others. This life experience supplied significant underpinning to this project and was a key contributor to its success.

Keys to Project Improvement

The benefit of hindsight reveals a few areas where project improvement could lead to greater ministry impact. These include expanded pretest data, improved seminar time management, and greater contextualization in the seminar format. Although none of them represent major procedural changes, their implementation could yield definite benefits.

Expanded Pretest Data

The pretest/posttest approach that I used provided an effective assessment of the project's immediate impact on its participants. However, partnering with district councils or with the General Council to administer the pretest to a broader range of ministers would supply intriguing data that would help promote the project to a broader audience. If test scores from a larger sample size prove consistent with those reported from the

pretests in chapter 4, it will further underscore the importance of making this training available to pastors throughout the Assemblies of God.

Improved Seminar Time Management

Time management was not an issue in the pilot seminar, but it did prove challenging during the district seminar. This is attributable to two factors. First, the pilot seminar was designed to have a smaller number of participants, which made it relatively easy to manage the interactive learning portions. Even though I anticipated the need to adjust for the larger group of participants in the district seminar, it would have been better to clearly define the time that was allotted for each small group representative.

Second, three individuals besides myself either lectured or participated in panel discussions. Two of those sessions extended beyond the allotted time, which forced me to cut the last portion of the seminar short. Although the content of the sessions was impactful, time management issues affected the overall balance of the material presented in the second seminar.

Increased Contextualization

There was a strong element of peer interaction throughout the pilot seminar. This contributed to everyone remaining strongly engaged from beginning to end. The context of the district seminar did not allow for as much interaction, which resulted in people becoming less engaged by the end of the day. It would be beneficial to make adaptations to the overall format to allow for increased peer participation when the material is presented to a group larger than thirty. Where possible, dividing the seminar into two or more days would be ideal. It would allow for fuller exploration of the research while

maximizing the interactive element to ensure that participants understand how to apply what they learn in practical ways.

Implications of the Project

When I first began working on this project, I expected to learn two things. First, I wanted to understand which mental health conditions might be easily mistaken as demonization so that I could teach pastors to recognize them. Second, I wanted to understand more about the psychological experiences of those who are demonized. The project successfully explored both these areas, but it also yielded numerous implications that I did not fully anticipate.

Opportunity for Education and Consultation with Other Professionals

I was surprised to find that people in the mental health field need to be better informed about demonization and deliverance ministry. The research revealed that this is a substantial need and that there are psychologists and psychiatrists who recognize this need for interdisciplinary dialogue. A significant implication of this project is that pastors with a strong understanding of demonization and its practical effects could serve as vital resources to the medical community and to the counseling community. A spiritual treatment modality could offer hope to some for whom the mental health model has failed.

Overlap Between Dissociative Disorders and Demonization

This project implies that there is significant overlap between the clinical presentations of some dissociative disorders and demonization. This is so widely

acknowledged in the mental health community that two of the leading diagnostic manuals for mental health disorders include a possession form of certain disorders.¹ While this does not suggest that everyone diagnosed with those conditions is demonized in the biblical sense, it does imply that spiritual treatment approaches could be considered for some of them. If people with these forms of dissociative disorders reach out to pastors for help, pastors should not ignore their mental health diagnosis, but they should also not immediately rule out the possibility of demonization.

Underdeveloped Distinction Between Oppression and Possession

A third implication of this project is that although Pentecostals often make a theological distinction between oppression and possession, many leaders need to further develop their ability to practically differentiate between these two conditions. The pretest scores that I shared in chapter 4 revealed that most participants were not able to make this distinction prior to the seminars. This need for further development was also demonstrated practically within the conversations surrounding the case studies in the pilot and in the district seminar. Proper assessment is essential for ministers who wish to design appropriate interventions. Further, ministers may need more training in deliverance techniques that are not exorcistic in nature to help people combat bouts of severe oppression.

¹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 329-30; World Health Organization, *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders: Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines* (Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Publications, 1992), 156.

Continuing Education is Needed

Finally, this project implies that although the seminar is an effective tool for equipping ministers, continuing education or mentoring may be needed beyond the seminar. Posttest scores demonstrated a marked increase from pretest scores. However, mean posttest scores revealed that room for improvement was still present. Pastors who regularly engage in counseling or deliverance ministry would benefit from follow-up teaching after they have had time to practically implement the knowledge and tools that are shared in the seminar. The nature of this training is such that its benefit will only be fully realized within the pastors' own contexts.

Recommendations for Improving Ministry Effectiveness

Recommendations for Assemblies of God Districts

Gary McGee notes that throughout the early 1900's, Pentecostals were viewed as "absurd and irresponsible," because their opponents did not foresee "the impact that healings and 'power encounters' (exorcisms, etc.) would have in capturing the attention of non-Christians on the mission fields."² As the United States increasingly becomes a post-Christian society, the Assemblies of God must be willing to continue its history of being unconcerned with ridicule and pray that God will again use power encounters to propel the movement forward.

Missiologist John York likewise documents the significant role of deliverance in Assemblies of God missions with this observation:

² Gary McGee. *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2014), Location 447.

In Pentecostal practice, it is customary to pray for the sick as part of the crusade service. When demonic manifestations occur, pastors or trained lay leaders deal immediately with the people who are affected. The testimonies of those delivered from sickness and demonic attack give great credibility to the preaching of the gospel, much as they did during the New Testament era. ... [M]inistries of healing and deliverance from demons are typical of Pentecostal church planting throughout the world.”³

A key word in York’s reflection is “trained.”⁴ Our Assemblies of God districts should encourage supernatural ministry, but the need for training relative to deliverance ministry has never been greater.

Drawing from the research presented throughout this project, I recommend that Assemblies of God districts implement four best practice standards for their ministers. First, pastoral teams should be trained to help people who suffer from demonization or mental illness. Assemblies of God pastors must always rely on the gifts and direction of the Holy Spirit for deliverance and healing. However, training that equips ministers for effective assessment and intervention enhances ministry confidence and effectiveness without undermining the Spirit’s role. Training seminars could be hosted by districts every three years to ensure that they are available to all pastors.

Second, although altar ministry should never be restricted, pastors should refer distressed individuals for a physical exam and a mental health evaluation if clear preternatural signs are not present. This is a safeguard for individuals, churches, and districts. Districts could maintain a list of recommended Christian doctors and counselors

³ John York. *Missions in the Age of the Spirit*. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2000), 206-207.

⁴ Ibid.

and provide this list to pastors. Doctors and counselors should never be asked to diagnose or rule out demonization. That is the role of pastors. Rather, medical and mental health professionals can inform the patient whether or not their symptoms are consistent with a specific medical diagnosis. This vital step in assessment should be actively encouraged as a best practice.

Third, pastors should never give medical advice that is beyond the reach of their own professional credentials. If pastors have a personal aversion to mental health medications, they should refrain from communicating this to congregants. People who suffer with certain mental health conditions like bipolar and schizophrenia may require long-term medication. Encouraging them to quit such medications without the approval of a medical doctor can endanger their lives. Although Assemblies of God pastors believe in miracles, they need not shun medical advice or confirmation.

Fourth, pastors who regularly engage in deliverance ministry should network with each other for ongoing prayer, encouragement, and professional development. In fellowships where some ministers are specifically designated as exorcists, this cooperative dynamic is normal. Although the Assemblies of God's context is different, ministers can still benefit from the gift of shared knowledge and resources. Districts could help facilitate this in a relational manner by maintaining a list of pastors who are known to consistently minister to demonized or mentally ill individuals.

Recommendations for Local Churches

The above recommendations to districts naturally impact local churches. However, I recommend the following additional best practices for individual assemblies.

First, local churches should develop a policy that individuals, including staff members, can only engage in focused, intentional deliverance ministry with the direct approval of their lead pastor. This policy would not prohibit people from praying with someone to be set free during an altar service. However, when a leader communicates either explicitly or implicitly that someone's distress is demonic in nature, a certain amount of liability is assumed by the local church. Pastors need to possess a sense of moral certainty that someone's affliction is demonic before such communication occurs.

Second, pastors should require everyone they counsel and those with whom they practice deliverance to sign an informed consent waiver. I recommend including a statement on the form indicating that your approach includes emotional healing and spiritual deliverance. These forms should list the qualifications and credentials of the pastor or staff member. Unless the pastor is a professional counselor, the form should clearly indicate that he or she is not. It is good to make sure that those seeking help clearly understand the difference between biblical counseling and licensed professional counseling.

Third, I recommend that pastors only allow individuals who acknowledge a distinction between mental illness and demonization to serve in their counseling or deliverance ministries. Although this may seem like an extreme recommendation, it provides an important safeguard for local churches. The Assemblies of God embraces supernatural ministry, but it does not disdain medical knowledge or scientific advancement. Denying the existence of mental illness or equating it with demonization imposes a sense of pressure on those seeking help to stop taking prescribed medication. This can endanger their health and expose churches to potential litigation.

Fourth, pastors should provide annual training to their ministry staff and altar workers that addresses these topics. This training should include a time of group interaction where people grapple with the complexities involved in ministry to demonized people. It should focus more on discipleship and truth encounters than on power encounters and place a priority on healing from past trauma.

Recommendations for Future Study

This project primarily focused on the more practical side of demonization, how it impacts individuals, and how it is distinct from mental and physical illness. Although chapter 2 offered some general reflections on demonic origins, it stopped short of a detailed examination of biblical demonology. Future studies should explore whether increased understanding of demonology offers practical benefits to the practice of deliverance.

Second, the general literature review in chapter 3 established three primary pathologies of demonization: personal sin, occult activity, and trauma. My research suggests that occult activity currently accounts for a relatively small percentage of demonization in this country. However, there is reason to believe that involvement in certain practices may increase the likelihood of demonization, and anecdotal evidence suggests that occult practice is on the rise in the United States. Further study is needed to establish clear correlations between specific activities and demonization.

Finally, this project emphasized the importance of team ministry for helping demonized people and touted the importance of therapeutic alliances. It did not, however,

analyze the details of team formation. Future studies should prioritize development and analysis of team dynamics for ministry to people in spiritual or psychological bondage.

APPENDIX A: SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND THE BELIEVER POSITION PAPER

Introduction

The Assemblies of God affirms the reality of spiritual warfare, acknowledging that the Christ-follower is engaged in a conflict in the world, with the flesh, and with the devil. Believers do not make this affirmation with any fear, because the apostle John provides the assurances that “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is the world” (1 John 4:4)¹, and “the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them” (1 John 5:18). The believer, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is more than a conqueror (Romans 8:31–39). Such assurance, however, is no license for failing to take seriously the challenges posed by ongoing opposition to the kingdom of God.

Followers of Christ must remember that the “struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus summarized the divine expectation for humans: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). From the fall into sin (Genesis 3:1–19), the devil has opposed humanity’s fulfillment of God’s purpose. The perversion, misdirection, and disruption of the intended love for God and neighbor is the opening used by the devil to torment humanity and create the warfare that continues to this day.

The triad—world, flesh, and devil—as a description of the arena in which spiritual warfare takes place is firmly rooted in the biblical tradition. The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 2:1–3, identifies these three as the areas of the battle for humans. “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.”

This paper will make use of this threefold lens through which to discuss spiritual warfare and the believer. All believers face this battle, and they do so more than

¹ Assemblies of God General Presbytery, “Position Papers: Spiritual Warfare and the Believer,” Adopted July 30, 2019: <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Spiritual-Warfare-and-the-Believer>, accessed November 8, 2024. All biblical citations in Appendix A are from the New International Version (2011).

adequately equipped for victory by the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The result of spiritual warfare, because of the work of the Spirit in and through believers, will be victory.

Spiritual Warfare and the World

The biblical writers understand the concept of the world in several ways. They use it to describe the physical world that God created and decreed that it be filled with His glory (Isaiah 6:3; John 1:9; Acts 17:24). The world is also used to refer to the land on which humans live, and even the humans who are dwelling there (Matthew 4:8; 24:14; Luke 4:5). The world is that which God so loved that He gave His Son to die for its redemption (John 3:16).

However, because of the sinful orientation of the world, it is opposed to God and His people. The world is also described as the domain of Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and as the world system of God-rejectors and their cherished values (John 17:6; James 4:4; 1 John 5:19).

Therefore, John warns, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:15–16).

The apostle Paul was aware of spiritual warfare and the world. He challenged the Roman Christians to “not conform to the pattern of this world,” because allowing the world to dominate hinders being able to approve the will of God in each life (Romans 12:2). The world is the total environment in which humans exist, a world which God created and called good, a world which He loves eternally, but a world that has departed from the plan God had for His creation.

The tragic reality of the record of the fall into sin in Genesis 3 is that the very structural orientation of the world has been altered. The ease of gaining food from the ground was lost so that thorns and thistles make it difficult to bring food from the soil. Childbirth is with severe pain, and human relationships are radically damaged (Genesis 3:16–19). The welcoming and nurturing world God created became threatening, with human death as the final indignity. Paul describes this disoriented world as “subject to frustration” and “groaning as in the pains of childbirth” awaiting the ultimate victory of God (Romans 8:20–22).

The structure and systems of the fallen world express themselves in opposition to the believer. Governments, governmental agencies, and societal and cultural norms conspire to attack the faith of the Christ-follower. Laws and policies have sometimes been implemented that conflict with the principles revealed by God as His will for humans. Racism in all its forms, ethnic arrogance, and unbridled nationalism coalesce to negate the truths of the Bible.

The constant pressure of the world to mold believers into its image is seen in the multiple ways the world advertises and tempts them to depart from their faith commitment. The steady stream of pictures, images, and marketing appeals, some based on the basest of human instinct, must be met by a commitment to spiritual warfare against these worldly forces.

Spiritual warfare in the world is also experienced in the pressure exerted on believers by fellow world dwellers who are not battling against the negative tug of the world. Instead, they have given over to the world's forces and place pressure on believers to do likewise. As a warning from biblical history to contemporary Christians, Israel was challenged repeatedly by God about the danger of allowing the people of the land of Canaan to lead them away from God to the worship of their gods.

In the warfare between the believer and the evil forces in the world, the resources for victory are spiritual, not political. The apostle John gave the primary challenge for engaging the pressures from the fallen world by saying, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them" (1 John 2:15). Supreme love for God, the antithesis of loving the world, is the antidote to the challenges of the world. Jude's call for believers to build themselves up in the most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20) allows the Spirit to pray through them "in accordance with the will of God" (Romans 8:26–27). Such prayer is powerful to bring victory in the spiritual battle in the world.

Spiritual Warfare and the Flesh

The New Testament uses flesh (*sarx*) to describe human nature and flesh, and body (*soma*) to depict the human body. Often flesh is used to speak of the weaker aspects of human nature, subject to temptation (Matthew 26:41; 2 Peter 2:18). Paul warns against being enslaved by the desires of the flesh (Ephesians 2:3), and challenges believers not to allow their minds to be set on the flesh (Romans 8:5–7).

The warfare with the flesh is with the fallen nature of humankind, which is now directed away from God and His will toward sinful inclinations and desires. In the fall into sin, Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation to have their eyes opened, be like God, and know good and evil (Genesis 3:5). Instead of continuing to recognize God as supreme and allow Him to be the determinant of what is right and wrong, they chose to exalt themselves and to direct their own lives. Such sin caused them to be no longer turned toward God but to be turned inward on themselves. The decision to remove God from His central place in human existence allowed evil to run unchecked, causing desires and passions to lead humankind away from the plan of God. This war with the fallen nature of humans, resisting what God decrees as right, still rages today.

Paul's identification of the acts of the flesh is a reminder that spiritual warfare against the flesh is crucial. The list in Galatians 5:19–21, "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like," is illustrative

of the fallen human nature. The challenge in the warfare against the flesh is to crucify the passions and desires of the flesh and to live by and keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:24–25).

The salvation provided by Christ grants freedom to the believer, but Paul cautions against using that freedom wrongly by indulging the flesh. Such indulgence denies the absolute expectation on the believer to “serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13). The direction of the unchecked flesh is to broken relationships and personal harm, which are antithetical to the work of the Spirit in the lives of believers. The tragic reality is that the flesh desires that which is against the Spirit, so to succeed in the warfare against the flesh, the believer must “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16–17).

The apostle Paul clearly states the biblical view of flesh, noting that the sinful passions are at work, leading to death (Romans 7:5). The danger is that even though individuals have become believers, they could refuse to set their minds on the Spirit, choosing instead to yield to the desires of the flesh. Continuing refusal to allow the Spirit to govern their lives results in spiritual death because the flesh is hostile to God (Romans 8:5–8). Warring with the flesh grows out of the recognition that the work of Christ has dealt a mortal blow to the flesh. The believer engages in spiritual warfare against the flesh by choosing to allow the Spirit to lead, guide, and direct all their living. The Spirit provides resurrection life to the believer so that victory in the spiritual battle against the flesh can be realized (Romans 8:9–13).

Victory is gained over the flesh as the Spirit empowers one to overcome the desires of the flesh and its sinful activities. As the believer continues to allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them, He increasingly produces Christian character in their lives (Galatians 5:22–23). These fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—evidence victory in the spiritual warfare with the flesh.

Spiritual Warfare and the Devil

Some may question theologically and practically if spiritual warfare against the devil is real and relevant to their lives and ministries. The consensus of Assemblies of God thought is that an unseen enemy, the devil, exists and is devoted to opposing God and destroying humanity. Immediately after He was anointed with the Holy Spirit to begin His public ministry, Jesus experienced a personal confrontation with the devil (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). Later, Peter summarized Jesus’ ministry: “He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38). The devil confronted Jesus repeatedly (Luke 4:13), and Christ’s representatives should expect no less. The war was and is real.

The biblical writers evidence belief in the existence of the devil, whom they depict as a personal entity. He is described as a serpent in the confrontation with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Capable of knowledge, speech, and persuasion, all indicators of a personal entity, he tempted them, and they fell into sin. When Jesus was tempted by the

devil, he conversed with Jesus, even using Scriptures, in the effort to divert Jesus from His mission (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13).

The devil is the adversary, a liar, and a deceiver. His opposition to God, His plan, and His people is fierce and relentless. However, the devil and the demonic forces allied with him are limited. They are not divine and lack the complete knowledge God expresses, they are not able to be present everywhere at the same time, and they are subject to God and His people. They do not have guaranteed access to human thoughts. The believer must be aware of their evil intentions and activities but should not fear them.

When God confronted Adam and Eve about their choice to turn away from His ultimate guidance and direction, to fall into sin and introduce sin to the entire human race, He pronounced the ultimate destiny of the devil. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Revelation 19 and 20 make it clear that the devil and those demonic forces allied with him are destined for destruction.

The conflict between the believer and demonic forces can be understood as a spectrum of demonic influence, ranging in the degree of domination over a person’s life and in the variety of aspects of life where demonic control has taken place. The impact of demonic powers may be slight and almost undetectable. If one repents, forsakes their sin and carnal activities, resists temptation, and calls upon the Spirit to cleanse and deliver, victory and freedom will be obtained. The extreme influence of the demonic could be called “possession” in which a person is controlled by demonic forces who manipulate the individual’s body, mind, and spirit for their destructive purposes.² This extreme case of demonic control is indicative of continued movement away from, and abandonment of, a personal relationship with Jesus; the believer should gain victory in the spiritual conflict well before this extreme and not be subject to it. While believers will engage in spiritual warfare and will be oppressed, they cannot be possessed by the demonic forces.

Great care must be taken not to confuse emotional and mental illnesses with demonic activity. While the demonic activity may mimic the behavior exhibited in mental illness, to assert that they are the same can bring harm to individuals, preventing them from receiving the medical care needed. The wise counsel of godly doctors, counselors, and psychologists can be of assistance in discerning the actual condition. The powerful and all-wise Holy Spirit provides discernment and wisdom to those who minister to humans facing this severe challenge.

There are those who teach that each instance in the biblical material that references “spirit” or “spirit of” refers to demonic activity. Most often the biblical writers

² With demon possession, the power of Satan takes control of the center of an individual’s personality. In such lives, demons can manifest themselves through temporary changes in personality, speech, bizarre physical behavior, physical and mental affliction, and self-destructive tendencies.

use *spirit* to identify an attitude or a disposition. For example, David spoke of a broken spirit (Psalm 51:17), Solomon of being lowly in spirit (Proverbs 16:19), and Paul wanted to come to Corinth with love and a gentle spirit (1 Corinthians 4:21). It would be better to treat uses of “spirit” and “spirit of” as designations of attitudes and dispositions, some of which could be sinful unless the context of the passage shows that an independent spirit-being is meant.

The teaching that demonic activity includes authority over geographical areas is based on the incident recorded in Daniel 10. Daniel received a divine messenger who had been delayed by the resistance of the “prince of the Persian kingdom” for twenty-one days (Daniel 10:13). This is a difficult passage to interpret, but even if the prince of the Persian kingdom is a demonic entity, a singular reference is not a solid basis for creating teaching about territorial demonic activity.

The authors of the Gospels detail numerous specific encounters between Jesus and demons. In each case, He was in command and provided the needed deliverance for the human tormented by the demonic forces. It would not be correct to deduce a set formula for encounters with the demonic from the examples of Jesus, because His actions were varied. For instance, He only asked the name of the demons once (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30). In that same encounter, He allowed the demons to choose where He would send them—into the pigs (Matthew 8:31; Mark 5:11–12; Luke 8:32). There are other instances in which He did not permit the demons to speak (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:35, 41). The Gospel writers frequently noted that He healed and delivered from demons (e.g., Matthew 4:34), but He did not identify every human malady with demonic possession.

There are some positive lessons from the accounts of Jesus’ victorious encounters with demons. He identified the Holy Spirit as the source of His casting out demons (Matthew 12:28; the “finger of God” in Luke 11:20), indicating the arrival of the kingdom of God. After delivering the young boy as He returned from the Mount of Transfiguration, He pointed to the necessity of faith and prayer (Matthew 17:20–21; Mark 9:29). In every case, Jesus’ voice was the command that drove demonic forces out of humans.

James provides a powerful means by which the believer can defeat the devil in spiritual warfare: “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). As believers recognize their full dependence on the power of God and that the devil cannot stand before that power, they can refuse to allow the devil any place in their lives. Peter summarizes warfare with the devil by saying, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

Pastoral Implications

Spiritual warfare in the world, with the flesh, and with the devil is a reality for Christ-followers. Pastoral leadership has the privilege of preparing congregational members for, and encouraging them in, this battle. The Pentecostal reality of Spirit-filled and enabled living is crucial for overcoming the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Leading the congregation into this Spirit-dependent living is vital. The ongoing growth of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and the allowance for the expression of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4–11) in the lives of believers are of paramount importance. Encouraging Christ-followers to allow the Holy Spirit to

pray and praise through them in a heavenly language opens the will and purposes of God to strengthen each for the challenges faced in spiritual warfare (Romans 8:26–27; Jude 20).

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul challenged believers in spiritual warfare “to put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11). Spiritual warfare is not against humans; instead, it is with spiritual forces of evil. Standing against such is possible because of the armor provided by God—“the belt of truth . . . the breastplate of righteousness . . . feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace . . . the shield of faith . . . the helmet of salvation . . . the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:14–17). The presentation of the resources provided the believer for spiritual warfare with a reminder of the power of prayer in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18).

There are some in congregations with emotional and mental challenges which might be helped by medical and counseling professionals. In some instances, the medical profession could be of more assistance than a deliverance ministry. Making use of professional help would not be instead of fervent prayer and intercession. God has the power to heal all of humanity’s illnesses. Great care and dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit are needed to determine the best path toward wholeness and healing.

Congregations have the privilege of not only being strengthened to fight personally but also to engage spiritual warfare in a corporate act of intercession. The battle with the world often must be carried on at the systems or structural level. Evil expresses itself through corporate practices, governmental decisions, and cultural traditions. The body of Christ can see the victory of God through intercessory prayer and actions as needed.

The apostle Paul provided the assurance needed for all believers as they engage in spiritual warfare. “What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? . . . in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:31–32, 37). Peter, as he begins his second epistle, provided this great assurance: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3).

APPENDIX B: DEMONIZATION AND BELIEVERS

This project's stated goal is to equip pastors to help people who are distressed by demonic influence or mental illness. Although pastors are at times called upon to offer help to those outside the church, much of their focus is naturally on ministry to those who identify as followers of Christ. Therefore, it is reasonable for readers to concern themselves with what kinds of distress may be encountered among believers.¹

It is common for authors who write from a Pentecostal perspective to assert that Christians cannot be demon possessed. I agree with this assertion. However, valid concerns could be raised about whether those who hold to this theological position may fail to account for the broad spectrum of demonic attacks. The Assemblies of God's Position Paper on Spiritual Warfare and the Believer offers significant insight:

The conflict between the believer and demonic forces can be understood as a spectrum of demonic influence, ranging in the degree of domination over a person's life and in the variety of aspects of life where demonic control has taken

¹ I wrote Appendix B because I realized that those reading my research and findings might naturally wonder what conclusions I draw regarding demonization and believers. This is often a polarizing issue, and strong feelings naturally arise on all sides. Some people fear that claims of demonization among believers increase the likelihood of mental and physical illnesses going untreated. Further, it is sometimes asserted that belief in demonization among believers undermines the integrity of the New Testament's teaching on soteriology and shirks human responsibility for sinful decisions, illegitimately transferring blame to demons. These are valid concerns. At the same time, others fear that people who desperately need spiritual deliverance may not receive the ministry they need if demonization is not considered as a possible root of their distress. This is also a valid concern. The matter is further complicated by differences in understanding of the believer's security among people from various faith traditions. The Assemblies of God's position paper that is included as Appendix A offers excellent insight on this subject, but I still felt that readers would benefit from further clarity as it relates to this project. While this appendix may not account for every theological nuance that is relevant to this conversation, it is intended to offer helpful pastoral guidance as part of the larger body of research that is presented throughout this project.

place. The impact of demonic powers may be slight and almost undetectable. If one repents, forsakes their sin and carnal activities, resists temptation, and calls upon the Spirit to cleanse and deliver, victory and freedom will be obtained. The extreme influence of the demonic could be called “possession” in which a person is controlled by demonic forces who manipulate the individual’s body, mind, and spirit for their destructive purposes. This extreme case of demonic control is indicative of continued movement away from, and abandonment of, a personal relationship with Jesus; the believer should gain victory in the spiritual conflict well before this extreme and not be subject to it. While believers will engage in spiritual warfare and will be oppressed, they cannot be possessed by the demonic forces.²

This well-articulated summary of a classic Pentecostal position provides an excellent starting point for understanding the complex nature of this issue.

The word “possession” has been used throughout this project to reference the most severe forms of demonization. It also appears in the psychological literature that was reviewed in chapter 3 to explain various mental health conditions in which individuals feel that they are under the control of a spirit. However, it is important to note that there has been a strong shift away from using the word “possession” in theological writings on this subject. Michael Heiser effectively frames the discussion:

Can a Christian be demon possessed? Christian writers have taken both sides of this issue. The disagreement in part derives from semantics, but that is not to imply that the debate lacks substance. The semantic problem derives from English translations of the Greek lemmas in passages describing demonized individuals. Words like “possess” and “possession” denote ownership. A close reading of the New Testament ought to make it clear that a member of the body of Christ cannot be owned by Satan or demons.³

² Assemblies of God General Presbytery, “Position Papers: Spiritual Warfare and the Believer.” The following footnote is included as part of this paragraph in the position paper: “With demon possession, the power of Satan takes control of the center of an individual’s personality. In such lives, demons can manifest themselves through temporary changes in personality, speech, bizarre physical behavior, physical and mental affliction, and self-destructive tendencies.”

³ Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says About the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 253, Kindle.

However, this begs the question of whether the New Testament authors intended to convey the idea of demonic ownership in demon possession. Heiser explains, “No Greek word for “possession” or “ownership” appears in passages to clarify or define the activity described by *daimonizomai*. It is English semantics, not the Greek lemma, which have led to the controversy over whether Christians can be possessed by demons.”⁴

Although I concur with Heiser’s analysis of New Testament possession language, his expanded explanation of demonization falls short of settling the issue as it relates to deliverance ministry. Heiser continues,

On this the New Testament is clear, as several passages employ language that suggests Christians can fall under the influence of Satan and evil spirits. Paul warned Timothy about certain teachers in this regard: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4: 1). That those doing so were “departing from the faith” indicates that those Paul had in view were professing believers. For sure, these false teachers did not see what they were doing as out of step with the faith. ... In his second letter to Timothy, Paul’s language was even more foreboding, instructing Timothy to gently correct such opponents so they might “escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” (2 Tim 2: 26). The idea that believers could be captured by Satan and made servants of his will certainly fits the notion of demonization, though it lacks the bizarre physical torment of episodes in the Gospels.⁵

Heiser’s observations are deeply significant. However, this explanation of demonization fails to account for some of the key issues. The absence of “the bizarre physical torment

⁴ Ibid, 254.

⁵ Ibid, 255-56.

of episodes in the Gospels” significantly distinguishes the passages here referenced by Heiser from the exorcism accounts of the Gospels.⁶

Many Pentecostals readily acknowledge that believers need to guard themselves against deception and that repentance from sin is imperative, but this is hardly the same as the gospel accounts of those whose minds or bodies were overtaken by malicious forces and could only be liberated by divine intervention. I agree with Heiser that the language of demonization is helpful for explaining the spectrum of diabolic attacks. Nonetheless, the substance of the gospel accounts makes it clear that some forms of demonization can be so severe that the human personality is overtaken. The debate surrounding deliverance ministry with Christians is decidedly focused on this aspect of demonization.

Nothing in the New Testament implies that born-again Christians should fear having their minds or bodies casually overtaken by demons. However, the teaching of the Bible and of the Assemblies of God is that habitual sin can have devastating consequences and may result in believers forfeiting divine protection. Stated another way, individuals may attend our local churches who profess faith in Christ but who are, from a Pentecostal perspective, backslidden. This has significant pastoral implications.

Although it is reasonable to assume that those who abide in Christ are protected from extreme demonization, many factors may exist in the lives of churchgoers of which their pastor is not aware. The primary context of this project focuses on a pastoral counseling setting and assumes that those seeking help are experiencing some kind of

⁶ Ibid.

spiritual or psychological distress. Within that context, a thorough evaluation of what led the person to seek help is warranted. The Assemblies of God Position Paper offers this wisdom:

Great care must be taken not to confuse emotional and mental illnesses with demonic activity. While the demonic activity may mimic the behavior exhibited in mental illness, to assert that they are the same can bring harm to individuals, preventing them from receiving the medical care needed. The wise counsel of godly doctors, counselors, and psychologists can be of assistance in discerning the actual condition. The powerful and all-wise Holy Spirit provides discernment and wisdom to those who minister to humans facing this severe challenge.⁷

There is much wisdom and safety in building therapeutic alliances with other professionals to help in these evaluations.

However, if someone seeking help experiences clear preternatural phenomena and if their struggles are not explained by illness or simple matters of sanctification, due diligence may demand that pastors consider demonization as a potential cause of distress. The pastoral counseling setting provides a natural venue to discuss potential roots of demonization like sin, trauma, and occult activity. Graham Twelftree insightfully observes, “[W]e should pay as little attention to the demonic as is pastorally possible. Yet we should confront the demonic as much as is pastorally required.”⁸ David Lim offers an expansive view of how this may be accomplished,

Deliverance may be called for that does not require expelling demons, but rather claiming victory over the past with its evil habits and thoughts that put one in bondage. Included in that type of deliverance must be solid Bible teaching, aggressive prayer, control of the thought processes (1 Corinthians 10:4), exercise of the power of God and the will to love (2 Timothy 1:7), Christian counseling,

⁷ Assemblies of God General Presbytery, “Position Papers: Spiritual Warfare and the Believer.”

⁸ Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 294.

focus on heavenly matters (Colossians 3:1), spiritual growth (Philippians 3:14), support of one another (1 Corinthians 12:26), and surrender of the matter to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 12:7)...In true cases of demonic possession, a person has surrendered his will to demons...Those who are possessed project a new personality and voice, experiencing an obliteration of their own personalities for a time. Deliverance is absolutely necessary in these cases.⁹

Pastors should not be quick to assume that someone's distress is demonic in nature. Even when it is, exorcistic approaches should not be the only tools in their pastoral arsenal. Nonetheless, ministers should always remember that the apostolic mandate to preach, heal, and drive out demons is still in force (Matt 10:7-8).

⁹ David Lim. *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look*. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2016), 84.

APPENDIX C: AN EXPANDED RESPONSE TO THE ARGUMENTS CITED AGAINST EXORCISM

I selected Jose M. Meza's dissertation on "Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession" as a source because it initially seemed to represent a strong critique of the use of exorcism as treatment for dissociative states.¹ Since there appears to be a risk of confusing demonic possession with some forms of DID, I intentionally looked for sources that detail the relevant concerns. While reading Meza's research, I was naturally horrified by his shocking claims of widespread psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in the context of exorcism.²

Initially, I accepted these claims at face value and determined to use his work as a springboard to call for significant reform and training in safety and best practices in deliverance ministry. I was, at that time, taking a directed research course with Dr. Cory Shipley, D.Min. Project Coordinator at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. When I shared Meza's assertions with him, he observed that it was unusual that such overwhelming numbers were not already widely reported and encouraged me to dig deeper to ensure accuracy since I planned to cite his research in this project. I purchased a

¹ Jose M. Meza, "Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession" (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2010), ProQuest. When my project advisor, Dr. Carolyn Tennant, first read chapter 3 of my project, she expressed that while my critiques of Meza's dissertation are clearly stated, readers might naturally wonder why I selected it as an example of the opposing viewpoint regarding possession and exorcism. I wrote this appendix to further explain my source selection.

² Ibid, 70-71.

copy of the study from which the referenced number of abuse victims was drawn and was surprised to observe that although some tragic situations were reported, the actual numbers were nowhere near what Meza suggested.³ Training in deliverance ministry best practices is certainly important, but I did not find compelling evidence of such widespread abuse.

Alyson Barry's dissertation that is referenced in chapter 3 of this project offers a far more balanced analysis of the therapeutic role of exorcism.⁴ Likewise, Dennis Bull acknowledges the risks associated with exorcism but lays out clear guidelines for minimizing those risks.⁵ I cited numerous studies in chapter 3 that underscore the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue among faith leaders, psychologists, and medical doctors. Although I do not question the sincerity of Meza's concerns, he casts ministry professionals in a disparaging light with thinly veiled accusations of sexism as a motivation for exorcism.⁶ Such accusations undermine the kind of conversations that are needed to offer maximum help to those suffering from dissociative disorders and demonization.

³ B. L. Bottoms et al., "In the Name of God: A Profile of Religion-Related Child Abuse," *Journal of Social Issues* 51, no. 2 (1995): 85-86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1995.tb01325.x>.

⁴ Alyson M. Barry, "A Qualitative Analysis of Reports of Dissociative Trance Experiences in the United States" (PhD diss., Seattle Pacific University, 2012), ProQuest.

⁵ Dennis L. Bull, "A Phenomenological Model of Therapeutic Exorcism for Dissociative Identity Disorder," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 29, no. 2 (2001): 131.

⁶ Meza, "Multiple Personality Disorder and Demonic Possession," 2.

APPENDIX D: FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



C. S. LEWIS WRITES

- “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors....” C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1941), ix.



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WHY ARE WE HERE?

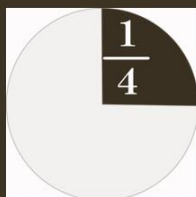
- In 1996, I saw a demon cast out for the first time. To say that it was messy would be a dramatic understatement. A man came up for prayer, and the minister said, “In the name of Jesus, rise up and fight me.” Moments later, the man who was receiving prayer punched the minister as hard as he could. A wrestling match ensued, which culminated in the man being held to the floor by multiple people while demons were cast out of him. He later testified that God truly did set him free that night. Nonetheless, much confusion resulted, with some individuals claiming that he had been forcibly converted to Christianity.
- Four years later, I met an individual whom many people believed was possessed. Well meaning individuals encouraged him to stop taking his medication and undergo deliverance prayer. Over time, his condition deteriorated, and he became unable to work or even maintain his own house. I did not know what this condition was at that time, but the man evidently suffered from bipolar depression. The absence of medication and good counseling proved tragic in his situation.

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- More recently, I sat in a recovery home surrounded by friends as we mourned the loss of one of our own. We cried and prayed together, and one person after another shared their stories, feelings, and words of encouragement. It was a sobering reminder that the battle with addiction, mental illness, and demonic influence, continues manifesting itself in tangible ways in our communities and that, sometimes, the stakes are life and death.



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CONSIDER THIS



- Research demonstrates that among those who battle mental health disorders, about **one-fourth choose to contact a member of the clergy** when reaching out for help. This is significantly higher than the percentage of people who choose to contact a psychiatrist or counselor. - Philip S. Wang, Patricia A. Berglund, and Ronald C. Kessler, "Patterns and Correlates of Contacting Clergy for Mental Disorders in the United States," *Health Services Research* 38, no. 2 (2003): 647, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.00138>.
- The prevalence of mental health disorders is rising. The World Health Organization estimates the someone dies by suicide every 40 seconds! - <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-09-2019-suicide-one-person-dies-every-40-seconds>, accessed July 24, 2024.
- It is vital for ministers to be prepared to offer real help.
- Further, although some may assume that demonic influence is relatively rare, among 488 societies that have been researched by anthropologists, possession states have been found to exist in at least 437, or 89 percent. **Demonization is a global phenomenon!** -Erika Bourguignon, "Hallucination and Trance: An Anthropologist's Perspective," in *Origin and Mechanisms of Hallucinations: Proceedings of the 14th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychiatric Research Association held in New York City (November 14-15, 1969)* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1970), 184, 187.

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TRAINING IS NEEDED

- Spiritual warfare is nothing new in the Assemblies of God. Most of our ministers are likely able to lead someone into spiritual deliverance.
- However, many pastors lack training in mental health issues and fear causing damage if someone appears to be demonized but is instead physically or mentally ill.
- Also, in our current scientific age, pastors are sometimes ridiculed for even suggesting that demonic influence may play a role in people's struggles, but the reality is that our ministers are not out hunting for demons. We simply desire to lead people into a place of spiritual, psychological, and physical wholeness.



CHRIST'S PARTING WORDS

- "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18)

DELIVERANCE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

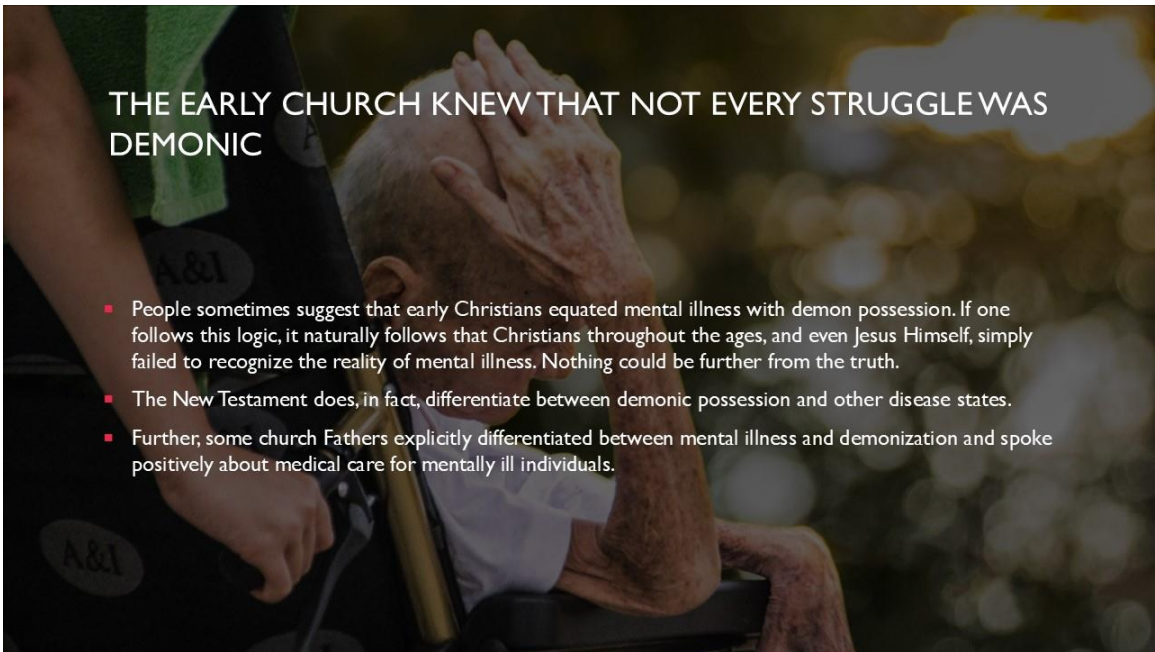
■ “Ancient writings unilaterally confirm that deliverance from demonic bondage was widespread among believers in the Early Church. During the first few centuries after Christ, Christian writers such as Lactantius and Cyril of Jerusalem spoke of deliverance as a continuing practice. Christian orators and teachers such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen verified through their personal testimonies that Christians were active in their prayers and in ministry to those needing deliverance from demonic bondage. Deliverance was so common in the Church that when the apostate Emperor Julian wanted to mock the Christian believers, he ridiculed them for what he identified as the two things marking the essence of their belief and ministry: driving out demons and making the sign of the Cross.” —Chris Hayward, *God's Cleansing Stream: Developing a Life-Changing Deliverance Ministry in Your Church*, (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2020.), 26.



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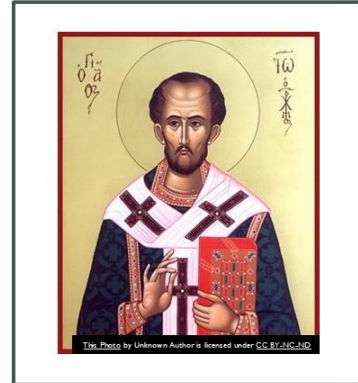
THE EARLY CHURCH KNEW THAT NOT EVERY STRUGGLE WAS DEMONIC

- People sometimes suggest that early Christians equated mental illness with demon possession. If one follows this logic, it naturally follows that Christians throughout the ages, and even Jesus Himself, simply failed to recognize the reality of mental illness. Nothing could be further from the truth.
- The New Testament does, in fact, differentiate between demonic possession and other disease states.
- Further, some church Fathers explicitly differentiated between mental illness and demonization and spoke positively about medical care for mentally ill individuals.



JOHN CHRYSOSTOM- BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE (347-407 C.E.)

- Chrysostom taught that there are three kinds of insanity: mental illness, compulsive sin, and demonic possession. He believed compulsive sin to be the worst of the three. -Claire Elayne Salem, "Sanity, Insanity, and Man's Being as Understood by St. John Chrysostom," (PhD diss., Durham theses, Durham University, 2020), <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3269/>, 8.
- "For to pursue shadows is a madman's (μαινομένου) part. ... For there is yet another madness (μανία), sorer than that caused by devils, than that from frenzy (φρενίτιδος). For that admits of forgiveness (συγγνώμην), but this is destitute of excuse (ἀπολογία), seeing the soul itself is corrupted and its right judgment lost; and that of frenzy (φρενίτιδος) indeed is an affection of the body (σωματικὸν πάθος), but this madness (μανία) hath its seat in the artificer mind." -John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, XXIX. 6, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 29950, Kindle.



CHRYSOSTOM ON MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR MENTALLY ILL PEOPLE

- "[T]he physicians, when they are kicked, and shamefully handled by the insane, then most of all pity them, and take measures for their perfect cure, knowing that the insult comes of the extremity of their disease." Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew*, XVIII.6, 26617.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- Today's seminar will explore these topics from numerous perspectives. There is no substitute for spiritual discernment. However, by examining what the Bible and various experts have to say, we can all grow in our ability to assess situations and to offer significant help to people in distress



THESE SESSION TOPICS ARE AS FOLLOWS

1. Foundations of Liberation: A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization
2. Foundations of Integration: A Pastoral Perspective on Mental Illness
3. Why It Matters: A Conversation with Superintendent Ronnie Morris
4. A Conversation with Mental Health Therapist Jonathan Seubold
5. Case Studies in Mental Illness and Demonization
6. The Healing Power of Community
7. Intro to the Intensive Sanctification Model- Part 1
8. Intro to the Intensive Sanctification Model- Part 2



Foundations of Liberation

A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization

Biblical Foundation



"And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction"
—Matthew 10:1

"And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay." —Matthew 10:7-8

"...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." —Acts 10:38

Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits*

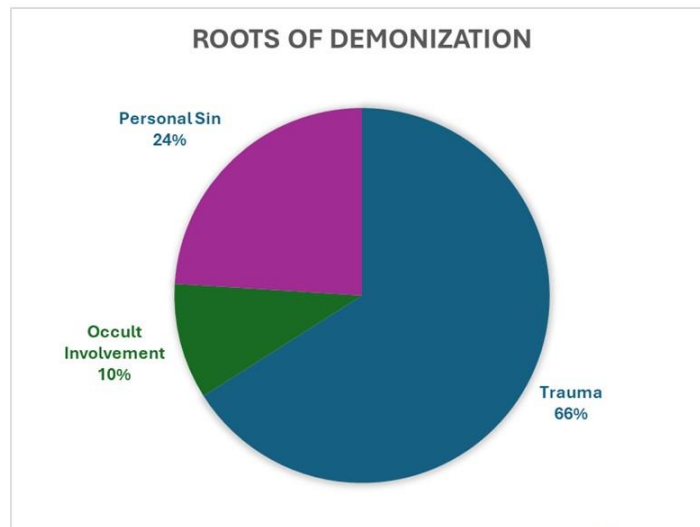
- “Jesus’ first act of ministry in Mark was casting out an unclean spirit from a man He met in the synagogue. This spirit ‘shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, ‘What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to unclean spirits, and they obey him.’” (Mark 1:26–28)
- To remove the thread of the exorcism ministries of Jesus and the disciples would be to destroy the fabric of Mark’s account. Moreover, it would not be . . . honest to take literally language of the New Testament about a Holy Spirit (pneuma hagion) and to psychologize the language referring to an unclean spirit (pneuma akatharta). —Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 44–45.



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Eight Biblical Cases of Exorcism

- 1. The man in the synagogue tormented by an unclean spirit (see Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37)
- 2. The blind and mute demoniac (see Matthew 12:22–29; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–22)
- 3. The Gerasene demoniac (see Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39)
- 4. The Syrophenician woman’s daughter (see Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30)
- 5. The epileptic boy (see Matthew 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43)
- 6. The woman with a spirit of infirmity (see Luke 13:10–17)
- 7. The mute demoniac (see Matthew 9:32–34)
- 8. The slave girl with a spirit of divination (see Acts 16:16–18)



The Spiritual and Psychological Impact of Sin

- “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (James 1:15).
- The NASB, translates “desire” as “lust.”
- “In effect, every time we sin, we diminish the intellect’s ordering toward prudence, which is the virtue which knows the right thing to do at the right time to attain the right end. ... [T]he will cannot will evil in itself but only under the appearance of good, when the object of conscience is presented as something sinful. ... [T]he will moves the intellect to engage in an act of ignorance and error in which it ignores the evil and only looks at the object by considering it under the aspect of the good, which is not what it truly is. ... [W]e do violence to our intellect every time we choose something sinful.” - Chad Ripberger, *Dominion: The Nature of Diabolic Warfare* (Keensburg, CO: Sensus Traditionist Press, 2022), 438-39.
- “We have all internalized lies from the master of deception. ... As a pattern of thinking is built based on the foundational lie, he finds a place to dwell and exerts greater influence on our emotions and will.” -Neal Lozano, *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (South Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2003), 40.



The Spiritual and Psychological Impact of Sin

- “It should be solemnly remembered that nothing opens the door to backsliding and demonic oppression so surely as continual self-indulgence in that which is physically unlawful.” -

Donald Gee, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1934), chap. 10, Kindle.



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The Spiritual and Psychological Impact of Sin

“There can be a spiritual sickness because of personal sin: the person has gone against the law of God and so has lost the directing power toward wholeness that the Spirit can give to the soul.” -T. Craig Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2009), 112.

“What spirits of sin do is add a driven, compulsive aspect to sin.” - MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits*, 201.

Driven and Demonized



- “Giving in to the experience of being excessively driven to action is the final road to possession: to be caught in a mood of haste.”

—T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil: A Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Possession* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 169. Isaacs is an Anglican priest, a psychologist, and an exorcist.

How Sin Can Lead to Demonization

- 1. Sin Damages the healthy, rational part of the mind, leading to self-deception and doing violence to one's inner sense of right and wrong.
- 2. Deception impacts the emotions as well as the will.
- 3. Spiritual sickness develops and personal disintegration sets in.
- 4. Unclean spirits prey on this weakened condition, compulsivity sets in, and the result is a driven, demonized state.





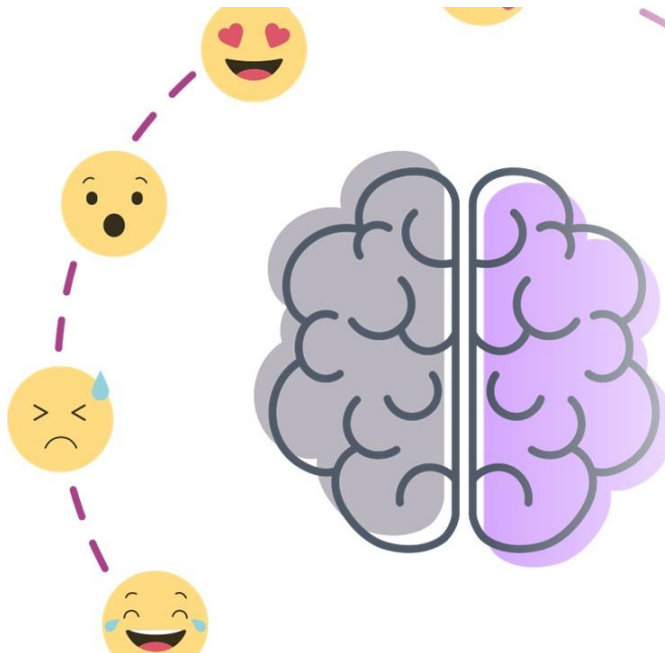
Spiritual and Psychological Impact of the Occult

- “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD” (Deut 18:10-12a).
- In Samaria, where Philip casts out many demons, the text reveals that the city was previously under the influence of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8).
- One of the eight New Testament exorcism narratives specifically identifies the demon as a “spirit of divination” (Acts 16:16-18).
- During Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, when large numbers of people were being set free from demonic power, the people gathered occult books and burned them (Acts 19).

Spiritual and Psychological Impact of the Occult

- “One of the most common explanations for possession today lies in a person naively approaching evil or the arcane powers of the universe. Many people who are seen to be either oppressed by demons, or to be possessed, have taken part in some aspect of the occult....” Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 115.
- Psychiatrist Basil Jackson notes, “In connection with the current interest shown in occult activity in this country, I have noted that there is an increased tendency for attraction to the occult in those Christians who have a basic paranoid personality structure. ... I have noted that Christians who claim to be soundly evangelical and who demonstrate this particular personality position often become fascinated with the occult ... Another question we must ask concerns the relationship between participation in occult activities and the possibility of subsequent demonization or, perhaps, subsequent psychiatric decompensation. A frequently stated objection to dabbling in the occult is that such an activity tends to make the individual more susceptible to invasion by outside agencies. ... In view of what has just been noted regarding certain types of personality being attracted to the occult, the question arises as to which is the cart, and which is the horse. -John Warwick Montgomery, *Demon Possession* (Irvine, CA: NRP Books, 2015), 268-69.

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Spiritual and Psychological Impact of Trauma

- Trauma is very significant for understanding both demonization and mental illness.
- Traumatized individuals often deal with feelings of bitterness, unforgiveness, uncontrollable anger, extreme fear, and distorted images of God.
- While none of these struggles individually means that a person is demonized, they can make it more difficult for individuals to stand up against demonic influence.

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Ephesians 4:26-32

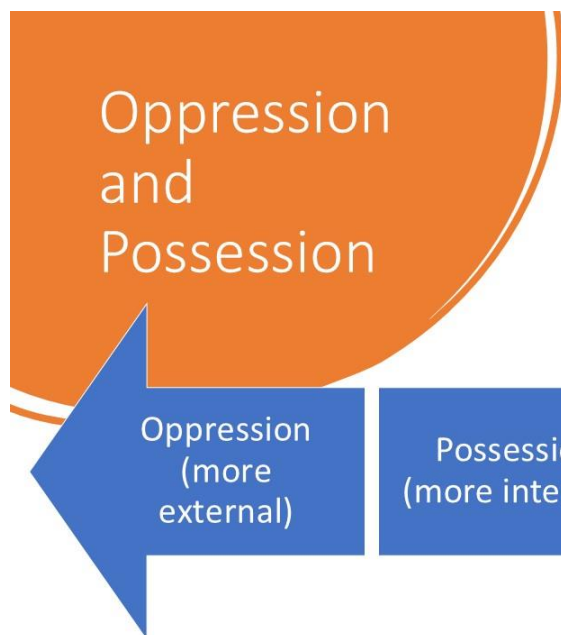
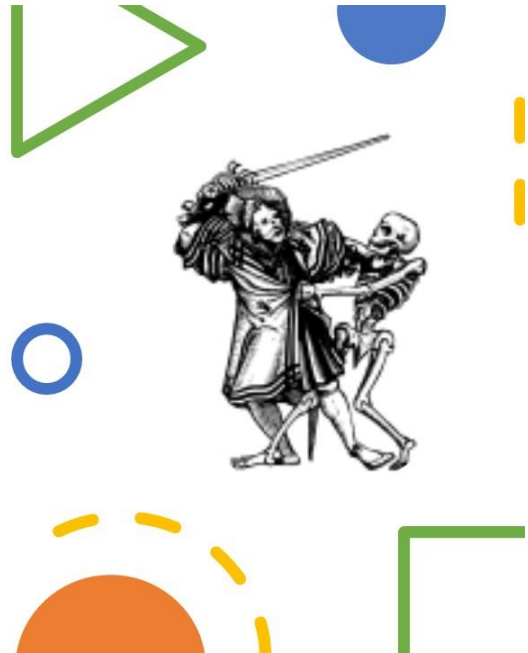


- "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. ... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

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Psychologist Stephen Diamond Describes Trauma-Based Reactivity in Similar Terms to Demonization

- Diamond uses the word “daimonic” to describe emotions or drives that seem to completely take over someone, often as the result of trauma.
- “The deceptively convincing subjective state of being “grasped” or “driven” or “possessed” by irresistible, impersonal, fatalistic forces cannot be considered some final, irreversible fait accompli, precluding personal responsibility. In contrast to Freud’s more pessimistic id system, the daimonic model presumes—with tempered optimism—the individual’s potential to constructively stand up to and ameliorate these negative influences. And to do so with dignity, integrity and creativity. The daimonic, like the shadow, can be met, atoned and meaningfully integrated—albeit typically not without great toil, risk and psychic upheaval.” -Stephen Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Paradoxical Power of Rage in Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (Plattsburgh: State University of New York Press, 2013), chap. 4, Kindle.



- Personal sin, occult involvement, and trauma can all increase people’s susceptibility to demonic influence.
- Oppression is a more common expression of demonic influence than possession.
- How do you differentiate between oppression and possession?
- While there are many distinctions between the two, one way to describe it is that oppression is more external, while possession is more internal.

Demonic Oppression

Demonic oppression is a focused external attack that is experienced in various ways.

MacNutt writes, “[T]here is what we might call emotional oppression, which comes when our spirit and emotions are weighed down by heaviness or depression. Many human psychological factors produce depression, but sometimes we find a demonic force bearing down on us to slow us up or prevent us from acting....” -MacNutt, *Deliverance*, 75.



Demonic Oppression

“Once indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a Christian cannot be possessed in his or her spirit by a demon. However, his or her soul (i.e., mind, will, and emotions) can be demonically harassed in many ways and with varying degrees of torment. These attacks from demons can be initiated because of personal trials (see 2 Cor. 12:7), by believing the lies of the enemy (see 2 Cor. 10:4–6) or by engaging in sinful activity (see Eph. 4:27).”

-Chris Hayward, *God's Cleansing Stream: Developing a Life-Changing Deliverance Ministry in Your Church* (Fort Collins, CO: Arns Publishing, 2020), 31.



Demonic Oppression

Pablo Bottari explains that “through temptations and persecutions,” demons use “oppression to exert pressure on Christians ... to go back to their old sinful lifestyles.” -Pablo Bottari, *Free in Christ: Your Complete Handbook on the Ministry of Deliverance* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2000), 88.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Deliverance is Multi-faceted

•“Deliverance may be called for that does not require expelling demons, but rather claiming victory over the past with its evil habits and thoughts that put one in bondage. Included in that type of deliverance must be solid Bible teaching, aggressive prayer, control of the thought processes (1 Corinthians 10:4), exercise of the power of God and the will to love (2 Timothy 1:7), Christian counseling, focus on heavenly matters (Colossians 3:1), spiritual growth (Philippians 3:14), support of one another (1 Corinthians 12:26), and surrender of the matter to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 12:7).” -David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2016), 84.

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Demonic Possession

- “In true cases of demonic possession, a person has surrendered his will to demons ... Those who are possessed project a new personality and voice, experiencing an obliteration of their own personalities for a time. Deliverance is absolutely necessary in these cases.” -David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1991), 84.
- The *Rituale Romanum*, originally published in 1614, requires that one of the following signs is present before proceeding with an exorcism: 1) the ability to speak or understand languages that the individual has not learned, 2) knowledge of “future or hidden events,” or 3) “display of powers which are beyond the subject’s age and natural condition.” - Philip T. Weller, trans., *The Roman Ritual, Part 2* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), Part XIII: Exorcism, chap. 1, accessed January 15, 2024, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/roman-ritual-part-2-11883>.



Demonic Possession



- Psychiatrist Richard Gallagher is considered by many to be the foremost medical expert in the world on demonic possession. He notes these additional signs:
- “expressions of hatred of the sacred, blasphemous and vituperative language, the ability to discern (and recoil from) blessed objects, the phenomenon of levitation, and, most importantly, a trance-like state interrupted by the presence of what appears as an independent, intelligent entity (or entities), and the expressed desire of this intelligence not to leave the afflicted.” -Richard E. Gallagher, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” *New Oxford Review* 75, no. 3 (March 2008): 24.



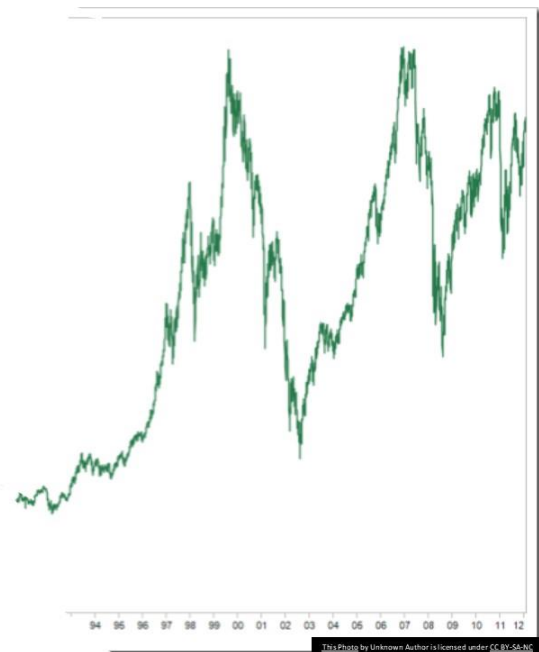
T. Craig Isaacs- Psychologist and Pastor

- **“The essential feature of this disorder is an experience of being controlled by someone, or something, alien to oneself, with a subsequent loss of control in any of four areas: thinking; anger and profanity; impulsive behaviors; and physical reactions.”**

-T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil: A Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Possession* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 207.

Internal Fluctuations in People Who Are Possessed

- “The emptiness and depression can be seen in periods of sad affect, inappropriate feelings of guilt and worthlessness, a perceived loss of energy, loss of interest in usual activities, suicidal ideation, threats, and even suicide attempts. The person may also express these feelings of emptiness as a feeling of inner darkness, a feeling of being depleted or drained by the one controlling them, or as a void within. The periods of inflation are marked by an egocentric, self-indulgent behavior and attitude. The person may seem vain and demanding, have a grandiose sense of self-importance, and be preoccupied with fantasies of power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.” -Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 123.





T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil*

- “The existence of the possession state in the human condition is not a matter of faith, it is a phenomenon that demands exploration.” –

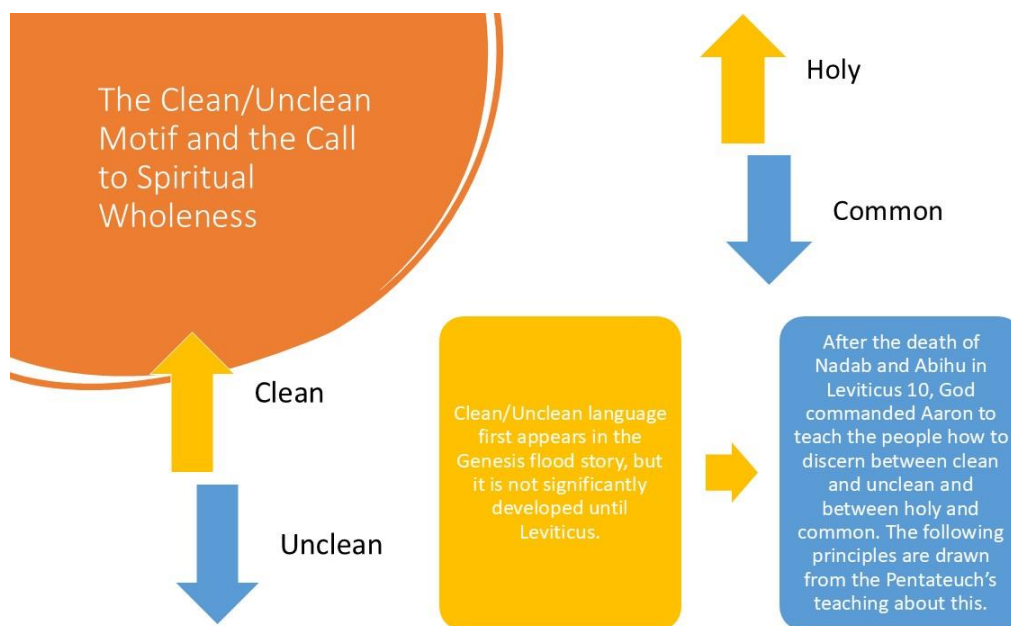
Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil*, 1.

Pastors Are Called to Help

- Demonic possession, mental illness, trauma-based reactivity, and the spiritual and psychological effects of sin may all result in shaking, screaming, writhing on the floor, angry outbursts, extreme fear, persistent nightmares, social isolation, self harm, and suicidal ideation.
- If there are no clear preternatural signs present, it may be difficult to distinguish one from the other.
- Regardless of the root cause, it is the minister's responsibility to offer real help.



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Clean/Unclean Principles from the Pentateuch

Sanctification is required to dwell in God's holy presence.

Uncleanness results in temporary or long-term separation from Yahweh's people (Lev 13:45-46), His tabernacle/house (15:31), and His presence (Num 5:1-3).

Uncleanness is not necessarily the result of moral depravity.

Uncleanness, even when morally neutral, results in isolation.

Conscious separation from demons, occult practices, and idolatry is essential.

The goal of cleansing/sanctification is restoration to the covenant community, the house of God, and the presence of Yahweh.

Mark's Use of "Unclean" Language

All the Synoptic Gospels mention unclean spirits, but the Gospel of Mark makes heavy use of this language.

Mark is clearly drawing from the Levitical imagery to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is more than just another exorcist. He is the only one who can cleanse people from uncleanness, driving out the unclean spirits.



Principles from the Gospel of Mark

Consistent with Levitical imagery, having an unclean spirit denotes a state of impurity that is likely to result in isolation.

Cleansing from impurity is central to deliverance from unclean spirits.

Restoration to cleanness is a requirement of living in covenant community.

Biblical exorcism ministry is tethered to the redemptive work of Jesus and to His fulfillment of Zechariah 13:1-2.





Zechariah 13:1-2

“On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for defilement. ‘And it will come about on that day,’ declares the Lord of armies, ‘that I will eliminate the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.’” (NASB)

“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. And on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness.” (ESV)

Lessons from the Man with the Legion- Mark 5

- “And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit” (v. 2). Before describing his maniacal condition, Mark describes him as a man.
- Even in his deeply demonized condition, his identity has not completely disappeared. He is a man, but he has an unclean spirit.
- Christ’s exorcistic command echoes this truth. He says, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit” (v. 8). Jesus separates the demonic identity from the human identity, and the man is restored to “his right mind” (v. 15).
- Jesus does not show up screaming at demons. He sees the man in an unclean state and chooses to cleanse him.



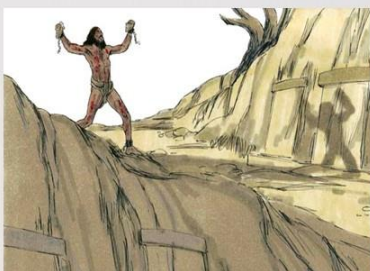
Notice the “Unclean” Imagery in Mark 5:3-5

- “He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones” (Mark 5:3-5).
- Levitical echoes are clearly present. Contact with the dead makes people unclean; he lives “among the tombs” and is thus continually unclean (Mark 5:1, 5; Num 19:11-22). Those who are unclean from leprosy must “cry out” (Lev 13:45); He is “always crying out” (Mark 5:5). Unclean lepers wear “torn clothes” (Lev 13:45); Luke’s account notes that the demoniac has not worn clothes “for a long time” (Luke 8:27). When considered alongside the nearby herd of pigs and the story’s location in Gentile territory, the need for cleansing appears overwhelming.

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Psychological Dis-integration and Preternatural Signs

He cuts himself with stones (Mark 5:5), possesses hidden knowledge (vv. 6-7), has unnatural strength (vv. 3b-4), and displays multiple personalities (vv. 7, 9-10, 12). -Hans Moscicke, “The Gerasene Exorcism and Jesus’ Eschatological Expulsion of Cosmic Powers: Echoes of Second Temple Scapegoat Traditions in Mark 5.1-20,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41, no. 3 (2019): 363-83, doi:10.1177/0142064x18821558, 365-366.



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Ben Witherington notes, “We may even be meant to think that he was impelled to be involved in satanic rituals (slashing oneself with rocks?). ... He was so little in control of himself that he could not keep from injuring himself.” -Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 181.

The devastation of his condition is overwhelming!



- The spirit pleads with Jesus not to torment it (Mark 5:7).
- During Christ's dialogue with the spirit, it vacillates between individual and plural pronouns (vv. 7, 9, 12). This may indicate that the many spirits are under a singular leader and is consistent with the self-description of the demons as "legion" (v. 9). It also illustrates a significant level of psychological distress on the part of the demonized man.
- It is noteworthy that although Jesus does ask for the demon's name, He does not use when casting out the unclean spirit.

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X Fretensis



- The spirit identifies itself as "Legion," which is a Latin loan-word designating a unit of 5,600 soldiers. -Joy L. Vaughan, *Phenomenal Phenomena: Biblical and Multicultural Accounts of Spirits and Exorcism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023), 148.
- When Jesus grants permission, the demons immediately drive 2,000 pigs to their death (Mark 5:13) This clearly demonstrates the spirits' destructiveness and gives the impression that they were under divine restraint while in the man.
- "[D]ocumentary evidence indicates that Gerasa served as a regional centre for Roman presence in the Decapolis represented by a Roman procurator with his staff, an imperial cult, and military presence by the early and mid-first century C.E." -Albert L. A. Hogeterp, "Trauma and Its Ancient Literary Representation: Mark 5:1-20," *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 111, no. 1 (2020): 11, doi:10.1515/znw-2020-0001.
- The symbol of the wild boar is found on coins and inscriptions about the Roman legion, *X Fretensis*, that occupied the Gerasenes at the time. The death of the pigs sends a clear message—the kingdom of God, with Jesus as its King, is greater than Rome. -Ibid., 19.

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A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization Summary Principles

Christ emphasizes, not just the act of casting out demons or curing diseases, but the broader process of sanctification—cleansing people spiritually and restoring them to wholeness. (This will be discussed at length in a later session.)

Healthy deliverance practices differentiate between human identity and demonic identity.

Christ endows His disciples with authority over unclean spirits and all forms of affliction, underscoring the battle against spiritual darkness as central to the Christian mission.

Believers should not focus on power, but rather on identity and relationship with God, which is the true source of purity and wholeness (Luke 10:20).

The process of holistic sanctification cleanses individuals from the inside out, addressing the root causes of spiritual and moral defilements and establishing a foundation for a life transformed by divine grace.

Christian exorcism celebrates the authority of the name of Jesus over all demons.

Although unclean spirits actively oppose followers of Christ, it is the responsibility of every believer to turn from sin, resist temptation, and submit to God (James 4:7).

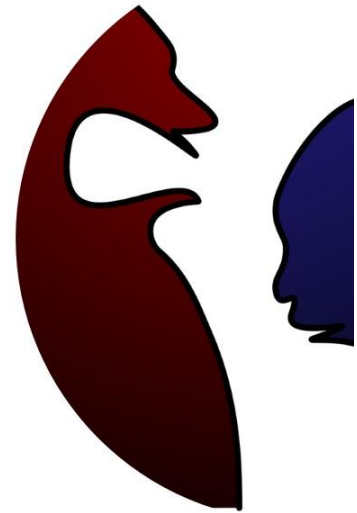
Foundations of Integration

A Pastoral Perspective on Mental Illness



A Common Problem

- MacNutt writes, "The most common problem we find is that some ministers of deliverance know little about psychology and are unable to tell whether a person needs inner healing or deliverance or both." —Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 88.
- Dennis Bull is a psychologist who writes in favor of exorcism but offers words of caution. **"Exorcisms appear to cause problems for two main reasons. First, exorcisms tend to be done by religious people with little or no understanding of dissociative disorders and/or psychological dynamics.** It is damaging when psychological constructs such as alter personalities are assumed to be demons by those doing exorcism. **Second, when done by some in Christian ministry, exorcisms tend to be practiced in controlling and demeaning ways; they tend to be done "to" the patient with little or no cooperation on the part of the patient.** This is often experienced as revictimization by the patient." —Dennis L. Bull, "A Phenomenological Model of Therapeutic Exorcism for Dissociative Identity Disorder," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 29, no. 2 (2001): 132.



Guidelines for Pastors

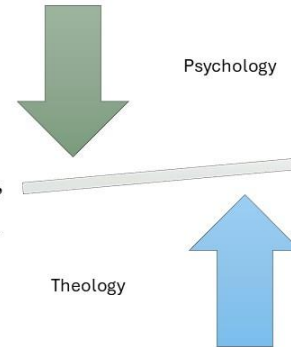
- 1. Pastors should encourage their congregants to consult medical and psychological professionals when appropriate.
- 2. Pastors should NEVER take a forceful or coercive posture toward people who are in distress. Rather, they should work WITH those they lead to help them experience freedom and healing.
- 3. If someone is physically or mentally ill, helping them involve the appropriate professionals is important. However, people with an illness still need pastoral care and spiritual guidance. They may need a medical or mental health professional AS WELL AS a pastor, but they do not need one INSTEAD OF a pastor.



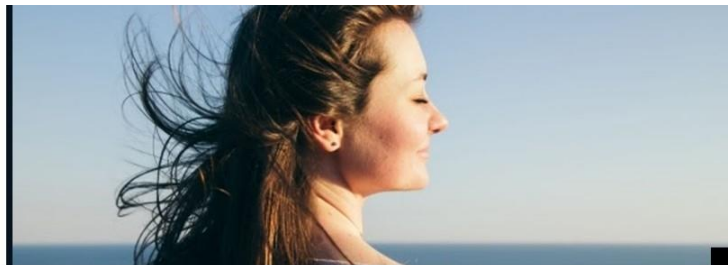
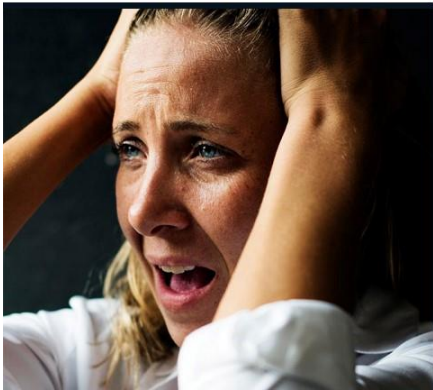
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Both Pastors and Mental Health Professionals Have a Role to Fill

- Alexander DiChiara documents the divorce of theology from psychology in a dissertation submitted to the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.
- He writes, **“Exorcisms were plentiful in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this upsurge of cases created a great urgency to come up with answers. Throughout time, individuals looked to the Church ... to help with this matter, but more recently, the tide has turned to science and psychology, to detrimental results.”** –Alexander DiChiara, “Dissociation, Possession, Or Otherwise? A Post-Critical Analysis of Exorcism” (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2021), 11, ProQuest.
- While secular psychology has much to offer, pastors are uniquely qualified to address the spiritual aspect of human existence. As Pablo Bottari writes, **“We have the right answer to the problems of the soul.”** –Bottari, *Free in Christ*, 77.



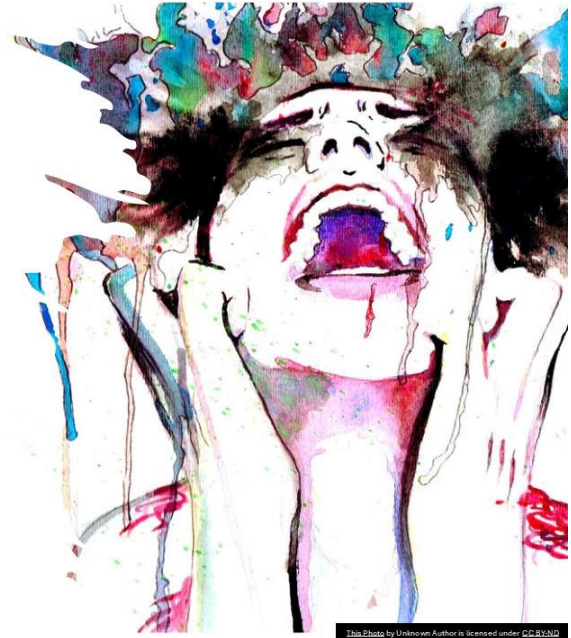
What is Integration?



- People with a high level of integration have successfully processed their life experiences and recognize that the things they have gone through, both positive and negative, contribute to who they are as individuals.
- Further, they recognize that although their relationships with friends and family may be imperfect, they still fill a vital role in their lives, and they are able to find their place within those relationships.
- When people move toward dis-integration, otherwise normal emotions may gain an unreasonable level of control over their lives and manifest in a disordered way. Although this is not the same as demonization, it can be debilitating.
- **“The daimonic...is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person. Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power are examples. The daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both. When this power goes awry, and one element usurps control over the total personality, we have ‘daimon possession,’ the traditional name through history for psychosis.”** –Rollo May, Ph. D in Psychology in Stephen Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Paradoxical Power of Rage in Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (Plattsburgh: State University of New York Press, 2013), chap. 3, Kindle.

Possessed by ... Emotions?

- What Diamond and May are describing could be likened unto being possessed by your own emotions. What they call “daimonic” should not be confused with demonic.
- If a traumatic experience leaves a person overcome by anger and he/she does not properly heal and integrate that experience into the larger story of their life, they may find themselves almost completely controlled by anger or rage. The same can be true of fear or sorrow or any number of emotions.
- Even when it does not fit into a specific disease profile, this may present very much like a form of mental illness.
- In addition to working with a mental health professional, people that are emotionally driven can benefit from ongoing discipleship and deeper levels of sanctification, as will be discussed in today's two final sessions.



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Mark Quay,
ACNA Exorcist

- “A large variety of medical conditions can cause behavioral disorders that may appear to be spiritual in origin. Untreated diabetes, neurological diseases, disorders of the thyroid, and a host of other illnesses can make distinguishing between what is of the natural world and of the supernatural world extremely difficult.” —Mark Allen Quay, *A Minister's Manual for Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 4.

Medically Treatable Disorders That Mimic Possession-Bipolar Disorder

- Isaacs describes how the mood of those in a state of possession swings between “periods of inflation” and times of “emptiness and depression.” -Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession*, 123.
- While this is true, a similar description can be given of those suffering from bipolar disorder.
- Psychiatrist Todd Clements writes, “The saddest case I’ve ever seen involved a bipolar college student who was a friend of mine. “Sally” had been a beautiful, straight-A, high school student who was a popular cheerleader and a professing Christian. Sally suffered a few depression episodes in high school, then had her first manic episode during her freshman year of college. Sally lost her virginity during this manic period, which is common because the mania often drives a person to crave sex with whoever happens to be available. Two months later she found out she was pregnant. This devastating blow sent her into a depression racked with so much false guilt that she wrote a suicide note.” -Paul Meier, Todd Clements, Jean-Luc Bertrand, and David Mandt Sr., *Blue Genes* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), chap. 8, Kindle.

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Bipolar Disorder- Psychiatrist Paul Meier

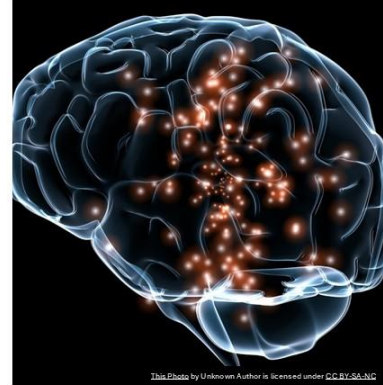


- “An estimated 300 million people worldwide live with this condition. In the United States close to 15 million people are afflicted with these mood swings.” -Ibid.
- Untreated bipolar disorder may lead to “psychosis, uncontrolled spending, ... hostility, sexual affairs,” and even suicidal or homicidal ideation. -Ibid.
- “Bipolar I ... is the more severe form, where the person experiences a full-blown manic episode. Manic episodes last at least a week and are more extreme than hypomanic episodes. People often make very impulsive and irrational decisions, such as spending their whole life savings in one day.” -Ibid.
- “...our brains act like a computer that shuts down for a while, though we would never do those things with the proper power steering fluids (serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine and GABA).” -Ibid.
- “Manic people can lose touch with reality and become delusional. These delusions are usually grandiose.” -Ibid.
- “Hearing voices that aren't there (auditory hallucinations), and seeing things that aren't there (visual hallucinations) are also common in bipolar I.” -Ibid.
- Thankfully, bipolar is typically responsive to medication, with patients showing dramatic improvement within weeks of beginning treatment. -Ibid.

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Medically Treatable Disorders That Mimic Possession- **Neurological Conditions**

- An article published in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* documents the case of a forty-three-year-old woman diagnosed with Central Nervous System lesion but initially suspected of having “trance and possession disorder.” -Soumya Basu, Subhash C. Gupta, and Sayeed Akhtar, “Trance and Possession Like Symptoms in a Case of CNS Lesion: A Case Report,” *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 44, no. 1 (2002): 65-67.
- “She would start shaking her body and head in gyrating movements; she would be unaware of what was going [on] around her [;] she would say that she is sent by her husband's dead sister-in-law to kill her husband; at other times, she would claim that she was a demon.... At times, she would utter completely irrelevant and incomprehensible speech.” - *Ibid.*
- An MRI and EEG identified the lesions.



Neurological Conditions- Tourette's Syndrome

- Tourette's “is a disease whose clinical manifestations are the occurrence of multiple motor tics and one or more vocal tics, lasting over one year, with onset of symptoms during childhood....” -Francisco Germiniani et. al., “Tourette's Syndrome: From Demonic Possession and Psychoanalysis to the Discovery of Gene,” *Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria* 70, no. 7 (2012): 547, Directory of Open Access Journals.
- Although Tourette's syndrome was previously believed to result from “demonic possession and witchcraft,” it is now recognized as a medical diagnosis with a “complex pathogenesis.” -*Ibid.*, 549.



Medically Treatable Disorders That Mimic Possession- **Schizophrenia**

- **Isaacs offers a detailed comparison between Schizophrenia and Possession:**

- In schizophrenia “voices may be incoherent ... or keeping a running commentary on the behavior of the person.” -Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession*, 119.
- In possession “voices are usually coherent and speak about religious or moral matters.” -Ibid.
- In both schizophrenia and possession “obsessions and compulsions” are common. -Ibid., 120.
- Possessed persons often see “dark figures and apparitions” and “hear audible and coherent voices.” -Ibid., 124.
- Schizophrenics may also experience visual or auditory hallucinations; however, they tend to be experienced as “dream-like.” These experiences “begin to lose their independent quality and slowly become more internalized as the person’s processing of external reality improves.” -Ibid., 124-25.
- Possessed persons, except when in a trance, experience hallucinations that often do not interfere with their ability to process “external reality,” and the experiences remain clear over time, being experienced as “completely alien and separate from him- or herself.” -Ibid.



schizophrenia

- “voices may be incoherent ... or keeping a running commentary on the behavior of the person.” -Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession*, 119.
- “obsessions and compulsions” are common. -Ibid., 120.
- may also experience visual or auditory hallucinations; however, they tend to be experienced as “dream-like.” These experiences “begin to lose their independent quality and slowly become more internalized as the person’s processing of external reality improves.” -Ibid., 124-25.

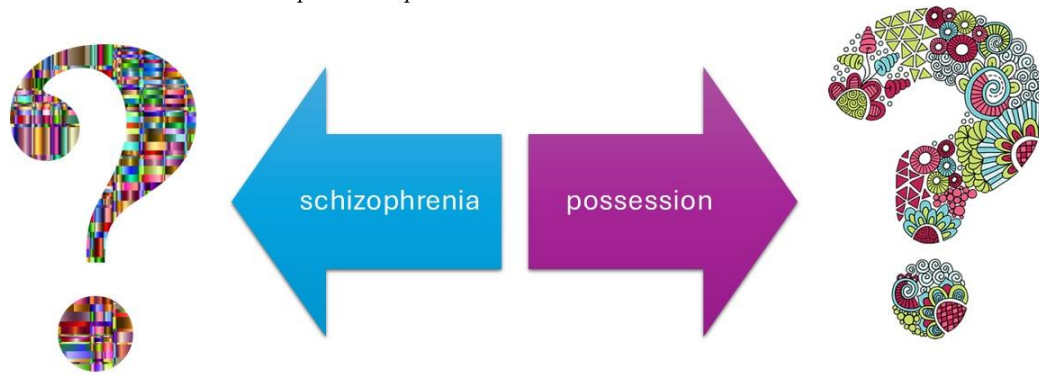
possession

- possession “voices are usually coherent and speak about religious or moral matters.” -Ibid.
- often see “dark figures and apparitions” and “hear audible and coherent voices.” -Ibid., 124.
- except when in a trance, experience hallucinations that often do not interfere with their ability to process “external reality,” and the experiences remain clear over time, being experienced as “completely alien and separate from him- or herself.” -Ibid.

“obsessions and compulsions” are common. -Ibid., 120.

Schizophrenia

•Through intentional observation and thoughtful dialogue with those who are suffering, it is possible to clearly differentiate between schizophrenia and possession.



Possession and the DSM-5



- In the first session, demonic possession was depicted as the most severe form of demonization.
- What you may or may not realize is that possession is also broadly discussed in psychiatric literature as a disease state. This is what might be called “possession syndrome” or “clinical possession.”
- For clarification, when discussing possession as a type of mental illness, we are not necessarily talking about the presence of an actual demonic entity. From a theological perspective, a demon may or may not be present, but from a mental health perspective, the person’s experience may very much be that of a possession.
- The DSM-5 is the diagnostic manual that is used by mental health professionals throughout the United States, and the ICD-10 is used in many other countries. **BOTH MANUALS INCLUDE DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR POSSESSION!**
- Let us explore further.

Dissociative Identity Disorder

- Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) was formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder.
- Although pastors should not claim that all DID is demonic possession, when examined from a phenomenological standpoint, they are often very similar. That is, when looking purely at the individual's experience from their perspective, DID is experienced very much like an experience of possession.



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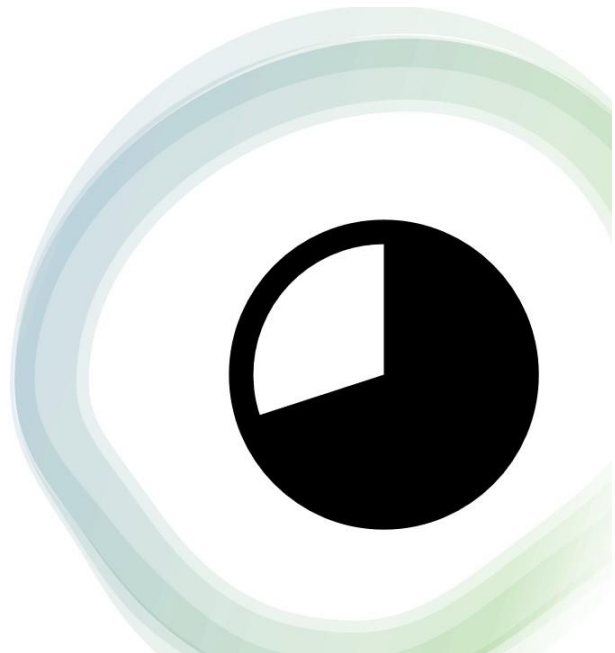
DSM-5 Criteria for DID

- Disruption of identity, characterized by two or more distinct personality states, which may be described in some cultures as an experience of possession. The disruption in identity involves marked discontinuity in sense of self and sense of agency, accompanied by related alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, memory, perception, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning. These signs and symptoms may be observed by others or reported by the individual.
- Recurrent gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting.
- The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- The disturbance is not a normal part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice.
- The symptoms are not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance ... or another medical condition.

—American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 329.

DID Has a High Rate of Suicidality

- The DSM-5 notes that “over 70% of outpatients with dissociative identity disorder have attempted suicide, multiple attempts are common, and other self-injurious behavior is frequent.” *Ibid.*, 332.
- “Individuals with dissociative identity disorder usually exhibit a large number of comorbid disorders.” *Ibid.*, 298.



DSM-5 and the Possession-form of DID

- Possession-form identities in dissociative identity disorder typically manifest as behaviors that appear as if a “spirit,” supernatural being, or outside person has taken control, such that the individual begins speaking or acting in a distinctly different manner ... an individual may be “taken over” by a demon or deity, resulting in profound impairment ... followed by more subtle periods of identity alteration.” *Ibid.*, 330.





What is Dissociation?

- Dissociation often begins as a trauma response and may be seen as the human mind's way of protecting itself.
- When someone dissociates, their conscious mind temporarily ceases to be connected to what is happening in their physical body. In some cases, consciousness splits off into multiple parts, allowing one personality to endure abuse while another personality enjoys a peaceful life.
- Unfortunately, these splintered pieces of consciousness do not always automatically merge when the danger has passed.
- Although certain degrees of dissociation may be seen in various circumstances, possession is a form of dissociative state. It is what might also be called a trance.



A Word to Pentecostal Pastors

- Many Pentecostal pastors, especially in the rural south, are accustomed to praying and speaking loudly, especially during intense moments.
- It is worth remembering that if a dissociative state is brought on due to trauma, it is unlikely to pass until the sense of danger has also passed. Some pastors' natural instincts may be to shout and pray forcefully when they see someone dissociate due to the assumption that a demon has overtaken them. If what the person is experiencing is a trauma response, this approach will likely worsen it. Faith does not require volume.
- Counseling and deliverance ministry are both good times to remember that the fruit of the Spirit includes gentleness and self-control (Gal 5).

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Dissociative Trance Disorder

- While the DSM-5 ultimately classifies possession as a form of dissociative identity disorder (DID), many clinicians believe that it should be understood as a distinct condition. -American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, 529-32.
- Although DID and possession have similar clinical presentations, possession is better explained by what some clinicians call dissociative trance disorder (DTD). Unlike those with DID, people suffering from DTD do not typically suffer from multiple psychiatric disorders.
- Emmanuel H. During and his four coauthors' dissent from the decision of the DSM-5. They write, **"From a phenomenological standpoint, possession and DID are two different conditions that may require different treatments."** -Emmanuel H. During et al., "A Critical Review of Dissociative Trance and Possession Disorders: Etiological, Diagnostic, Therapeutic, and Nosological Issues," *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 4 (2011): 241.
- Unlike those with DID, people with DTD rarely have other psychiatric conditions. -Ibid, 239.

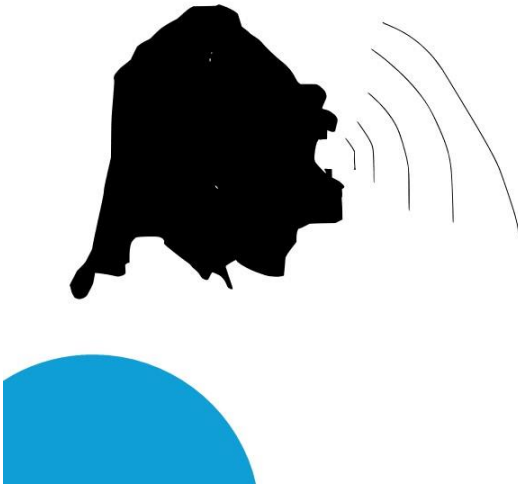
Dissociative Trance Disorder

- The study's authors recommended this inclusion for the possession type of dissociative trance disorder:

- **"Possession type:** a single or episodic alteration in the state of consciousness characterized by the replacement of customary sense of personal identity by a new identity, identified by the patient or his entourage as the spirit of an animal, a deceased individual, a deity, or a power, evidenced by at least one of the following:
 - a) determined behaviors, movements, speech, or attitude that are experienced or recognized as being controlled by the possession agent.
 - b) visual or auditory hallucinations relating to the possessing agent."
- During et al., "A Critical Review," 238.



An Example of Clinical Possession



- A fifty-three-year-old man, Mr. A, was referred for a psychiatric evaluation. He had frequent episodes during which “he would speak in a demonic voice, exhibit superhuman strength, and engage in profound non-suicidal self-injury....” -Collin Weintraub and Melissa P. Bui, “Remove These Chains! Spiritual Possession Syndrome as an Example of Cross-Cultural Psychiatry,” *Journal of the Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry* 62, no. 6 (November-December 2021): 661, MEDLINE PubMed.
- The episodes did not last for very long at a time, and afterward he could not remember what happened.
- Other symptoms include a bad smell and “visual hallucinations of a demon face covered in erotic imagery which occurred separately from his dissociative episodes....” -Ibid.

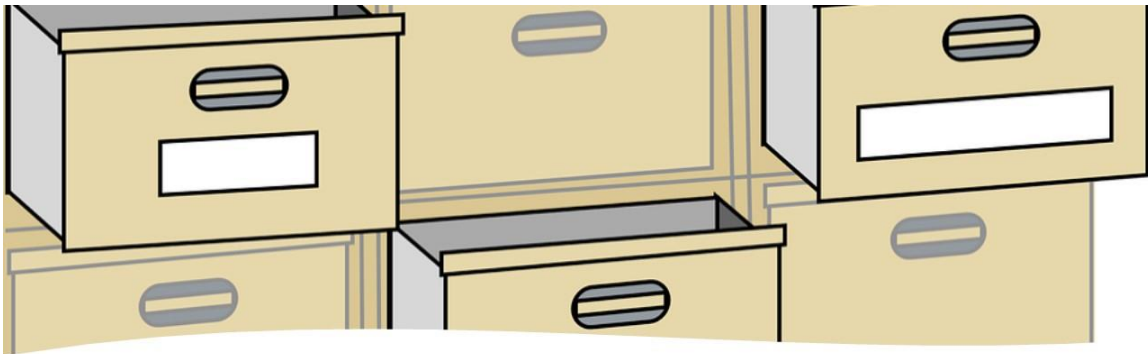
An Example of Clinical Possession

- The following encounter happened in the clinic:
 - **“Toward the end of the psychiatric evaluation, it became apparent that he and his wife were not reassured by our team’s suggestion that his diagnosis may be primarily psychiatric. He then began to growl and exclaimed in a gravelly voice, “[Mr. A] isn’t here anymore!” He began hitting himself with an ice pack, which broke open, throwing ice all around the room. He pulled at the electroencephalogram (EEG) leads affixed to his scalp, yelling, “Remove these chains!” Security was called; however, before their arrival, he lay down on his hospital bed and appeared to fall asleep. His EEG did not demonstrate any signature pattern consistent with sleep, seizure, or other neurological abnormality at any point before, during, or after the episode.”** -Ibid.
- Mr. A’s condition was unresponsive to medicine, and he showed no improvement, even after ten inpatient psychiatric stays. The authors of this study observe that “a spiritually focused modality of care should be considered to meet patients where they are and can be incorporated as an unconventional component of a multidisciplinary treatment plan.” -Ibid, 662.
- Mr. A was a Southern Baptist man. Pastoral intervention in cases like this might very well prove lifesaving.



People Need Spiritual Care as Well as Psychiatric Care

- There are two equally problematic extremes that pastors could fall into. One extreme is to assume that all psychiatric problems are demonic and that pastors can offer everything their parishioners need. The other extreme is to assume that if problems affect someone's mental health, there is nothing pastors can do to help.
- Khan and Sahni summarized it very well in their article published in the Kathmandu University Medical Journal:
 - **"There is a wide gap between the medical and theological ideology regarding Possession syndrome. There is a serious lack of understanding of medical pathology by laymen including theologians who tend to think in their own sphere of belief. Similarly, it is possible that doctors lack theological information constraining them to diagnose in their sphere of knowledge. Drug resistant cases of Possession syndrome have been cured by exorcism as well as people have died in the hands of exorcists for want of medical attention. ... The concept of possession should be observed as a disease condition and a harmonizing approach advocated. Theological perspective can be amalgamated with current scientific theory and practice, thereby complementing existing concepts. Possession syndrome and exorcism may be incorporated into some paradigm of illness."** -I. D. Khan and A. K. Sahni, "Possession Syndrome at High Altitude (4575 m/15000 ft)," *Kathmandu University Medical Journal* 11, no. 3 (2013): 255.



That Is a Lot to
Take In, but Not
Really

- In one sense, this seems like a lot to process. However, it is really quite simple. Even when situations do not fit in a tidy box, distressed people really need pastors to step up and do what pastors do best, while also allowing medical and mental health professionals to do what they do best.
- Pastors and professionals in other fields may not agree on everything, but we can agree on the goal of leading people to personal health and wholeness.
- The mental health model places a heavy focus on helping people live healthy, integrated lives. This is not the enemy of pastoral ministry. Rather, it is consistent with the teachings of Scripture.



Jesus Christ Utilized Integrative Teaching

- During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reframes existence for His followers, declaring among other things that they are blessed if they are “poor in spirit,” “mourn,” and are “persecuted” (Matt 5:3-4, 10). He tells common people that their “good works” can provoke others to “give glory” to God and that it is possible for them to be “great in the kingdom of heaven” (vv. 16, 19). He teaches how to understand and respond to anger (vv. 21-26), lust (vv. 27-30), divorce (vv. 31-32), and to their enemies (vv. 38-48).
- Jesus offers direction on the integrative practices of giving (Matt 6:1-4), prayer (vv. 5-13), offering forgiveness (vv. 14-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18). He calls for an eternal perspective on success and finances (vv. 19-24) and gives guidance on managing anxiety and trusting in God (vv. 25-34). Before returning to miracle working, Jesus cautions His followers against developing a judgmental attitude (7:1-5), warns them to be intentional about who they trust (v. 7:6), encourages them to persist in prayer (vv. 7:7-11), instructs them to treat others as they wish to be treated (vv. 12-14), and emphasizes that prophecy, exorcism, and miracle working do not authorize people to be “workers of lawlessness” (vv. 21-23).

Jesus Christ Utilized Integrative Teaching

- Just as Jesus speaks to dark powers and forces them to flee, He speaks to mortal men and women and teaches them to live at peace with God and with each other. He declares the coming of God’s kingdom with miracles and exorcisms but warns people not to trust in miracles and exorcisms. Christ does not simply drive out uncleanness; He promises those who are cleansed and “pure in heart” that “they will see God” (Matt 5:8).



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Integrative Teaching in the Old Testament

- The Old Testament is replete with examples of psychological distress without reference to evil spirits. Job, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Jonah long for death (Job 6:8; 1 Kgs 19:4; Jer 20:19; Jonah 4:3).
- In Job's case, psychological distress is connected to loss and physical suffering; Elijah and Jeremiah's death wish is related to life and ministry pain, and Jonah's is due to a rebellious heart. -Devora K. Wohlgeleter, "Death Wish in the Bible," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 19, no. 2 (1981): 139.
- Saul and Nebuchadnezzar, experience psychological decomposition as the result of divine judgment (1 Sam 16:14-16; 18:10-11; Dan 4:30-33). Saul becomes homicidal, and Nebuchadnezzar goes completely insane.
- King David's prayer describes his own struggle with depression. He writes, "I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. ... My soul also is greatly troubled. ... I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping" (Ps 6:2-6). Depression, insanity, and suicidal ideation are therefore not exclusively tied to demonization in biblical thought.
- How can pastors help? They can sometimes cast out demons, but they can at all times preach and teach the Word and watch as it heals the human mind!



An Integrated, Healing Community

- Pastors can agree with the mental health model's call to personal wholeness and are very aware of the importance of healthy, integrated relationships.
- Specific attention will be given to the healing power of community in a future session. The words of James provide a fitting conclusion to this session and preview of the importance of community.
- James writes, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (Jas 5:13-16a).
- Suffering finds its voice through prayer. Joy finds its expression through praise. Those who are ill are surrounded by the community of faith while sins are confessed and forgiven. What could anyone expect besides healing?



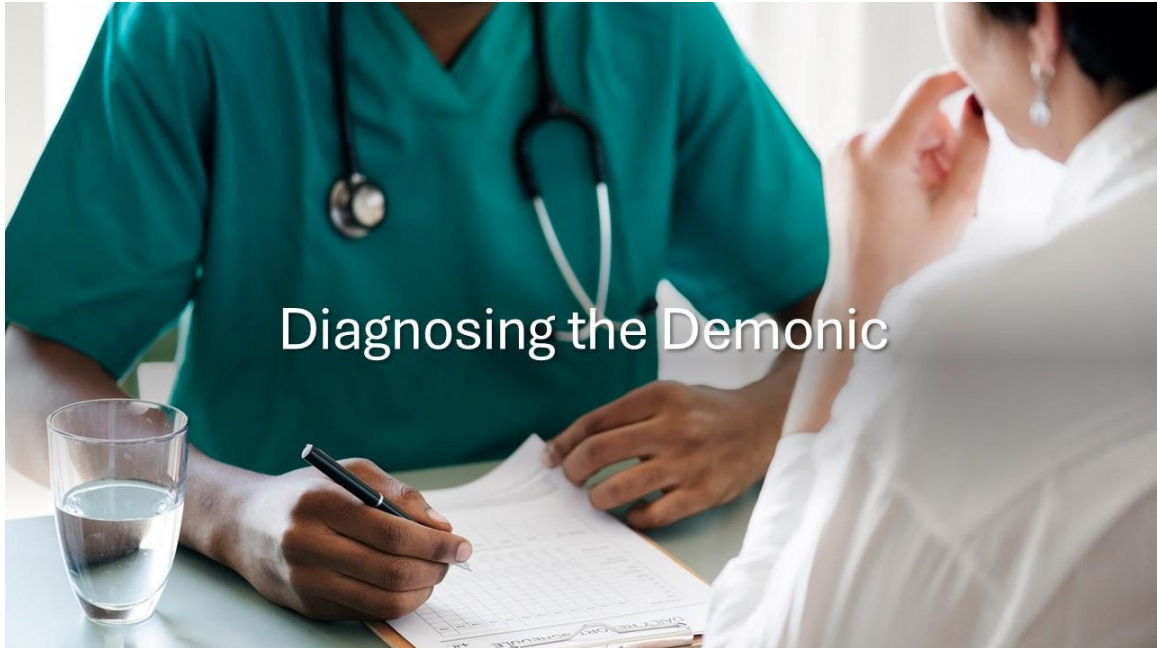
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10 Minute Break
Enjoy the refreshments in
the back of the room

A Conversation
with
Superintendent
Ronnie Morris

Why Does It Matter?





Diagnosing the Demonic



The Necessity of a Good Interview

- There is a tendency among ministers to associate demonic influence, and especially demonic possession, with the manifestations that are sometimes witnessed when an unclean spirit is confronted.
- The dissociative episodes that sometimes demand attention during an altar service, are merely symptoms of what may be seen as a sort of spiritual sickness.
- If someone is truly demonized, there will be evidence of this beyond the occasional experiences that are visible to all.

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Asking the Hard Questions in the Right Way

- We will deal more fully with the interview process during the two final sessions. However, it is important to note that the minister's posture toward those he/she is helping matters during the interview.
- If a person is distressed by demonization or mental illness, some hard conversations are often required to offer effective help.
- Topics include: thorough discussion of traumatic events, addictions and sinful compulsions, sexual history, past or present occult involvement, broken relationships, bitterness, and unforgiveness.



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Asking the Hard Questions in the Right Way

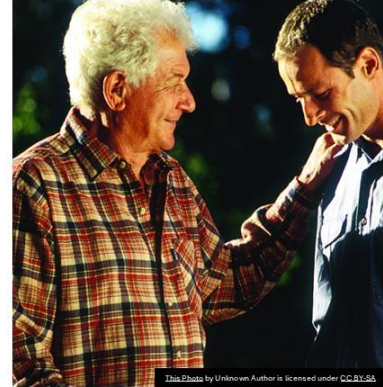
- The simple act of discussing these things can be traumatic for some people. In pastoral ministry, people disclose things to you that they have never told anyone.
- They need to know that they can trust their pastor not only to maintain confidentiality, but also to respond in a loving and non-judgmental way.
- I reached out to some people that our team has worked with in the past to ask what was especially helpful or meaningful to them. Here is what I received back.



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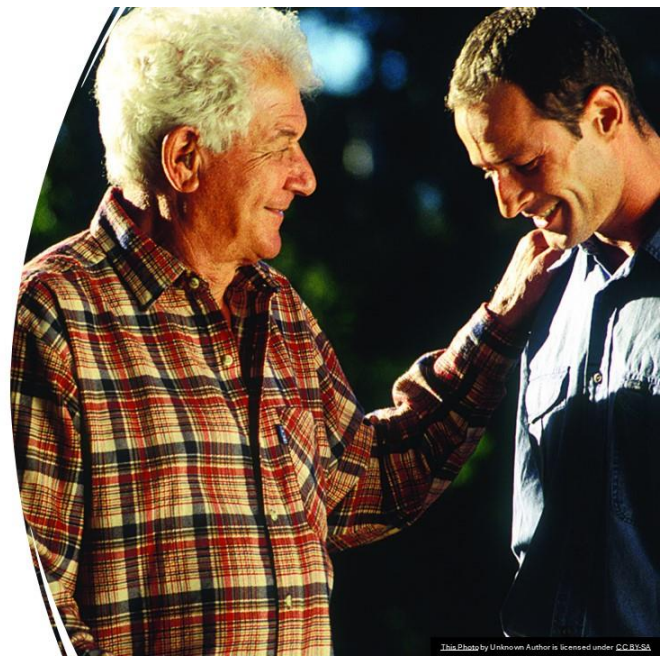
Meaningful Interactions

- “I loved how when I mentioned anything about past traumas, he never looked uncomfortable or panicked. I have talked to less than a handful of people, and they each gave me a look of panic, like what do I do? Or, like I needed to be fixed. He just looked at me like I was a person confiding in him. It was so thoughtful and made it easier to talk to him and about what I was dealing with.”
- “I loved how during some of our conversations, he would actually get emotional with me, which to me it helped me open up. It wasn’t like I was talking to a doctor; it was like I was talking to a friend or family member who cared.”
- “He made it feel like even if I didn’t get a huge word from God each time we got together, he still reassured me God was still present.”



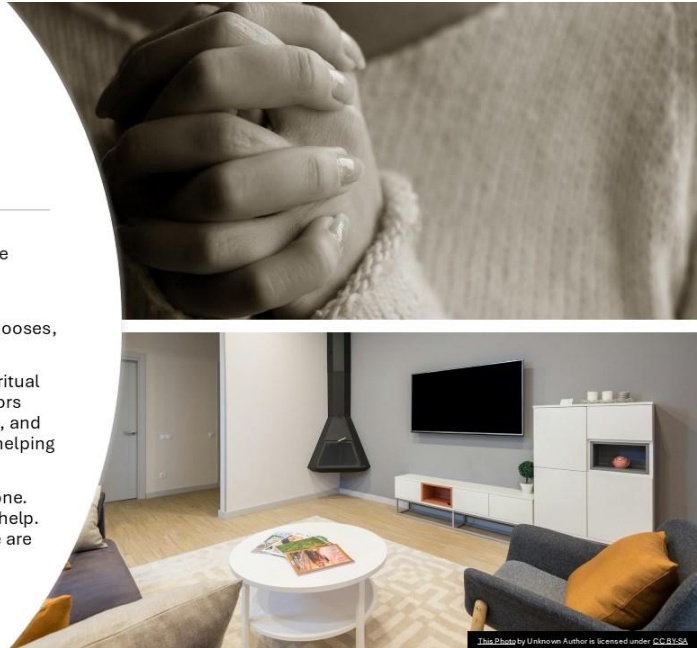
Meaningful Interactions

- “I love that when I got there, I could feel that he had been preparing and praying for that session and how it felt like he truly did care about my walk with God.”



Prepare the Room

- Keeping in mind that the primary context we are focusing on in this seminar is that of pastoral counseling, the room matters.
- God can heal and set free anywhere that He chooses, but if we have options, we should prepare.
- First, prepare the room through prayer. The spiritual atmosphere matters more than anything. Pastors should spend time praying before others arrive, and pastors should always pray with those we are helping before we begin.
- People could have chosen to reach out to anyone. They chose a pastor because they want God's help. We should never forget to make it clear that we are relying on Him.



Prepare the Room

- Second, prepare for privacy. When someone agrees to talk to their pastor about such personal matters, they will be more open and at ease if there is little risk of others overhearing.
- Third, prepare the furniture. We all have to work with what we have, but we should make things as comfortable for those we are meeting with as possible.
- Fourth, provide tissues. People cry in counseling and in deliverance, and this is highly uncomfortable for some people. Pastors can ease that discomfort as much as possible.
- Fifth, communicate up front that if they need to step out to use the restroom or take a call, it is ok.



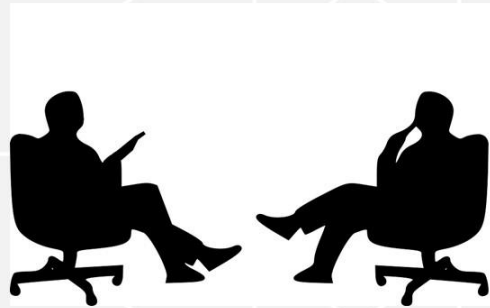
Prepare the Room



- Sixth, communicate the anticipated time limit. Although time limits can be adjusted as needed, letting people know when they can expect to be done helps everyone focus and relax.
- Seventh, let them know that they can leave at any time or decline to answer any question.

Basic Interview Guidelines

- Without uncomfortable staring, look people in the eyes.
- Don't be afraid to show emotions but be careful not to shift the focus onto yourself.
- Ask permission before putting your hand on someone. Get comfortable asking things like, "Is it ok if I put my hand on your shoulder while we pray?"
- When the person shares something that clearly has a lot of emotion behind it, ask, "Would you be willing to talk me through that?" Ask simple questions to encourage them to go deeper.



Basic Interview Guidelines

- Pay attention to the main reasons people say they reached out for help. If they say, "I have horrible panic attacks," say something like, "That must be really difficult to deal with. When do you first remember having a panic attack?"
- Understanding WHEN something began is often the key to getting to the root of WHAT is troubling the person.
- Use the interview to build trust and develop a plan.
- When people leave, give them something they can work on and let them know what to expect next time you meet with them.



A Disease State

- Many pastors and mental health professionals believe that demonization should be understood as a disease state that can be objectively evaluated and treated.
- Theologically speaking, if someone is demonized, a key part of that treatment will be some form of deliverance.
- As Pentecostals, we believe that the Holy Spirit can supernaturally reveal the presence of an unclean spirit. However, Pentecostals are also not opposed to objective proof.



A Disease State

- The Assemblies of God has affirmed the reality of divine healing since the beginning of its existence. However, we also affirm the value of medical diagnoses and medical treatment.
- Objective evaluation is not the enemy of the miraculous. In fact, it may be a tool that God uses to increase the minister's faith.
- How can we objectively determine if someone is demonized?



T. Craig Isaacs Offers Direction

- Toward the end of his book, *In Bondage to Evil*, Isaacs uses his insight as both as psychotherapist and a minister to enable effective diagnosis.



Diagnostic Criteria for the Possessive States Disorder

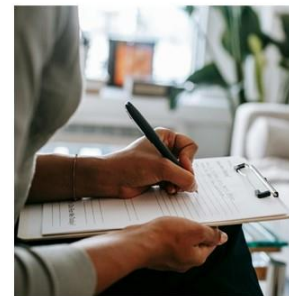
- A, B, and C Must Be Present
- A. The experience of being controlled by someone, or something, other than oneself, with a subsequent loss of self-control in one of four areas: thinking, anger or profanity; impulsivity; or physical functioning.
- B. A sense of self that fluctuates between periods of emptiness and periods of inflation, though one period may predominate. This fluctuation is not due to external circumstances but corresponds to whether the person is feeling in control of him- or herself or is feeling out-of-control.

Diagnostic Criteria for the Possessive States Disorder

C. At least one of the following is present:

1. The person experiences visions of dark figures or apparitions and/or the person hears coherent voices that have a real, and not a dream-like, quality.
2. Trances, or the presence of more than one personality. Also there may be variations in voice or the ability to speak or understand a previously unknown language.
3. Revulsive religious reactions, such as extreme negative reactions to prayer, or to religious objects. The inability to articulate the name Jesus, or the destruction of religious objects.
4. Some form of paranormal phenomena, such as poltergeist-type phenomena, telepathy, levitation, or strength out of proportion to age or situation.
5. There is an impact on others: Paranormal phenomena, stench, coldness or the feeling of an alien presence or that the patient has lost a human quality, is experienced by someone other than the patient.

• T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil: A Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Possession* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 211-12.



Additional Characteristics When Present Increasing Validity

- When A, B, and C from the previous list are present, these additional characteristics can increase the minister's certainty that they are dealing with severe demonization.
- 1. The patient experiences a vision, voice, or feeling as coming from outside of him- or herself, attributed to a wholly other. The important aspect here is that the event is a spontaneous, immediate experience, rather than a subsequent interpretation of an event as having come from **the wholly other**.
- 2. The experience is numinous.
- 3. The presence of numinous fear or awe.

Additional Characteristics When Present Increasing Validity

- 4. There is an unusual clarity to the experience clarity marked by the gaining of a cognizance that is instantaneous rather than gradual (like the awareness gained when listening to another person speaking rather than the knowledge gained by means of reasoning through a personal thought). Clarity is also exhibited in the establishment of the experience in long-lasting memory.
- 5. When a visual image is involved, there is some form of luminosity involved, whether of beautiful light or of shadowy darkness.

• -Ibid

Are They Hearing Voices?

- Be careful how you ask this, but it is always important when people are in severe distress to determine if they are hearing voices.
- If the answer is yes, look at the worksheet in your handouts to help assess what that may indicate. Remember, this is simply a guide. If you are not a mental health professional, do not give a mental health diagnosis. This guide is to help you know when to make referrals and when to proceed with a spiritual intervention.



When the Person is Demonized

Get to the root.

In session one, we discussed three possible roots of demonization:

1. Personal Sin
2. Occult Involvement
3. Trauma

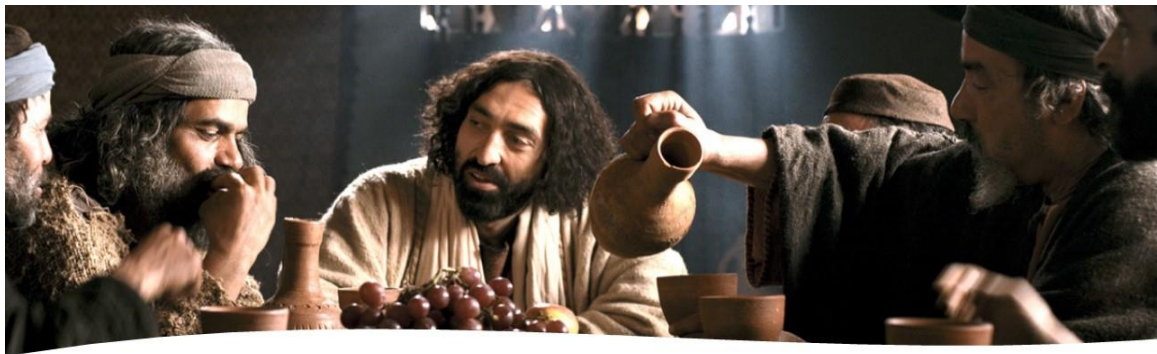
Listen for indications of these things throughout the diagnostic process and ask appropriate questions. In the Intensive Sanctification Sessions, we will discuss how to address these things.





Questions?

Case Studies in Mental
Illness and Demonization
1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.



Liberation for Integration

- When Jesus liberates people from demonic activity in the gospels, it brings personal healing AND enables them to integrate into their community and family systems.
 - They are liberated so that they can be integrated.
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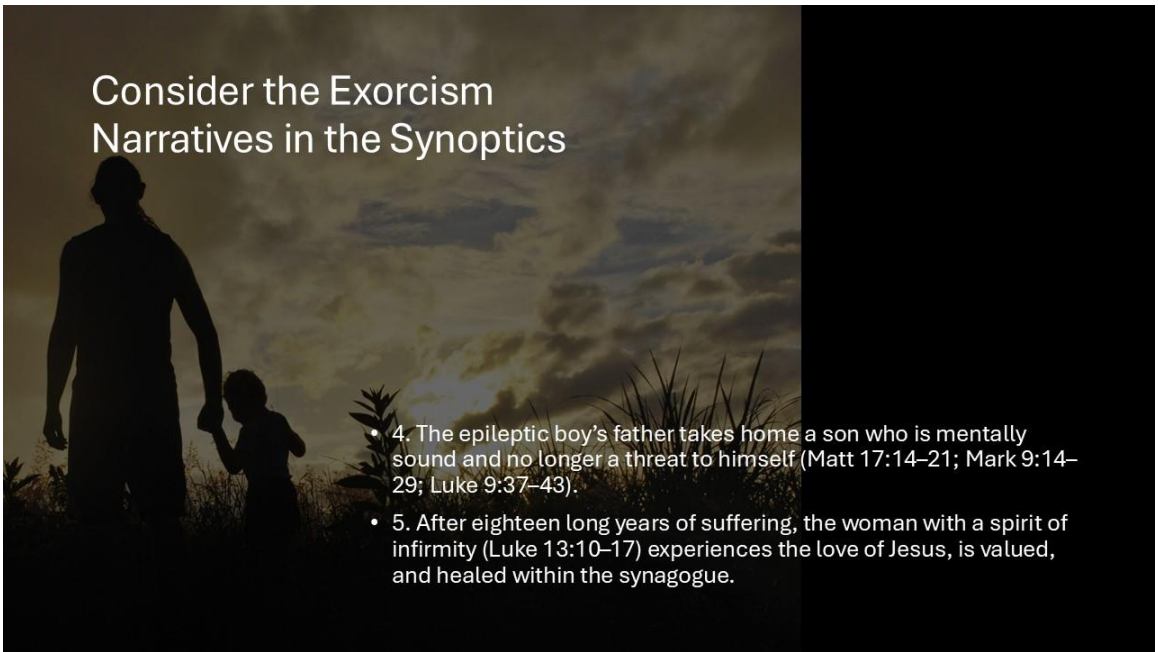
Consider the Exorcism Narratives in the Synoptics

- 1. The man in the synagogue that is tormented by an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37) gains the ability to peacefully worship and learn alongside others in his community.
- 2. The mute demoniac (Matt 9:32–34) and the blind and mute demoniac (Matt 12:22–29; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–22) gain the capacity to more readily communicate with those around them.
- 3. The Syrophoenician woman returns home to a sane, healthy daughter (see Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30).



Consider the Exorcism Narratives in the Synoptics

- 4. The epileptic boy's father takes home a son who is mentally sound and no longer a threat to himself (Matt 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43).
- 5. After eighteen long years of suffering, the woman with a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:10–17) experiences the love of Jesus, is valued, and healed within the synagogue.



What About the Man Who Had the Legion?

- After his liberation, we see the man “sitting there, clothed, and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15).
- He begs Jesus to let him get on the boat and go with Him, but in a somewhat shocking response, Jesus tells him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19).
- What does Jesus do after liberating a man from thousands of demons? He sends him home.



The Invasion of a Mustard Seed

- Joshua Garroway offer a beautiful summary of the man’s return home. He writes,
- “The first thirteen verses (w. 1-13) portray the violent destruction of that ruling kingdom, achieved through synecdoche by the annihilation of an occupying legion. The ensuing seven verses (w. 14-20) portray the peaceful invasion of a new and different kind of kingdom, the kingdom of God. The invaded becomes the invader as the cured demoniac, like a solitary mustard seed, reenters the community from which he has been expelled and preaches a message that rapidly proliferates. The colonial ideology of invasion is thus mimicked and invoked, but also subversively altered. The might of an occupying kingdom is conquered, as expected, with even greater might, yet against expectations the ensuing kingdom invades in a most unmighty manner—through the planting of a single, meager seed.”

—Joshua D. Garroway, “The Invasion of a Mustard Seed: A Reading of Mark 5.1-20,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32, no. 1 (2009): 59–60, doi:10.1177/0142064X09339138.

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Isolation is for the Unclean and Was Meant to be Temporary

- In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone."
- This theme remains consistent throughout Scripture.
- As seen in our first session, Levitical codes required unclean people to be isolated from the community, from Yahweh's house, and from His presence.
- Cleansing, then, results in re-integration within all three arenas.



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The Fullest Expression of Cleansing and Healing is Found Within Community



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- Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck devotes around 300 pages to documenting the two exorcisms that he led during his practice. Reflecting on the importance of having the right team in place as a healing community while liberating someone from the demonic, he writes,
- "It also has an almost mystical healing power that often plays a more important role in a successful exorcism than does the exorcist him- or herself." -M. Scott Peck, *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption* (Washington, DC: Free Press, 2005), 191.

Alyson Barry, *A Qualitative Analysis*

- In a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Seattle Pacific University, psychologist Alyson Barry examines why deliverance ministry seems to be effective among those experiencing dissociative states.
- Barry offers no commentary on the actual existence of demonic entities, but notably does recognize the effectiveness of exorcism among those who believe themselves to be possessed.
- Six out of seven of the participants in Barry's study experienced childhood trauma, which Barry clearly suspects is the root of their dissociation. -Alyson M. Barry, "A Qualitative Analysis of Reports of Dissociative Trance Experiences in the United States" (PhD diss., Seattle Pacific University, 2012), 82, ProQuest.

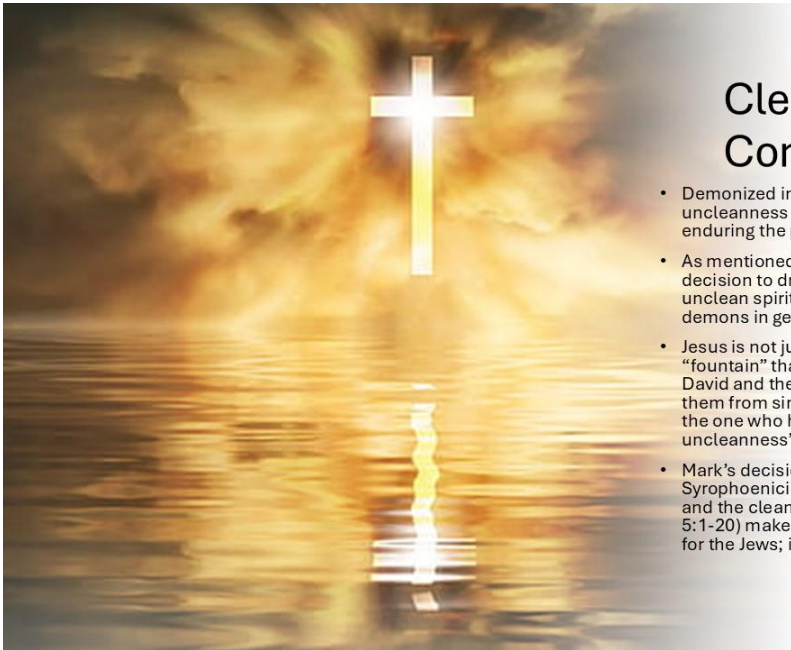


Alyson Barry, *A Qualitative Analysis*

- They were all treated by exorcism, and all reported marked improvement through this treatment. *Ibid.*, 55, 98.
- **Barry attributes the effectiveness of exorcism to three criteria.** While as pastors, we believe that deliverance is effective for more reasons than these, Barry's insights are nonetheless significant.
- **1. Spiritual intervention restored a sense of personal power.** -*Ibid.*, 108, 128.
- **2. The deliverance models they were exposed to emphasize integration as well as liberation.** -*Ibid.*, 95-96.
- **3. The participants discovered the healing power of community.**
- Their experience of deliverance is not a secret, hidden affair. On the contrary, they willingly talk about it and draw strength from others who understand what they have been through.

Alyson Barry, A Qualitative Analysis

- “Feeling as if they are a part of a supportive group of people may facilitate healing for these individuals. This shared understanding seems to have led to the development of what I might call a deliverance culture. There is a language and a set of beliefs that are shared and even made explicit. There are communities dedicated to the process and this shared meaning. This culture allows these individuals, who may feel outcast from mainstream Christianity as well as mainstream culture in general, a way to connect and feel understood and accepted.” -Barry, “A Qualitative Analysis,” 129-30.
- Those who once dissociated due to trauma and victimization have discovered a reality where they are no longer isolated and where others share their pain and their victory. -Ibid., 82.



Cleansed for Community

- Demonized individuals are consumed by the uncleanness warned about in Leviticus and are now enduring the pain of separation from God's presence.
- As mentioned in session 1, the Gospel of Mark decision to draw primary attention to the battle with unclean spirits in particular, rather than just to demons in general, is Christological in nature.
- Jesus is not just another exorcist. Rather, He is the “fountain” that has been “opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1). He is the one who has come to “remove ... the spirit of uncleanness” (13:2).
- Mark's decision to include the liberation of the Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30) and the cleansing of the man with the legion (Mark 5:1-20) makes it clear that this cleansing is not only for the Jews; it is available to Gentiles as well!

Cleansed for Community

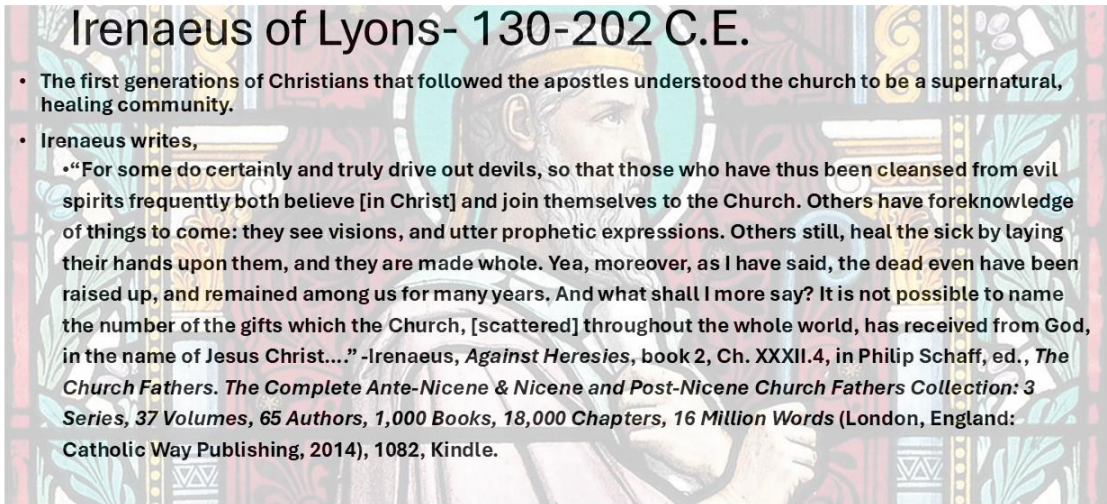
- Young Kuk Kim observes, ““Since being rendered clean allows one to participate in the worship of the community again ... Mark very likely says that Jesus’s exorcism was a way of restoring people in God’s chosen community (cf. 1:44).”

-Young Kuk Kim, “The Enochic Traditions and Jesus’s Exorcism in Mark,” (PhD diss., Department of New Testament Studies Dallas Theological Seminary, 2019), 158.



Irenaeus of Lyons- 130-202 C.E.

- The first generations of Christians that followed the apostles understood the church to be a supernatural, healing community.
- Irenaeus writes,
 - “For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ] and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ....” -Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 2, Ch. XXXII.4, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 1082, Kindle.





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The Healing Power of Community

- The church is God's chosen vessel to bring healing to our communities.
- What if we as pastors chose to fully embrace and champion this healing identity?
- We believe in supernatural healing and deliverance, but as Pentecostals we also believe that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone" (1 Cor 12:14-16).

The Healing Power of Community

- The church is the place where miracles happen. It is also the place where people should be able to connect with and benefit from the gifts that God has placed in the body of Christ throughout the world.
- What if we as leaders committed to make our churches healing hubs, regardless of whether that healing flows through us or through those we connect people to.



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IT'S NOT JUST A CHURCH,

- If someone shows up at Link Church in Clarksville, AR and says they need help with addiction, we are going to pray for them and trust God for miracles.
- Then, we are going to say to them, let us introduce you to Pastor Jarad Harper, head of the Drug Enforcement Administration in Arkansas and Recovery Pastor at Link Church. Join him and us at Celebrate Recovery this Sunday night!
- We are going to say, let us introduce you to our friends with Stepping Stones Recovery of Arkansas, Next Step Recovery Housing, and Safe Haven. Let us share the resources we have so that we can give you the best shot there is!

it's a family.



What if We Committed to Do This in Every Arena?

- What if we made the same commitment to maintain a list of referrals to medical doctors, counselors, or psychologists who are also members of the body of Christ?
- What if we networked with other pastors and leaders and churches to make sure that those who come seeking help and healing are able to find it?
- What if we fully embraced our identity as a healing community where no one is ashamed of their past and everyone is confident in the One who holds their future?

rowpixel

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How Can the Church Function as a Healing Community for People Who Are Impacted by Mental Illness or Demonic Influence?

Let's talk about it.

Break
Time
10
Minutes



Introduction to the Intensive Sanctification Model

The Truth and the Blood

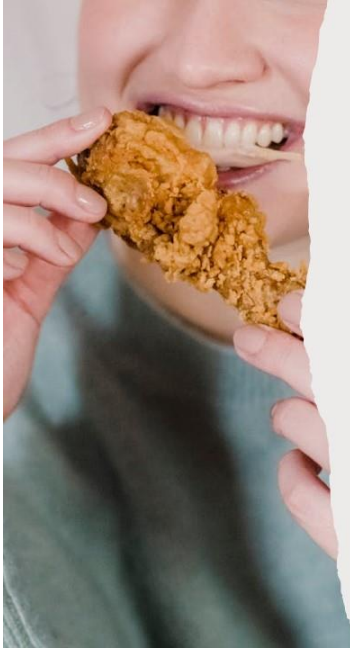
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How Do People Become Unclean?

- Among the seven exorcism narratives and various other references to deliverance provided by the synoptics, none explain how individuals initially became demonized. The same is true of the book of Acts.
- However, a significant indication is given by Christ in the Gospel of Mark about the cause of uncleanness and thus, the roots of demonization.



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Mark 7:18b-23

- “‘Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?’ (Thus, he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (Mark 7:18b-23).



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Food Does Not Defile People; Sin Does

- Jesus does not discard the clean/unclean framework, but cutting past the historic boundaries, He reveals the true source of uncleanness—the heart.
- Jesus lists thirteen kinds of sin that defile people, and it appears throughout Mark that being defiled (or unclean) makes people vulnerable to unclean spirits.
- What, then, can be done about “evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, [and] foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22)?
- Those who are defiled by these things must be sanctified, that is, separated from sin and to God—made clean.





Cleansed by the Blood

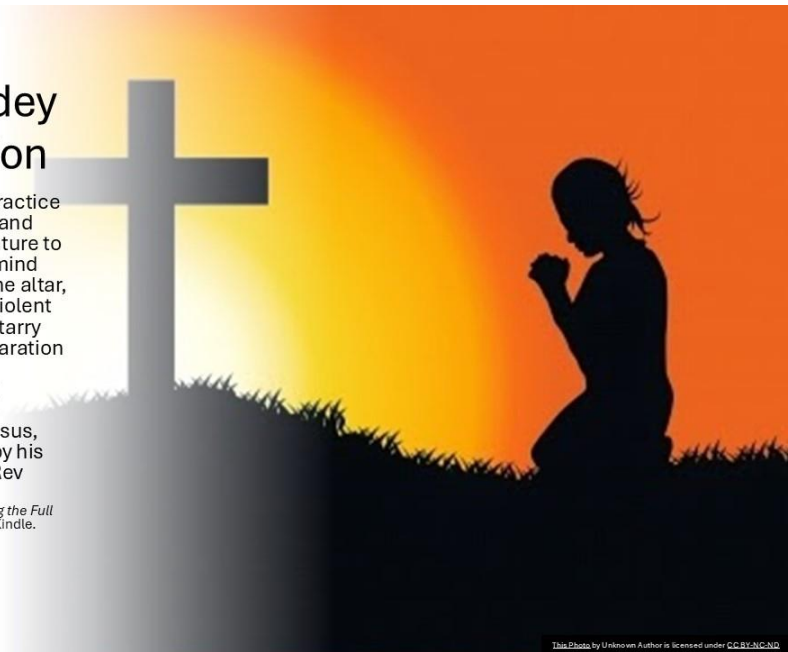
- Sin must be confessed, repented of, and surrendered to God (1 John 1:9).
- “Christ has entered the sanctuary once for all with the gift of his blood and has achieved eternal redemption ([Heb] 9:12; 10:14). His self-offering renders obsolete the animal sacrifices of the temple. By the will of God “we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10). But “since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place” (10:19), the author warns us not to defile the blood of the covenant, through which each one has been sanctified (10:29).”

• Moisés Silva, ed., “ἁγίος, G43,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 131.

Wolfgang Vondey on Sanctification

- “Sanctification as a tarrying practice contains the confession of sin and the surrender of one’s sinful nature to God, not only as an act of the mind but, in the concrete space of the altar, as a physical and sometimes violent struggle of the flesh. Believers tarry for Jesus, both in an active separation from the world, and through participation in the sanctifying presence of Christ. There is no Pentecostal tarrying without Jesus, since believers are sanctified by his blood (1 John 1:7; Heb 10:10; Rev 1:5).”

• Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 64, Kindle.



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Sanctified by the Blood Through the Cross

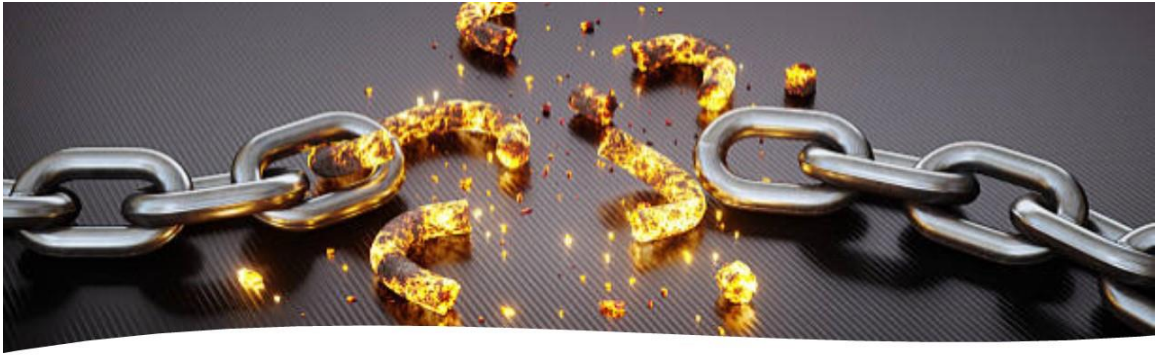
- The opportunity for sanctification by the blood is epitomized in the cross of Jesus Christ.
- “So, Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood” (Heb 13:12).
- The blood of Jesus is more powerful than an exorcistic command, for while the latter may drive out demons, the former cleanses the heart from conditions that allow demonization.
- How is this sanctifying blood applied to the human heart?
- It is through faith in Jesus Christ, by repentance from sin, and through the agency of the Holy Spirit!



No Exorcism Stories, but Satan is Cast Out

- It is noteworthy that the Gospel of John does not contain a single exorcism narrative.
- This is such a stunning departure from the synoptics, that one can only assume that John intentionally edited these stories out to make a different point.
- In John, Satan's defeat does not come through exorcism, but rather through the Cross of Christ and the Truth of the Word.
- Only in John do we read this declaration of Jesus, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).

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Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*

- Reflecting on John's Gospel, Graham Twelftree writes, "Satan is not confronted in the form of sickness caused by demons but in the form of unbelief inspired by the father of lies. So, exorcism is not the response to demon possession; truth is its antidote." -Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 282.
- This truth has profound implications for the ministry of deliverance, especially as it relates to demonic oppression.
- Although there is certainly a place for casting out demons when needed, John teaches that truth has an exorcistic function; it liberates (John 8:31-32)!
- As people embrace truth encounters and allow the blood of Jesus to do its work, power encounters with demons often become unnecessary.

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Sanctified by the Truth

Jesus prays for His disciples, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Sanctification by truth has a powerful, integrating effect on the mind and spirit.

Those who are separated from God "are darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:18), while followers of Christ are urged to "be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (v. 23). This sanctifying renewal enables believers to "put away falsehood" and "speak the truth" (v. 25), to "be angry" and "not sin" (v. 26), and to "give no opportunity to the devil" (v. 27).

It transforms the way that Christ-followers act and speak (vv. 28-29) and protects them against grieving the Spirit (v. 30). It equips people to let go of "bitterness," "wrath," "anger," "clamor," "slander," and "malice," and to embrace kindness, forgiveness, and tender-heartedness (vv. 31-32).

v. 23

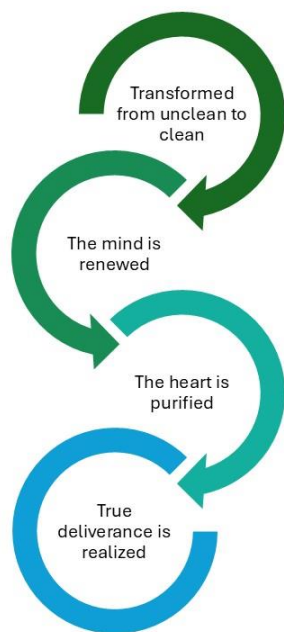
- Put away falsehood
- Speak the truth

v. 26

- Be angry
- Not sin

v. 27

- Give no opportunity to the devil



Sanctification as a Supernatural Force

•Vondey writes, "[T]he fullness (not a portion) of sanctifying grace is poured out by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals speak of this aspect of sanctification as 'deliverance' and being 'set free', code words that can indicate the experience of justification, typically at a person's conversion, or the affirmation of justification in a subsequent experience, and that refer to a concrete and repeated sense of liberation from sin, addiction, sickness, and even demon-possession."

• Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 79-80.

• Sanctification is received by the blood of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and by the truth of the Word. Individuals are transformed from unclean to clean. The mind is renewed; the heart is purified, and true deliverance is realized.

What is the Intensive Sanctification Model?

- The Intensive Sanctification Model (ISM) is an approach to cleansing and deliverance that is built upon the truth that God wants to cleanse everyone from moral defilements, enabling them to enjoy lives filled with His presence, in relationship with His people, and abiding in His house.
- This model recognizes that sanctification begins at conversion and continues progressively throughout life.
- At the same time, it pays respect to our Pentecostal heritage observed by Vondey in the quotes shared in this session, where he rightly observes that Pentecostals have historically envisioned sanctification as something that should be intensely pursued and powerfully experienced.



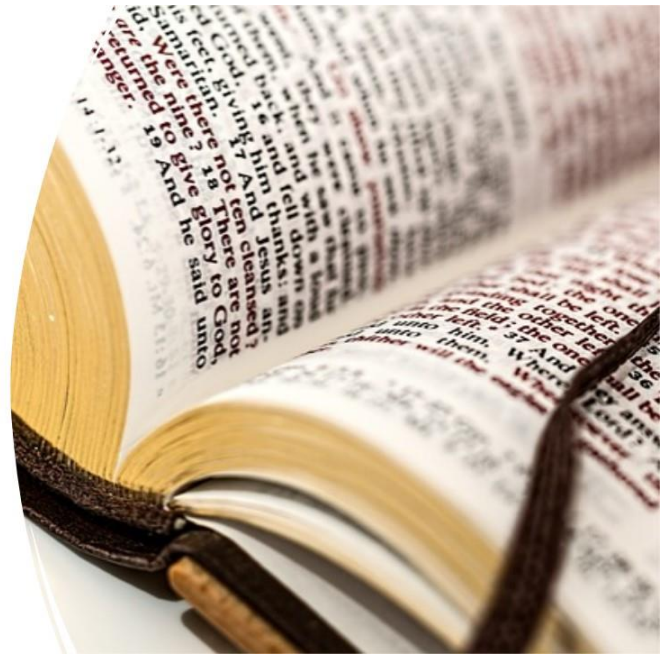


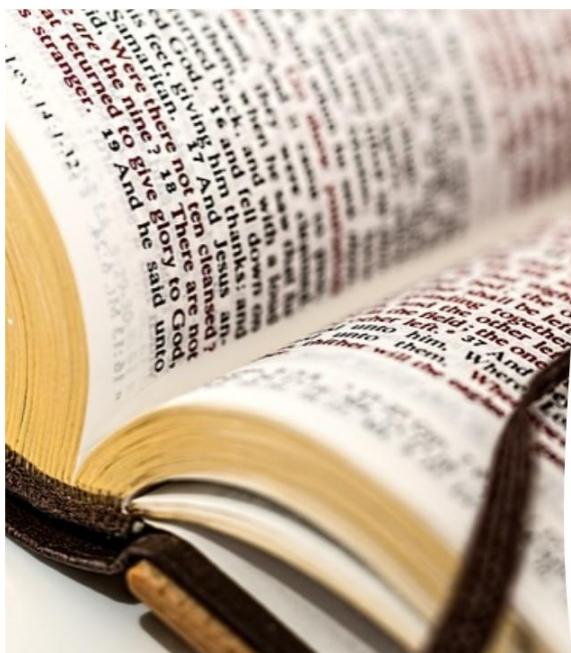
Intensive Sanctification Celebrates James 5:16

- “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”
- ISM recaptures the power of confession within the framework of sanctification and the context of pastoral counseling.
- Notice that James does not tell us to confess our sins to each other so that we can be forgiven. Rather, he says to do it so that we can be healed. Christ, as our high priest, forgives our sins, but He welcomes us to experience His sanctifying, therapeutic power through confession to each other. In this case, it is a very personal conversation with the pastor.
- Do not worry. You will find that it “has great power as it is working.”

Here Is How It Works

- Oftentimes, people realize that they need spiritual help, but they do not know where to begin.
- When a pastor invites them into this process, it begins with a thorough evaluation of their lives in light of the Scripture. It begins with truth.
- Many passages could be employed, but two that fit powerfully within this process are Mark 7:18-23 and Hebrews 12:14-17.



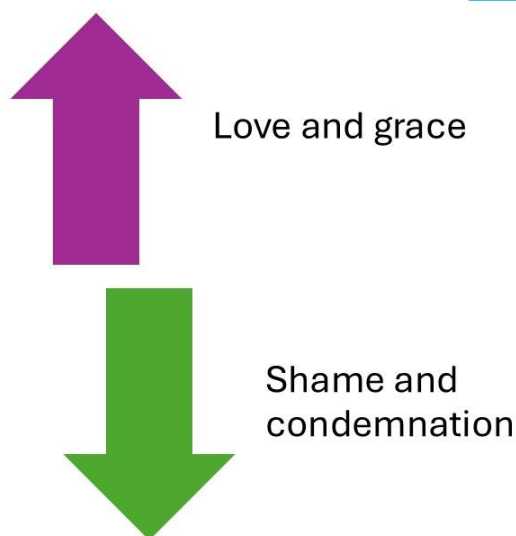


Why These Passages?

- Mark 7 draws directly from Christ's words about the issues proceeding from the heart that can produce an unclean state, and Hebrews 12 is written in the context of sanctification by the blood of Christ.
- In this process, we begin with a deep and sometimes painful reflection on the truth, and then move to exercising active faith in the blood of Christ.
- Turn to page 62 in your book, and we will discuss the process.

ISM-Truth, Hebrews 12 Assessment

- It is vitally important that pastors clearly explain what this process looks like to those they are working with. This first major step in the process is implemented in a pastoral counseling-type setting.
- Do not simply hand this sheet to someone and ask them to fill it out. This is a relational, pastoral process that is designed to communicate love and grace, not shame and condemnation.
- Explain up front that the questions will be very personal, but they will give focus to your prayer time together and provide opportunity for them to experience significant breakthrough.



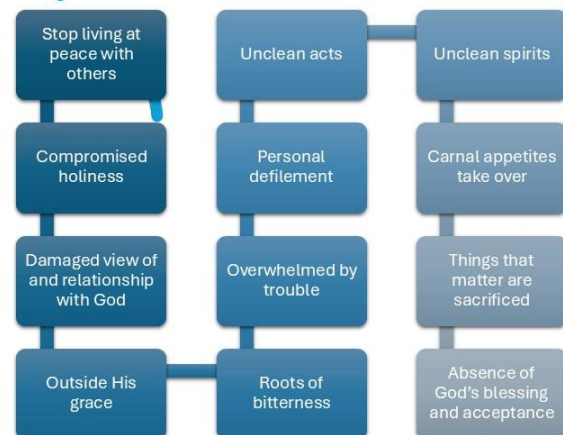


ISM-Truth, Hebrews 12 Assessment

- “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears” (Heb 12:14-17).

ISM-Truth, Hebrews 12 Assessment

- These verses illustrate what a progressive movement away from God may look like. Beginning with the admonition to strive for peace with everyone, each phrase represents a successive stage in the journey away from peace with God and others.
- When we stop living at peace with others, it impacts our holiness. When we compromise our holiness, it damages our view of and our relationship with God. Once our relationship with God is impacted, we are in danger of stepping outside His grace. This is when the roots of bitterness can set in, and trouble overwhelms us.
- The next stage is personal defilement, or a sense of uncleanness. When someone feels unclean, they may be more likely to commit sexual sin or to entertain unholy thoughts. When they do, uncleanness makes them vulnerable to unclean spirits. Carnal appetites take over, and tragically, the things that matter most are sacrificed. This all results in the absence of God’s blessing and acceptance, and the tragic end is a tormented state, filled with regret.



ISM-Truth, Hebrews 12 Assessment

1. Is there anyone that you are currently not at peace with? How are your relationships?

2. Are you living a holy life? If you were going to see God today, what changes would you want to make first?

3. Is there an area of life where you feel an absence of God's grace? Are there any nagging sins or situations that you cannot seem to get victory over?

4. Are there any roots of bitterness in your life? With whom do you feel angry or resentful?

5. Is there anything you feel troubled by?

ISM-Truth, Hebrews 12 Assessment

6. Defilement is a synonym for uncleanness. When someone was "unclean" in biblical times, they were temporarily separated from God's house, His people, and His presence. Are you struggling in any of those three arenas? Do you faithfully gather in the house of God? How is your relationship with the people of God? Are you consistent in prayer and worship and do you sense God's presence in your life? If the answer to any of these is no, why do you think that is?

7. Have you committed sexual sins or done things you consider unholy?

8. Do you feel driven by lust or other appetites?

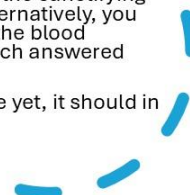
9. Are there any areas where you feel a lack of God's blessing or acceptance?

10. Overall, are you satisfied with your life? Do you have any major regrets?



You May Alternatively Use the Mark 7 Assessment and the Occult Activity Assessment in the Same Way

- There is no need to use both Mark 7 and Hebrews 12. Either can be very effective. However, I DO recommend pairing one of them with the Occult Activity Assessment on page 67.
- Be careful not to make this overly clinical. Allow it to be a conversation that develops organically and leads into encounters with the Holy Spirit.
- Once everything is answered, you can move into a reflection on the sanctifying blood of Jesus Christ. Alternatively, you can pause and focus on the blood immediately following each answered question.
- If this is not making sense yet, it should in a moment.

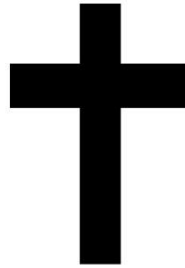


ISM-Blood

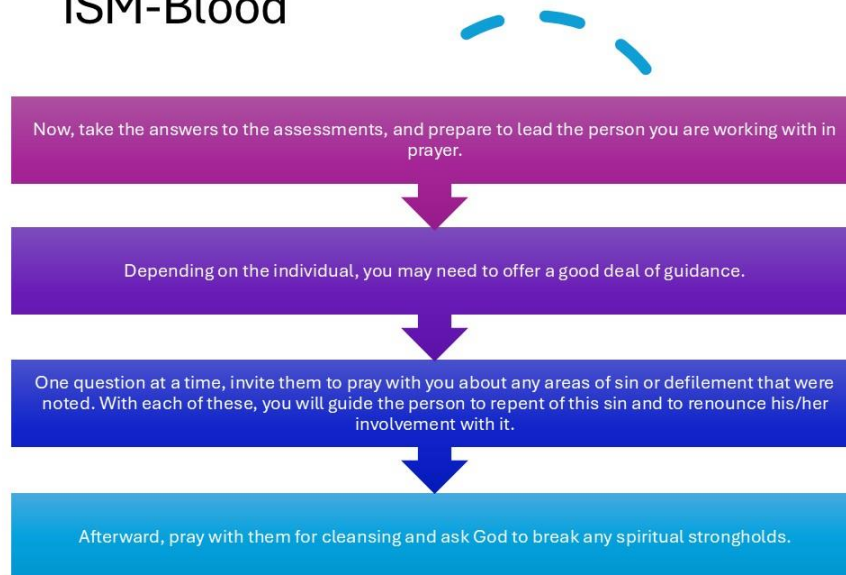
- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
- “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10).
- “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:19-22).
- “Repent therefore ... that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

ISM- Blood

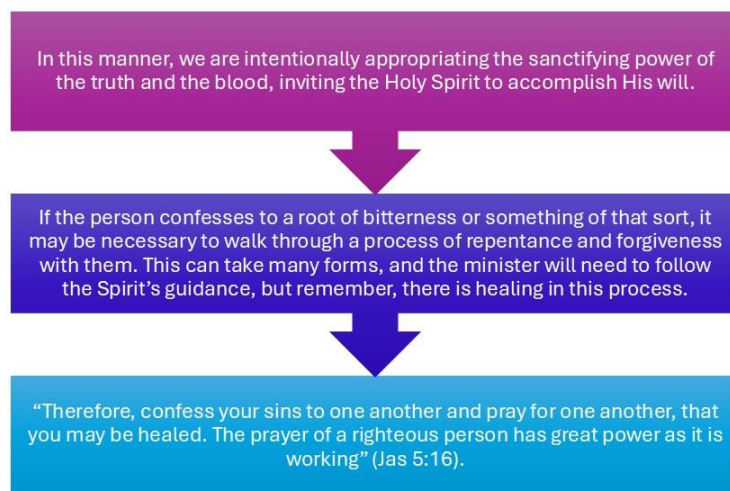
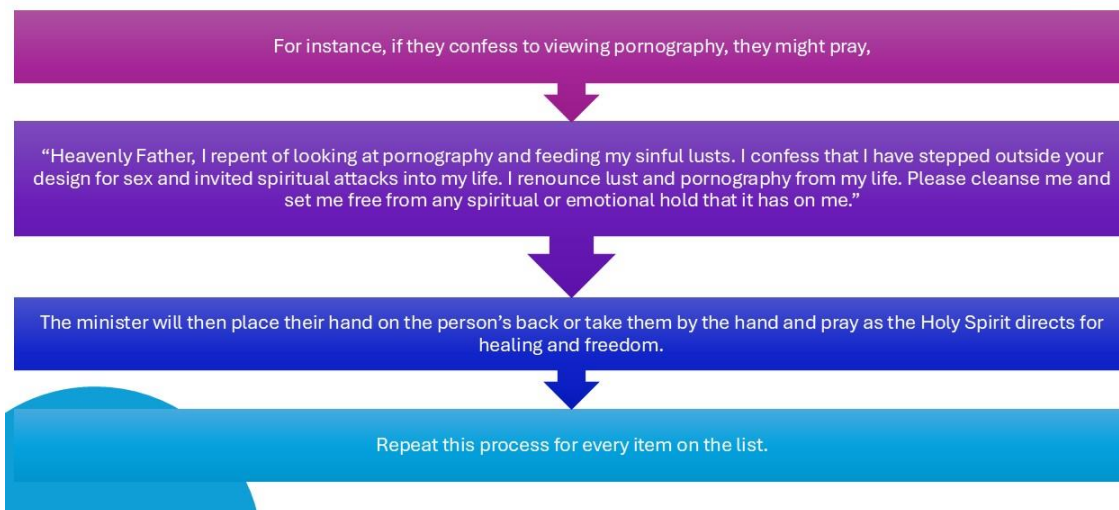
- “But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways...” (2 Cor 4:2).
- “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:7-10).



ISM-Blood



ISM-Blood





Paul on Sanctification by the Holy Spirit

The Apostle Paul expresses his desire, “that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16b). He goes on to boast of “what Christ has accomplished ... to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed” (v. 18b). The next verse says, “by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (v. 19a). This includes the Spirit’s activity in exorcism and healing, by which He breaks the power of uncleanness and restores people to the covenant community within which He dwells. -Kim, *The Enochic Traditions*, 158.

- Another aspect of sanctification is that people become more holy through “association with ... the Holy Spirit.” Following a detailed list of defiling sins, the apostle writes, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Silva, ed., “ἁγιος, G43” in *NIDNTTE*, 130.



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Paul on Sanctification by the Holy Spirit

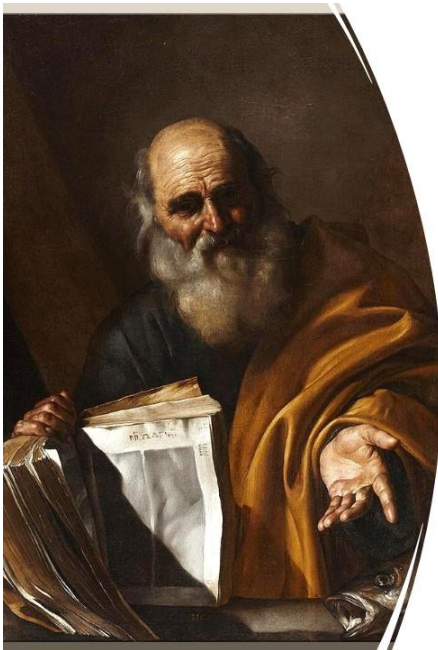
- “But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first-fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thess 2:13).
- “Or do you not know that the unrighteous[b] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Paul on Sanctification by the Holy Spirit

- “To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16).



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Peter on Sanctification by the Spirit

- “[A]ccording to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Pet 1:2).

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Vondey on Sanctification by the Spirit

- “[T]he Pentecostal experience of the Lord is accompanied by the witness of the Holy Spirit in physical manifestations that can range from the inward sense of deliverance from sin to the dramatic exorcism of a demonic spirit. Christians are sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Pet 1:2).” –Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 64.



ISM-Holy Spirit

Pentecostal pastors understand that significant aspects of sanctification are experienced through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit.

The ISM-Holy Spirit phase is not a neatly structured part of the process. Rather, it is an opportunity for ministers to use their spiritual gifts and witness God's miraculous hand on the lives of those seeking help.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

- “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills.”



The Spirit Can Give Whatever Gift is Needed

- There are no limitations when we minister through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.
- He can give us any gift that is needed in the specific moment.
- The “truth” phase of the Intensive Sanctification Model brings people face to face with their need for cleansing, and the “blood” phase accomplishes that cleansing through repentance and faith, it is the Spirit who reveals what may be unknown and directs our prayers to the point of precision.

Distinguishing of spirits

The Holy Spirit grants ministers “the ability to distinguish between spirits,” exposing unclean spirits, even when they wish to remain hidden (1 Cor 12:10).

It has been emphasized in numerous ways throughout this seminar that sanctification and deliverance are experienced in numerous ways that do not include casting out demons.

Nonetheless, when a demon is present, the Holy Spirit supplies whatever knowledge the minister needs, and it is driven out by the Name of Jesus Christ!

Jesus Never Used Information Gained from a Demon in His Deliverance Ministry

- This may sound like a controversial statement, but it is true.
- Among the seven exorcism narratives in the gospels and the many passing references to deliverances, the only time Jesus requests information from an unclean spirit is in the case of the man with the legion, and he notably did not use that information in any formulaic fashion to cast the demons out.
- Demons are deceptive and cannot be trusted when they speak, but thankfully, ministers can rely on the Holy Spirit’s voice for direction.



Gifts of Healing

It is commonly observed that “gifts of healing” is expressed in the plural form in 1 Corinthians 12:9.

This passage may be read in a manner that allows for some to operate in gift of physical healing, while others may be used in gifts of emotional or spiritual healing.

However one interprets this passage, it is not difficult to envision deliverance as an expression of healing that is accomplished by the Spirit’s sanctifying presence.



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A Final Thought

- In the Old Testament, uncleanness separated people from the presence of God, the people of God, and the house of God. Cleansing, then, offered restoration in all three realms.
- The New Testament’s language of sanctification is a direct callback to the Old Testament construct of clean/unclean and holy/common. Sanctification makes one clean and holy.
- Although it is reasonable to draw comparisons between the old covenant temple and new covenant worship gatherings, that is not the direct parallel.



A Final Thought

- The Apostle Paul asks the Corinthians, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20).
- Salvation and sanctification by the blood, the truth, and the Spirit prepares believers to be God’s house, connects them to God’s people, and forms them into a community within and among whom His presence dwells.



APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

INTRODUCTION: A CONVERSATION ABOUT LEADING PEOPLE INTO SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL WHOLENESS

The ministry that is modeled by Jesus Christ throughout the gospels reveals God's care and concern for humanity. He sets distressed individuals free from malicious spiritual powers while simultaneously offering spiritual, mental, and physical healing, integrating those who are liberated into the community of faith. Graham Twelftree insightfully observes that in the New Testament, "little interest is shown in demons and demonology except where it relates to soteriology."¹ Jesus engages in exorcism and commissions His disciples to do the same, but what He celebrates is salvation, not power encounters. Exorcisms and healings are sanctifying tools in Christ's ministry to cleanse people from the things that separate them from Himself, His house, and His people.

Jesus speaks to dark powers and forces them to flee, but He also speaks to mortal men and women and teaches them to live at peace with God and with each other. He declares the coming of God's kingdom with miracles and exorcisms but warns people not to trust in miracles and exorcisms. Christ does not simply drive out uncleanness; He promises those who are cleansed and "pure in heart" that "they will see God" (Matt 5:8).

¹ Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 294. Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation.

The expectation of supernatural ministry was woven into the fabric of the early church's mentality. Christ's commission to His disciples in the Gospel of Mark makes this clear. Mark writes,

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:15-18).

Mark differentiates between healing the sick and casting out demons, but he leaves no question that both expressions of ministry should be the normal experience of believers in Christ.

Writing in the second century C.E., Irenaeus confirms that this understanding of ministry continued in his day.

For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ] and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ....²

The mandate to heal those who battle physical and mental illnesses and to cast out demons remains active today.

Today's seminar will explore various aspects of the call to healing and deliverance. Topics include:

² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 2, Ch. XXXII.4, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Church Fathers. The Complete Ante-Nicene & Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers Collection: 3 Series, 37 Volumes, 65 Authors, 1,000 Books, 18,000 Chapters, 16 Million Words* (London, England: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 1082, Kindle.

1. Foundations of Liberation: A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization
2. Foundations of Integration: A Pastoral Perspective on Mental Illness
3. Why It Matters: A Conversation with Superintendent Ronnie Morris
4. A Conversation with Mental Health Therapist Jonathan Seubold
5. Case Studies in Mental Illness and Demonization
6. The Healing Power of Community
7. Introduction to the Intensive Sanctification Model

This participant's manual is supplemental to the information that will be presented throughout the day. It is intended to add tools to your pastoral toolbelt as Christ uses you to bring healing and deliverance to people through faith in the name of Jesus.

SESSION ONE: A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEMONIZATION DEMON POSSESSION OR DEMONIZATION?

It has become increasingly common in the last few decades to speak of demonization rather than demon possession. Writing from a traditional Pentecostal viewpoint, Opal Reddin adamantly asserts that the Greek word, “*daimonizomai*,” denotes a state of possession and should be translated as such.³ Reddin's claim is reasonably consistent with English Bible translations, as seen below:

ESV- “demon-possessed” or “oppressed by demons”	NIV- “demon-possessed”	NASB- “demon-possessed”
KJV- “possessed with devils”	MEV- “possessed with demons”	NLT- “possessed by demons” or “demon-possessed”

³ Opal Reddin ed., *Power Encounter: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Central Bible College Press, 1989), 10-13.

However, the relative consistency of the above translations does not negate the challenge of understanding what the biblical authors intended to convey.

Although “possessed” seems to denote ownership, this is not true to the word’s usage in the New Testament. Possession should be understood as demonic control so extreme that possessed people temporarily lose control of their cognitive or physical abilities. This is distinct from ownership. Further, the New Testament uses varied language to describe demonic influence, even when it is not readily noticeable in English Bibles. Consider the following phrases with their corresponding translations from the ESV:

- Matthew 4:24 “those oppressed by demons” = “*daimonizomenos*”
- Matthew 8:28 “demon-possessed” = “*daimonizomenoi*”
- Mark 1:32 “oppressed by demons” = “*kai tous daimonizomenos*”
- Mark 5:2 “a man with an unclean spirit” = “*Anthropos en pneumati akatharto*”
- Mark 5:18 “possessed with demons” = “*ho daimonistheis*”
- Luke 4:33 “a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon” = “*Anthropos echon pneuma daimoniou akathartou*”
- Acts 10:38 “healing all who were oppressed by the devil” = “*iomenos pantas tous katadynasteuomenous hypo tou diabolou*”
- Acts 16:16 “a slave girl who had a spirit of divination” = “*paidiskin tina echousan pneuma pythona*”

Regardless of how one translates the different forms of “*daimonizomai*” and its counterparts, it does not appear that the New Testament authors intended to reduce demonic influence to a single type of expression.

Most popular-level writing on this subject, as well as a significant amount of scholarly literature, transliterates the word “*daimonizomai*” to create the word “demonized.” Demonization is used to describe the spectrum of demonic attacks that are depicted in the New Testament and attested to by deliverance ministers and exorcists today. Francis MacNutt, a charismatic Catholic minister, writes, “A better word for what people commonly experience is demonization. ... In fact, the Greek word used in the

New Testament can best be translated as ‘to have a demon’ or ‘to be demonized’ rather than ‘to be possessed.’ This correct translation makes all the difference because it is quite possible to have a demon yet not be possessed.”⁴ Whatever word one prefers to describe demonic activity, it occurs on a spectrum, and one cannot rightly classify all its expressions as possession. Throughout this seminar, “demonized” and “demonization” will be used to reference this spectrum of attacks in general, though “possession” and “possessed” will be used to describe the severest forms of demonization.

⁴ Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 73.

EIGHT BIBLICAL CASES OF EXORCISM

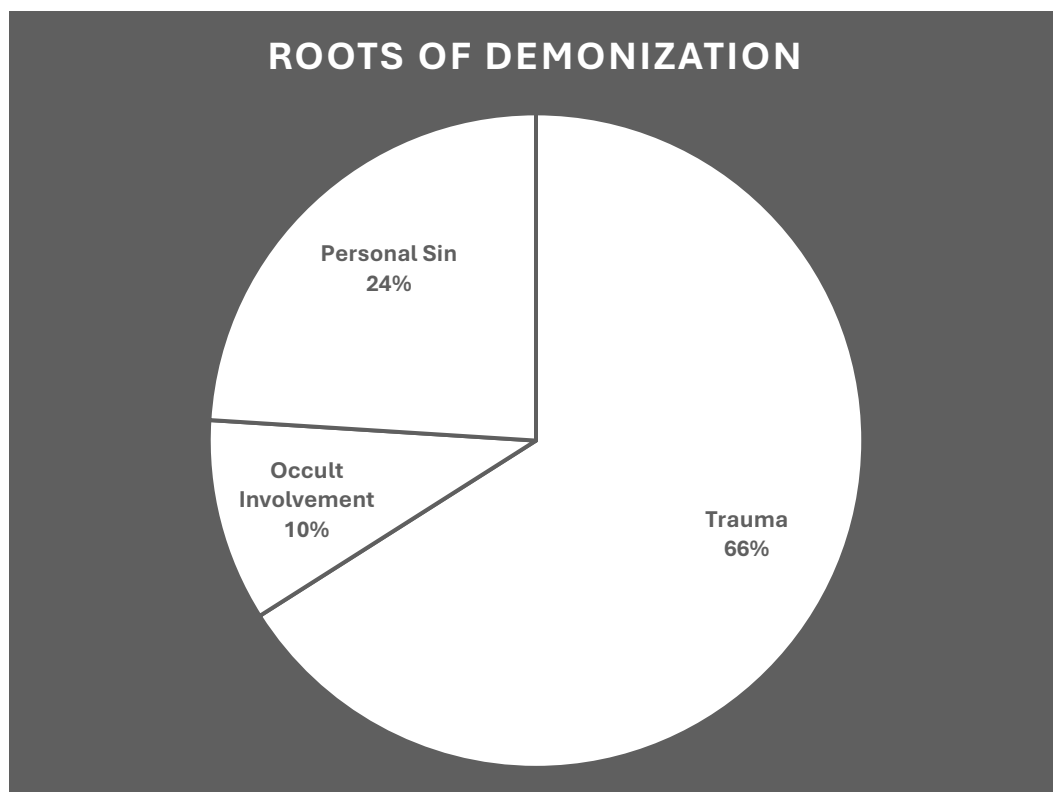
The New Testament includes many accounts of driving out demons. However, many of these are mentioned in passing or as a summary of the ministry of Christ or the apostles in a specific region. There are eight cases for which the New Testament supplies full narrative accounts. Some are mentioned in only one biblical book, while others are mentioned by multiple authors. They are as follows:

1. The man in the synagogue tormented by an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37).
2. The blind and mute demoniac (Matt 12:22–29; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–22).
3. The Gerasene demoniac (Matt 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39).
4. The Syrophoenician woman’s daughter (Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30).
5. The epileptic boy (Matt 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43).
6. The woman with a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:10–17).
7. The mute demoniac (Matt 9:32–34).
8. The slave girl with a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16–18).

People sometimes equate demonic activity with mental illness. However, this is an error. Although demonic influence can result in psychological distress, a quick glance at the above list reveals that about half of the New Testament’s exorcism narratives deal with physical disorders rather than mental health symptoms. Further, there is no evidence that Jesus, the apostles, or the early church believed that all mental illness was caused by demons.

Pentecostal theologian John Christopher Thomas’s research confirms this truth. In his book, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought*, Thomas concludes, “In contrast to claims made both at the scholarly and popular levels, the New Testament writers generally make a clear distinction between

demon possession and illness.”⁵ This is certainly true in the Gospels (Matt 4:23-24; Luke 4:40-41; John 9:1-3).



The percentages in the above chart are drawn in part from MacNutt.⁶ Pastoral perspectives on demonization are relatively consistent with this assessment across various faith traditions, at least when their context is the United States. Those who focus on

⁵ John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 297.

⁶ Ibid, 91, 93, 96, 185. On page 96, MacNutt notes a fourth category of spirit that he deals with—familiar spirits. For the above chart, I have grouped familiar spirits with personal sin. Some might argue that they are an extension of occult involvement, but MacNutt draws a distinction between occult involvement and familiar spirits. MacNutt’s views on familiar spirits are beyond the scope of this training and would require substantial explanation. His usage could be grouped under what some call generational spirits, but my research suggests that there is more value in focusing on personal responsibility in the context of deliverance. Regardless of how one classifies familiar spirits, I chose to include them under personal sin, as intentional association with them is certainly a sin in the biblical worldview.

international contexts vary greatly. Gabriel Amorth, founder of the International Association of Exorcists, claims that most cases of demonization he encounters are occult related.⁷ Nonetheless, trauma should be a key consideration for all who engage in the ministry of deliverance.⁸ Specific expressions of trauma may include unforgiveness, extreme fear, a distorted image of God, or a vast number of other struggles.

Although some may contend that occult involvement should be included under the category of personal sin, it is distinct enough to warrant a separate category. Not everyone who dabbles in the occult becomes demonized. However, those who do often represent the most severe cases of demonization.⁹

The category of “personal sin” relates to habitual, compulsive sins in people’s lives. If someone is controlled by a particular vice, a degree of demonization could be present. Although there is little value in endless speculation about what may or may not have gone on throughout past generations of a specific family, if the individual seeking help reveals that previous generations have experienced the same struggle, it is at least worth noting. Personal repentance is always necessary when sin is present. The cleansing

⁷ Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic: The Antics of Satan and His Army of Fallen Angels* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Press, 2016), 79. While Amorth attributes these possessions to the occult, he does not necessarily attribute this occult activity to the afflicted individual in every case.

⁸ Trauma may be defined in various ways. However, within this material, I am using it as an umbrella term for a broad range of experiences. In my usage, trauma can be any experience that negatively affects someone and has an enduring impact on them, regardless of whether it is psychologically, physically, or spiritually. Trauma may be experienced through a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to abuse, neglect, loss, injury, illness, or death of a loved one. It is worth noting that what is traumatic for one person may not seem significant to another person. Trauma is a highly personalized experience that can alter the way people see themselves, others, circumstances, and even God. Inner healing from trauma may include addressing false belief systems that have developed because of the traumatic experience.

⁹ Ibid, 91.

that is made available through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is the ultimate answer to demonization, regardless of its root. However, understanding how a struggle began may be helpful when leading people into freedom and healing.

HOW SIN LEADS TO DEMONIZATION

1. Sin damages the healthy, rational part of the mind, leading to self-deception and doing violence to one's inner sense of right and wrong.¹⁰
2. Deception impacts the emotions as well as the will.¹¹
3. Spiritual sickness develops and personal dis-integration sets in.¹²
4. Unclean spirits prey on this weakened condition, compulsivity sets in, and the result is a driven, demonized state.¹³

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR DEMONIC POSSESSION

There is no substitute for spiritual discernment when identifying the presence of unclean spirits. However, in addition to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is vital for leaders to hold a solid understanding of possession. The following excerpt from *In Bondage to Evil* by T. Craig Isaacs is illuminating:

Diagnostic Criteria for the Possessive States Disorder
A, B, and C must be present.

¹⁰ Chad Ripperger, *Dominion: The Nature of Diabolic Warfare* (Keensburg, CO: Sensus Traditionist Press, 2022), 438-39.

¹¹ Neal Lozano, *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (South Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2003), 40.

¹² T. Craig Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2009), 112.

¹³ T. Craig Isaacs, *In Bondage to Evil: A Psycho-Spiritual Understanding of Possession* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 169.

- A. The experience of being controlled by someone, or something, other than oneself, with a subsequent loss of self-control in one of four areas: thinking, anger or profanity; impulsivity; or physical functioning.
- B. A sense of self that fluctuates between periods of emptiness and periods of inflation, though one period may predominate. This fluctuation is not due to external circumstances but corresponds to whether the person is feeling in control of him- or herself or is feeling out-of-control.
- C. At least one of the following is present:
 - 1. The person experiences visions of dark figures or apparitions and/or the person hears coherent voices that have a real, and not a dream-like, quality.
 - 2. Trances, or the presence of more than one personality. Also there may be variations in voice or the ability to speak or understand a previously unknown language.
 - 3. Revulsive religious reactions, such as extreme negative reactions to prayer, or to religious objects. The inability to articulate the name Jesus, or the destruction of religious objects.
 - 4. Some form of paranormal phenomena, such as poltergeist-type phenomena, telepathy, levitation, or strength out of proportion to age or situation.
 - 5. There is an impact on others: Paranormal phenomena, stench, coldness or the feeling of an alien presence or that the patient has lost a human quality, is experienced by someone other than the patient.¹⁴

As a professional who practices both psychotherapy and exorcism, Isaacs offers unique insight into the diagnosis of demonic possession. As is evident when reading his proposed criteria, he recognizes the existence of demons as independent, intelligent entities, but he also describes possession as a type of disease state.

When A, B, and C from the above criteria are present, Isaacs notes that the following characteristics may further verify the presence of demonic possession:

Additional Characteristics When Present Increasing Validity

¹⁴ Ibid, 211-12. This entire segment is quoted directly, beginning with the heading, “Diagnostic Criteria for the Possessive States Disorder.”

1. The patient experiences a vision, voice, or feeling as coming from outside of him- or herself, attributed to a wholly other. The important aspect here is that the event is a spontaneous, immediate experience, rather than a subsequent interpretation of an event as having come from the wholly other.
2. The experience is numinous.
3. The presence of numinous fear or awe.
4. There is an unusual clarity to the experience; a clarity marked by the gaining of a cognizance that is instantaneous rather than gradual (like the awareness gained when listening to another person speaking rather than the knowledge gained by means of reasoning through a personal thought). Clarity is also exhibited in the establishment of the experience in long-lasting memory.
5. When a visual image is involved, there is some form of luminosity involved, whether of beautiful light or of shadowy darkness.¹⁵

Pastors should remember that the above criteria relate specifically to demon possession.

Lesser levels of demonization, such as oppression, may be present in a person's life without meeting these standards.

Although I do not recommend hastily telling individuals that they are possessed, these criteria can help pastors have the moral certainty that is needed to determine if someone they are counseling needs serious deliverance. None of this negates the possibility of God supernaturally setting someone free during an encounter at the altar without walking through this kind of diagnostic process. However, increased tools in our pastoral tool belts can lead to increased ministry confidence and effectiveness.

It should be evident when reading through the criteria contained in this document that many of them can be evaluated objectively. People often refer to strong emotional

¹⁵ Ibid. This entire segment is quoted directly, beginning with the heading, "Additional Characteristics When Present Increasing Validity." The word "numinous" means that something is supernatural in nature.

responses as demonic manifestations. Although demonic influence can cause strong emotional reactions, these are subjectively evaluated and can be mis-assessed. People may scream, shake, writhe on the floor, make guttural sounds, or lose consciousness due to demonization, but these exact phenomena may also be witnessed during times of extreme grief or trauma. Pastors are wise to exercise caution and not hastily jump to conclusions.

SESSION TWO: A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

GUIDELINES FOR PASTORS

1. Pastors should encourage their congregants to consult medical and psychological professionals when appropriate.
2. Pastors should NEVER take a forceful or coercive posture toward people who are in distress. Rather, they should work WITH those they lead to help them experience freedom and healing.
3. If someone is physically or mentally ill, helping them involve the appropriate professionals is important. However, people with an illness still need pastoral care and spiritual guidance. They may need a medical or mental health professional AS WELL AS a pastor, but they do not need one INSTEAD OF a pastor.

WHAT IS DISSOCIATION?

Dissociation often begins as a trauma response and may be understood as the human mind's way of protecting itself. When people dissociate, their conscious mind temporarily ceases to be connected to what is happening in their physical body. In some cases, consciousness splits off into multiple parts, allowing one personality to endure abuse while another personality enjoys a peaceful life. Unfortunately, these splintered pieces of consciousness do not always automatically merge when the danger has passed.

Dissociative episodes may be experienced by both demonized people and by those who are mentally ill. Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as

Multiple Personality Disorder, is one of the most severe expressions of dissociation. In some cases, DID is purely a mental health condition. However, the DSM-5 does note a possession subtype of DID.¹⁶ From a pastoral perspective, some of those with the possession form of DID may be suffering from a spiritual condition rather than a purely psychological one.

If a dissociative state is brought on by trauma, it is unlikely to pass until the sense of danger has also passed. Some pastors' natural instincts may be to shout and pray forcefully when they see someone dissociate due to the assumption that a demon has overtaken them. However, if what the person is experiencing is a trauma response, this approach may worsen it. Faith does not require volume.

DID, as well as schizophrenia and bipolar, can cause people to hear voices. Hearing voices is also a common experience among those who are severely demonized. Ministers should remember that if someone claims to hear voices, further investigation is needed. If they suspect that the person they are trying to help has a serious mental illness, ministers should encourage evaluation by a mental health professional.

Today's training alone does not qualify anyone to make mental health diagnoses. However, it should be remembered that any diagnosis, whether spiritual or psychological, requires a fuller picture of the nature of someone's suffering. It is not enough to know that someone hears voices; leaders should inquire about HOW the individual experiences those voices. Listen carefully enough to understand the fuller nature of what the sufferer is experiencing. This can help reveal whether an experience is spiritual or psychological

¹⁶ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 30.

in nature. The following chart offers some basic guidelines for differentiating between the voices heard by those suffering from schizophrenia and those experienced by someone who is demonized.¹⁷

Do You Hear Voices?

This chart draws its information from T. Craig Isaacs, *Revelations and Possession: Distinguishing Spiritual from Psychological Experiences* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2009), 119-125.

	Demonization	Schizophrenia
Voices are incoherent, like a noisy room	No	Yes
Voices are clear, more like a conversation with someone	Yes	No
Hallucinations fade over time	No	Yes
Hallucinations remain clear	Yes	No
Voices and visions are experienced as almost dream-like	No	Yes
Voices and visions have an independent quality that is as vivid as anything else in the surrounding environment	Yes	No
Voices speak about religious or moral issues	Yes	No
Voices keep a running commentary on daily activities	No	Yes
Hallucinations typically do not interfere with processing one's surroundings and experiences.	Yes	No

¹⁷ Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 119-25.

WHEN PASTORS SHOULD REFER

When people ask their pastor for help, the pastor should not hastily refer them to someone else. Pastors can always offer biblical and spiritual guidance to those they lead, even if their specific struggles are beyond the minister's professional qualifications.

However, there is a time to refer. Here are some questions to consider when making this decision:

1. Is there compelling evidence that the person's distress is spiritual in nature?
2. Has he/she had a recent wellness visit with his/her physician?
3. Has the individual experienced significant changes in mood for which there is no clear explanation? If so, it may be appropriate to encourage him/her to visit a doctor to check thyroid levels, blood sugar, vitamin d levels, or other medical conditions that can impact a person's mood.¹⁸
4. Is the individual suffering from traumatic experiences that are beyond your professional ability to help them fully process? If so, referral to a mental health professional may be an important supplement to the spiritual care that pastors provide.
5. Do you see evidence of possible mental illness? If so, consider referring the person to a qualified professional as part of your holistic care plan. Remember, always provide spiritual care, but do not be afraid to encourage those you lead to also include other professionals when needed.
6. Is the person hearing voices that interfere with daily functioning and do not appear to be associated with a spiritual struggle?
7. Do you feel that the person is an immediate threat to themselves? Depending on your professional qualifications, a referral may be needed.

A PSYCHOLOGIST'S PERSPECTIVE ON TRAUMA AND INNER HEALING

Psychologist Stephen Diamond offers significant insight into the importance of processing through traumatic experiences in a healthy way. He writes,

Some childhood wounding or trauma is inevitable in this imperfect world of ours. And such fateful psychic damage becomes our daimon—part of our destiny—

¹⁸ Mark Allen Quay, *A Minister's Manual for Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 4.

forming our character and more or less informing our future actions. In adulthood, emotional laceration may be recognized, made conscious, placed in a wider perspective and, sometimes, even healed. But “healing” does not mean forgetting, for to become conscious is to remember and to know. Healing entails the mature acceptance of the traumatic facts of one’s emotional mortification, the causes and the consequences, as well as a resolute willingness to swallow the following bitter pill: We cannot change the past nor undo the wound. Nor can we realistically hope as adults to now magically receive that which, in so many cases, brought about the original wounding by dint of its absence during infancy, childhood or adolescence. We can, nonetheless, allow ourselves to feel our rage and grief over this irretrievable loss. We have the freedom and power to determine our attitude toward the past. We may even—with some good fortune, time and grace—find within ourselves the capacity to forgive those who we feel inflicted our agonizing injuries.¹⁹

Diamond’s assertion that traumatized people should be allowed “to feel our rage and grief over this irretrievable loss” offers important insight into the role that pastors and therapists can play in someone’s healing.²⁰ Spiritual leaders and mental health professionals can provide a safe environment for people to experience and vocalize their true feelings about traumatic events. Pastors can also help by praying with them for healing and peace.

Diamond continues, “But we cannot ever expect to totally exorcise such demons. They have taken up permanent residence; turned into an integral part of us; molded our personality; made us who we are. To deny them or try to eradicate them is tantamount to self-renunciation.”²¹ Especially for this seminar, it is important to understand that Diamond is using the word “demons” differently than many ministers use it. Although I recognize demons as spiritual entities with their own personalities, Diamond uses the

¹⁹ Stephen Diamond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Paradoxical Power of Rage in Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (Plattsburgh: State University of New York Press, 2013), chap. 8, Kindle.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

word metaphorically to explain real and intense feelings and struggles that became part of the individual through traumatic experiences. Demonic entities that have taken up residence in people's lives can and should be cast out. However, Diamond's point is well taken that the personal impact of devastating life experiences cannot simply be exorcised. A process of healing is necessary. As followers of Christ, we understand that there may very well be a miraculous element to this healing, but that does not negate the importance of helping people process their experiences in a healthy manner.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT CAN BE MISTAKEN AS POSSESSION

Today's seminar includes a review of some medical conditions that can be mistaken as possession. It is wise for spiritual leaders to familiarize themselves with these conditions. They include:

1. Schizophrenia²²
2. Bipolar I and II²³
3. Central Nervous System lesions²⁴
4. Tourette's syndrome²⁵

²² Isaacs, *Revelations and Possessions*, 119-25.

²³ Paul Meier, Todd Clements, Jean-Luc Bertrand, and David Mandt Sr., *Blue Genes* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2005), chap. 8, Kindle.

²⁴ Soumya Basu, Subhash C. Gupta, and Sayeed Akthar, "Trance and Possession Like Symptoms in a Case of CNS Lesion: A Case Report," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 44, no. 1 (2002): 65-67.

²⁵ Francisco Germiniani et. al., "Tourette's Syndrome: From Demonic Possession and Psychoanalysis to the Discovery of Gene," *Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria* 70, no. 7 (2012): 547, Directory of Open Access Journals.

SESSION THREE: A SUPERINTENDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

The following space is blank to provide room for notes:

**SESSION FOUR: A CONVERSATION WITH A MENTAL HEALTH
THERAPIST**

1. How do you define mental health?
2. I previously heard you say that if possession existed, it would include the complete surrender of free will. Why is that?
3. Why do you think it is important for pastors to understand the impact of trauma, and do you have any recommendations for us when working with traumatized individuals?
4. In your opinion, what is the relationship between spirituality and mental health?
5. Schizophrenia is a condition that is often misunderstood. Can you help us understand a bit more about schizophrenia and what treatments may help those who suffer from it?
6. Suicidal ideation is common among those with untreated mental illness and among those who are severely demonized. What do you feel that ministers need to understand about this struggle? Also, how can ministers help people whose minds are focused on ending their lives?

SESSION FIVE: CASE STUDIES IN DEMONIZATION AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Case Study #1: Rose

Rose was around thirty years old when she first reached out for help. The following portion of her story is told in her own words:

Well, let's just say my growing up life was a bit crazy. My grandparents raised me. My mom was addicted and so was my dad. My grandma was very mean most times, and my grandpa was like my world; he was a big part of my life.

As far as I can remember, I have always had bad anxiety and depression. When I was younger, I was able to somewhat push it away just because I always tried to stay busy. Well, I remember when I was 19, I had a really bad year. I always was having bad thoughts. I would cut myself because I just had a voice that said, "You're not good enough," and I just wanted the pain to go away.

I turned against my boyfriend at that time, which is my husband today. I would try whatever I could to hurt him, and it's like it just got worse and it became a part of me to want him to be in pain. Several years passed, and I became an addicted meth IV user, and I just felt like the devil finally got what he wanted, me all to himself. My kids got taken, and I just knew that the voices in my head had taken over. I was gone.

I started attending church and got my kids back that same year. I did all I could do to get them back. I realized God saved me, and I was on the right track. Well, fast-forward a few years. I had a relapse with life, and I just couldn't do it anymore. The voice returned and kept pushing me. I was at a rodeo that night when I told my husband, 'I'm leaving.' I just up and left my family, my horses, and all to go find my fix. Well don't ask me how, but I guess God was driving my truck. I ended up at my church, and I remember that it was a Saturday. There's not church on Saturday, but my pastor and his wife were there for some reason..."

In addition to the things described here, Rose also shared that she had known for months that something was not right. She lost all desire to read her Bible and became angry any time she thought about going to church.

How would you assess this situation? Is it the result of mental illness, demonic activity, trauma responses, or something else? How would you offer help?

Case Study #2: Mary

For as long as Mary could remember, it had felt like there were at least twenty different thoughts in her head at once. She was frequently unable to focus, and at moments when she could, she became obsessive. Mary's mind was a very loud place. She dealt with frequent anxiety attacks, thoughts of self-harm, and suicidal ideation. Her doctor prescribed medicine for anxiety and depression, which offered some relief at times. Although these feelings were worse during her monthly cycle, they never went away.

Mary confessed to what she called "unholy thoughts" on a frequent basis, though she did not act on them. She longed for escape, which she found in video games and things of that sort. She felt numb and "zoned out" for hours at a time. Her mental state had steadily worsened for the past year.

Mary occasionally saw a dark figure inside her home and dealt with frequent nightmares. Her husband also sensed things in the home at times and made it a matter of serious prayer. One night, the power went out in their house, but the television continued playing for several minutes. The breaking point came when her husband found her curled up inside the bedroom closet, wailing and shaking. When they reached out for help, she was mostly unable to engage in rational conversation.

How would you assess this situation? Is it the result of mental illness, demonic activity, trauma responses, or something else? How would you offer help?

Case Study #3: Jack

Jack and his spouse had struggled in their marriage for many months. There was a nagging sense of secrecy and dishonesty that loomed over their relationship, and

sometimes things were said that seemed completely out of touch with reality. Their issues came to a head when it was revealed that he had been having inappropriate conversations with other people. Although this seemed out of character, it was nonetheless a devastating revelation.

During this time, Jack also became obsessed with the occult. He researched tarot card readings at length and paid to have a personal reading done. Additionally, he found himself intrigued by an ancient demon, Lillith, and sought to understand more about her. Although Jack faithfully attended church, he became withdrawn from those around him and did not feel connected to what was happening in the services.

Jack regularly heard voices, not internally, but with his ears. He felt completely detached from reality and was unable to feel anything on his skin. Literally, his sense of touch seemed to be missing. His sleep patterns were inconsistent, and it frequently seemed like he was seeing scenarios play out that were not consistent with reality.

How would you assess this situation? Is it the result of mental illness, demonic activity, trauma responses, or something else? How would you offer help?

Case Study #4: James

When asked to describe his situation, James writes,

The first time I remember seeing something that felt ‘wrong’ was at night when I was in early primary school and was laying in my bed for the night. I recall seeing my parents walking through the hall by my open door. I looked away and looked back and then saw a man standing in my doorway staring at me. He didn’t look menacing. Honestly, he looked like a member of the family. However, it was incredibly odd for a grown man to be staring at me in my bed. I threw the cover over my head, and then peaked out but he was gone.

A couple other times, I saw something floating above my head, completely black with red eyes. I have since seen more of these specific entities, and it’s interesting how similar [other people’s] stories are to mine. I recall being angry all the time and not understanding why. I was fascinated with the thought of hurting someone but would never do it because I also had a large amount of

empathy built into me. It felt like warring factions inside of my brain. I would hate myself and punch my legs as hard as I could, slap myself in the face for being ‘stupid’ or ‘worthless’. Yet, through all of this, I never knew anything was wrong. It’s difficult to know when something is amiss if it’s been around your entire life.

I’ve always suffered from not feeling good enough. This is a different feeling. It was never “voices” in my head, but nudges—nudges to look into something harmful, nudges to contemplate suicide, nudges to shoot someone. ... No one would see it coming. It would be the perfect plan. I have never even gotten close to harming another person, but I have gotten close to harming myself. It’s interesting looking back on it now. It’s similar to a pain from long ago and how numb it can feel, like an old scar that still itches from time to time. My soul aches from it at times, just like my knees get before it rains.

Although James is now an adult, his struggles began in childhood and were magnified during his teenage years. When I met him, he was a well-mannered young man that was dealing with a lot of typical late teen/young adult struggles. The only notable features that were evident outside his personal story is that he carried a lot of anger and was, at that time, living in open sin and struggling to navigate some close relationships.

How would you assess this situation? Is it the result of mental illness, demonic activity, trauma responses, or something else? How would you offer help?

Case Study #1: How Rose Received Help

Although Rose had previously been a faithful churchgoer, she was not following Christ at the time of this encounter. There were numerous counseling sessions and times of prayer, but this one was completely unplanned. I was at the church cleaning that Saturday night along with a few other people when Rose called in tears to say she needed prayer.

When Rose walked in, I was standing between two rows of chairs running a vacuum cleaner. I reached my hand out to place it on her shoulder, and as soon as I began

to pray, she was thrown to the floor and began violently manifesting. Everyone present immediately began rebuking the unclean spirit. Things escalated for the next half hour or so until the spirit began speaking through her, and she appeared to no longer be in control of herself. There was a point when we seemed to be getting nowhere. She appeared to be asleep and was responding to nothing.

Suddenly, Rose's eyes shot open. The spirit speaking through her boasted of homicidal intentions. The team commanded the spirit to be silent and began speaking to Rose about the importance of forgiveness. Within the next few minutes, it was cast out in the name of Jesus, and we led her through forgiving her husband along with some other individuals. She was free.

Rose recalls the experience in her own words,

All I remember is walking in, and it's like my body just did what it wanted. I somewhat remember pastor praying for me, and then it's like something was in me. It scared me, but I couldn't stop it. It's like vomiting, when it just keeps coming out, and I couldn't control it. I felt my body slithering across the floor. It's like I was watching myself do this, but I couldn't stop it. It was evil. It was so scary, but I knew whatever it was, I didn't want it in my mind or body anymore. I had a demonic spirit living in me, and I would not ever have thought that I would be one who did.

I'm not sure how long I was at the church that night. I just remember after a little while, I remember my pastor saying, "Do you want me to call your husband?" I couldn't walk. I couldn't do much of anything besides cry. I felt a big relief, like something that had been holding me down wasn't there anymore. The bad thoughts and the addiction were gone. I'm telling you after that day, I haven't felt the same. I feel like I have a clear picture of life now, when before it was blurry. I had a lot of hate and a lot of scary thoughts, but I thank my Jesus today for saving me! I am so blessed to know Jesus. He saved me when I was at the end of my rope.

Rose was immediately restored to functionality, freed from addiction, and to my knowledge, never returned to her formerly demonized condition.

Rose was demon possessed. She experienced significant lapses in consciousness during which a malicious personality was clearly driving her. She had moments of dissociation when she could not control her thoughts, her physical body, or her temper. Some of her closest friends and relatives recognized what she was going through and saw that something dark had taken over her. Rose's story is an important reminder of the ongoing need for pastors to engage in effective deliverance ministry.

Case Study #2: How Mary Received Help

When Mary and her husband arrived, she was in severe distress. We talked for a while, but her thoughts seemed erratic, so we prayed. While praying, the Holy Spirit showed me an image of her as a young girl, about five years old. I asked, "Did anything significant happen when you were about five?" She began weeping harder and said, "I'm not totally certain if I was five, but when I was very young, a relative touched me." After further describing the abuse, she went on to explain that from then on, she was very sexually minded and acted out in a variety of ways. She had never shared these things with anyone. This deeply rooted shame led to self-hatred, which gave way to suicidal ideation.

After praying for quite some time with no apparent change, our team commanded whatever was controlling her to reveal itself in Jesus' name. At that moment, something appeared to seize control of her eyes and facial features. It looked as if the very bone structure in her face changed, and her eyes became glassy and bloodshot.

Mary cried out, "I'm scared. I feel like I'm losing control!" As we rebuked the spirit, she began choking and saying she could not breathe. Next, she began strangling

and vomiting and became incontinent. As she screamed and wept, Mary found herself unable to control her mind and body.

We continued praying, and she screamed that she could see hundreds of eyes surrounding her. We continued commanding it to leave in Jesus' name. Moments later, the presence of God flooded the room. Mary cried out, "I see Jesus!" Immediately, she was at peace.

Concerning the moment of her liberation, Mary remembers losing control of her body and mind. Something else seemed to be taking over. She saw hundreds of eyes and dark figures surrounding her. After her deliverance, everything was quiet and peaceful inside. She felt different than she ever remembers feeling. In the weeks that followed, she was filled with joy and constantly found herself in worship. Further, the desire for escape went away as God healed the painful memories of the past and she gained control of her own thoughts. She is deeply grateful to God and overwhelmed by the love of Jesus.

Mary's situation was complex. Strong elements of trauma-based reactivity contributed to her being completely overtaken by her own emotions and memories. While she did not describe it in these words, Mary experienced frequent dissociative episodes before reaching out for help and then clearly dissociated during our time of prayer and counsel. Although demonic oppression was notably present, Mary's healing came through prayer, giving and receiving forgiveness, a personal awareness of the love of Jesus, and giving voice to things she had kept secret since childhood. The name of Jesus drove back the oppressing spirits as Mary was able to submit to God and resist the devil, as James 4 directs. The dissociative episodes ended that day.

Our team recommended that Mary follow up with a medical doctor and consider ongoing counseling for a time. Even after such a significant breakthrough, it is always wise to rule out any underlying health issues, especially since she made mention of worsened struggles that coincided with her cycles. Also, the deep traumas from her past that Mary mentioned for the first time during this session may take time to fully process, even after receiving instant relief.

Case Study #3: How Jack Received Help

Our team spent hours with Jack and his wife. We strongly suspected that he had Bipolar I. This would explain the erratic behavior and the blurring of sensual and spiritual boundaries. Further conversation revealed that he had, indeed, been diagnosed with Bipolar I when he was younger, but he was completely unmedicated. The onset of symptoms corresponded directly to the time when Jack had quit his medication.

In prayer, the Lord also revealed to us that he had suffered from sexual abuse in his youth. Subsequent conversations revealed that this was the case, but Jack had never shared it with anyone. By what can only be described as a miracle, our team was able to help Jack get an appointment with a psychiatrist within a few days. We met with him again four days after he began medication. Jack was remarkably better. We met again one week after this, and he was like a completely different person.

We did lead Jack through renouncing his occult involvement, and he tearfully repented. Cases like this one are complicated, because although Jack engaged in sinful and relationally damaging behavior, his mental health condition was a driving factor, and he was not fully in control of his own decisions. Nonetheless, these events deeply impacted Jack's family.

In the months that followed, Jack and his spouse met with their pastors multiple times for prayer and to seek healing from the traumatic events of the past. Interestingly, Jack did have a significant experience of spiritual deliverance during a church service several months later. In that moment, he felt that God set him free from demonic oppression, and he shared that his mind was quiet for the first time ever. Jack continues taking his bipolar medications and is active in church along with his family. This case underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach that includes professionals in more than one field. Biological, psychological, and spiritual needs are all very real, and healing sometimes comes through addressing all of them.

Case Study #4: How James Received Help

James did not initially reach out for personal help. Our team was working with his friend, and he came to offer support. This is his account of what happened:

When my exorcism occurred, we were actually praying for my girlfriend. She had revealed some very traumatic experiences from her past, and this meeting was meant to help her find some peace with it and cast away any demonic attachments put onto her. I vividly remember thinking, “Wow, I’m so glad this isn’t me.” Then, it was requested that I should be next because it had recently become pretty common knowledge that we had been sleeping together, and they felt this was good for me to ensure nothing attached itself to me.

They began praying for me, and I thought it was going to go like any other prayer goes—I stand there and allow others to pray over me; I’ll get a clean bill of health, and we’ll all laugh and move on. Right after this thought, I lost consciousness. I awoke in a dark world filled with vast nothingness. There was a door and a little girl. I can’t quite remember all the details of her, but I remember the feeling. Behind her, was a large Native American with an axe in his head. I grew up on tribal land and am myself a member of the Cherokee Nation. I knew who he was even though I’d never seen him. My grandfather has an old grave marker for a tribal elder on his back property. This felt like him.

I was so terrified of this enormous man that I began praying against him and forgot about the little girl. It wasn’t long before he vanished and I thought, “Why am I still here?” That’s when I saw the little girl again and knew that she was the main problem. She had been there all my life. She was a deep rot that had sat in long, long ago and was not going quietly. She was thin, pale, petite, and her hair was straight and black as night (as I’m typing this, it’s becoming more and

more difficult to remember). She spoke so calmly at first, then her face distorted and her jaw lowered far beyond where any jaw has ever dropped. She screamed and finally revealed herself.

At that moment, I awoke and found myself back in the living room that I had previously been standing in. Furniture was in different spots around the house, and I believe a chair had been tipped over. I was told that I had threatened people's lives and cursed everyone and threw furniture. I apologized but honestly, it was such a shocking experience that I don't remember much else. I felt different. If you've ever been inebriated, then you know the feeling after you become sober again and things go back to how they're supposed to be and know exactly what feeling I'm talking about. If you haven't had this experience, imagine a headache that hasn't gone away for years and then, poof! It's gone. It was such a strange and humbling experience. I had to eat crow that night because I truly thought I was untouchable—not in an intentionally vain way. Imagine having everyone you've ever met at church tell you how special you are and now you were just delivered from demonic possession. It's something that changes you forever.

The next few days were wonderful. I don't remember specifics, but I do recall feeling better than I've ever felt in my life. The anger was gone. The self-hatred was gone—completely gone. It was therapeutic, like a spa in my soul. I don't know how to explain it, but I felt like a completely different person.

James's story stands as a dramatic testimony of how important it is for pastors to engage in meaningful deliverance ministry.

Unfortunately, I was young and inexperienced when I tried to help James, and I made some significant mistakes. My approach was overly aggressive, and I was not sufficiently prepared for the encounter. During his possessed state, James picked up my sofa and threw it across the room. I allowed myself to become frightened, and rather than calmly praying and giving directions, I became louder and more emotional. In God's amazing grace, James did receive freedom, as expressed in his above testimony. However, I offered no follow-up counseling, and in my youthful ignorance, it never occurred to me that the experience was traumatic for him.

James experienced deep struggles in the years that followed, including significant battles with depression and suicidal ideation. Over time, he found healing in a variety of

ways. He is married with children and has found peace with God and with himself. James would have benefited from ongoing discipleship that helped him identify potential areas of weakness and develop healthy relationships. Thankfully, he was able to find this many years after the encounter described in this case study.

SESSION SIX: THE HEALING POWER OF COMMUNITY

The Synoptic Gospels reveal that Christ's exorcism ministry had an integrative effect on those who were delivered. That is, their deliverance resulted in greater peace with God, themselves, and others. Consider this:

1. The man in the synagogue that is tormented by an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:31–37) gains the ability to peacefully worship and learn alongside others in his community.
2. The mute demoniac (Matt 9:32–34) and the blind and mute demoniac (Matt 12:22–29; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–22) gain the capacity to more readily communicate with those around them.
3. The Syrophenician woman returns home to a sane, healthy daughter (see Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30).
4. The epileptic boy's father takes home a son who is mentally sound and no longer a threat to himself (Matt 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43).
5. After eighteen long years of suffering, the woman with a spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:10–17) experiences the love of Jesus, is valued, and healed within the synagogue.
6. Following his deliverance, the man who had the legion is sent back home to his friends to tell them what God had done for him (Mark 5:19).

What other insights from this session stand out as especially significant to you?

SESSIONS SEVEN AND EIGHT: INTRODUCTION TO THE INTENSIVE SANCTIFICATION MODEL (ISM)

BEST PRACTICES

The Intensive Sanctification Model is about far more than ministry to demonized people. It is designed to help lead people into sanctifying experiences that are both liberating and integrating, regardless of their initial spiritual condition. However, the ISM is also intended to help the demonized find lasting freedom. While preparing to lead people into freedom there are some important best practices to remember:

1. **Demonized people are not the enemy.** “We wrestle not against flesh and blood...” (Eph. 6). No matter how much a person may curse you or even try to physically assault you in a deliverance session, refuse to get angry with the individual.
2. **Be gentle.** Yelling is unnecessary and can be damaging. Pablo Bottari rightly points out that people can be traumatized by the actions of a deliverance minister.²⁶ Do not lay down the fruit of the Spirit when casting out a demon.
3. **Trust in Christ’s power and authority.** The Holy Spirit’s gifts and guidance and the Name of Jesus Christ are of supreme value in the ministry of deliverance and healing.
4. **Use a team.** Jesus sent the disciples out by twos. It is arrogant and foolish to assume that you do not need help.
5. **Remember the Word.** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7).
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Other people’s stories of deliverance are not the minister’s stories to tell without permission. Liberation from demonic power may be exciting, but it may also be a lot for individuals to process emotionally.

²⁶ Pablo Bottari, *Free in Christ: Your Complete Handbook on the Ministry of Deliverance* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2000), 91-96.

STEPS TO FREEDOM

When someone comes to a minister for help, and spiritual deliverance is needed, the following steps can serve as an action plan:

1. **Step One:** In prayer, acknowledge and celebrate the Lordship of Christ (Col 2:9, 15).
2. **Step Two:** Remind the individual of God's love for him/her and of His willingness to heal and deliver (Rom 5:8).
3. **Step Three:** Use the Intensive Sanctification Model to bring freedom and healing.
4. **Step Four:** When a demonic entity is present, command it to leave in the Name of Jesus (Mark 16:17).
5. **Step Five:** Ask God to fill the person with the Spirit and with His fruit (Matt 12:43-45).
6. **Step Six:** Follow up and offer pastoral care and teaching (Mark 5:15).

INTENSIVE SANCTIFICATION MODEL (ISM) WORKSHEET

ISM-Truth

Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31b-32). Again, He said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). The application of "truth" in the ISM is designed to lead individuals into an encounter with the truth of the word so that they can experience the sanctifying grace that is promised through these passages.

Hebrews 12 Assessment

The author of Hebrews writes,

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears (Heb 12:14-17).

These verses illustrate a progressive movement away from God.

Beginning with the admonition to strive for peace with everyone, each phrase represents a successive stage in the journey away from peace with God and others. When we stop living at peace with others, it impacts our holiness. When we compromise our holiness, it damages our view of and our relationship with God. Once our relationship with God is impacted, we are in danger of stepping outside His grace. This is when the roots of bitterness set in, and trouble overwhelms us. The next stage is personal defilement, or a sense of uncleanness. When someone feels unclean, they may be more likely to commit sexual sin or to entertain unholy thoughts. Carnal appetites take over, and tragically, the things that matter most are sacrificed. This all results in the absence of God's blessing and acceptance, and the result is a tormented state that is filled with regret.

Ask each of the following questions. Pay attention to body language as well as to what the person says, and listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit throughout this conversation.

1. Is there anyone that you are currently not at peace with? How are your relationships?
2. Are you living a holy life? If you were going to see God today, what changes would you want to make first?
3. Is there an area of life where you feel an absence of God's grace? Are there any nagging sins or situations that you cannot seem to get victory over?
4. Are there any roots of bitterness in your life? With whom do you feel angry or resentful?
5. Is there anything you feel troubled by?
6. Defilement is a synonym for uncleanness. When someone was "unclean" in biblical times, they were temporarily separated from God's house, His people, and His presence. Are you struggling in any of those three arenas? Do you faithfully gather in the house of God? How is your relationship with the people of God? Are you consistent in prayer and worship, and do you sense God's presence in your life? If the answer to any of these is no, why do you think that is?

7. Have you committed sexual sins or done things you consider unholy?
8. Do you feel driven by lust or other appetites?
9. Are there any areas where you feel a lack of God's blessing or acceptance?
10. Overall, are you satisfied with your life? Do you have any major regrets?

Mark 7 Assessment

The Gospel of Mark shares Christ's teaching about defilement,

And He said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness (Mark 7:20-22).

Depending on the circumstance, a minister might use one of these biblical assessments instead of the other. It is not necessary to use both Mark 7 and Hebrews 12 in every intensive sanctification session, as there is some definite overlap between the two.

However, they do work together to help people get a thorough image of themselves and what may unconsciously impact their relationship with God.

Jesus said that people are defiled by the things that come out of their hearts. Given the Gospel of Mark's consistent use of Levitical clean/unclean language, it is likely that he intends to portray Jesus as saying that these things can create an unclean state that isolates people from God's presence, His house, and His people. Ask the following questions, paying close attention to the person's non-verbal cues and to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

1. Do you find yourself dwelling on evil thoughts? If so, what are they? Is there a pattern to them?
2. Have you committed sexual sin? Is there any kind of ongoing sexual sin in your life? Pornography? Fornication? Sexual addiction?
3. Have you ever stolen anything? If so, did you take steps to make amends? This may extend beyond material items. Have you taken credit for something you did not actually do? Have you stolen God's glory in some way? Are you faithful in tithes and offerings?

4. Have you murdered anyone? Jesus said that if you are angry at someone without a cause, it is like murder (Matt 5:22). Is there anyone you are harboring anger toward?
5. Have you violated your marriage vows or someone else's? Have you harbored lust in your heart?
6. Are you guilty of covetousness? That is, do you regularly crave things that are not rightly yours?
7. Have you acted wickedly or in a way that you know is against God's law?
8. Have you deceived anyone? Are there any areas where you are being dishonest with yourself?
9. Do you act or speak in a sensual manner outside the boundaries of marriage?
10. Are you envious of anyone?
11. Have you slandered anyone? Do you use your words to tear others down?
12. Are you prideful? Do you find yourself boasting about your accomplishments or trying to "one up" others?
13. Are you guilty of foolishness? Do you get so caught up in lightheartedness that it becomes hurtful to others? Do you neglect things that need to be done because you are obsessed with entertainment?

Occult Activity Assessment

Although occult activity is not mentioned in Hebrews 12 or Mark 7, the Old and New Testament both have much to say about it (Deut 18:10-14; Is 8:19; Gal 5:18-21; Rev 22:15). Further, Acts 19:11-20 documents the successful deliverance ministry of the Apostle Paul, the failed attempt of the traveling exorcists to invoke the name of Christ like a magical formula, and the burning of occult books as part of the gospel's triumph over dark powers. As noted throughout this seminar, modern day deliverance ministries also consistently caution against occult involvement. It is therefore reasonable to ask people who are seeking freedom if they have past or present involvement in witchcraft and/or other aspects of the occult. If the answer is yes, then this will need to be addressed through specific repentance and renunciation.

I recommend using the Occult Activity Assessment in addition to one of the other two assessments. Ask the following questions, paying close attention to the person's body language and to the Holy Spirit's voice.

1. Do you practice any form of witchcraft, or have you done so in the past?
2. Have you made any kind of covenants or pacts that might be considered ungodly?
3. Have you attempted to gain information by communicating with spirits or with those who are deceased?
4. Have you tried to influence others using any kind of paranormal abilities or spells?
5. Have you engaged in any other kinds of occult activities that you feel should be mentioned?

ISM-Blood

The Apostle John writes, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Two verses later, he explains that this cleansing is closely related to confession and repentance. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). Intentional application of the sanctifying blood of Christ is the next step in the ISM. This is accomplished through confession, repentance, and prayer.

After completing either the Hebrews 12 Assessment or the Mark 7 Assessment as well as the Occult Activity Assessment, begin working through the answers to each question individually. The assessments are designed to identify areas where relational healing and inner healing are needed as well as to expose the need for repentance. The purpose of this next step in the process is to lead individuals into a clear encounter with Christ, allowing them to receive cleansing where it is needed. If you have not already, be sure to ask if the person is born again. This part of the process is a perfect time to lead people who are not Christ-followers into a salvation experience.

If the primary needs that are revealed through the truth assessment relate to sin, then begin by instructing the man or woman to repent, out loud, of any sins that have

been identified. As explained throughout this seminar, this is a vital part of the healing process (Jas 5:16). This step cannot be rushed. Take only one matter at a time, ensuring that repentance is deep and sincere. Next, instruct the individual to renounce involvement in that sin, asking God to break any power it holds in their life. Repeat these steps for each item on the list, taking whatever time is needed. It is better to need multiple sessions than to rush this part of the process. If there has been occult involvement, it is vital to repent of all participation and to renounce every action and every covenant or pact.

If the individual's main needs are healing from trauma or are relational in nature, it may be more appropriate to begin there. If this process reveals that the person needs to work through their life experiences in a more long-term manner with a licensed professional counselor, consider making a referral. However, at this phase of the ISM process, you want to focus on leading the individual into a healing experience through the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Inner healing is directly related to the blood of Jesus. Isaiah 53 reveals how Christ's sufferings function as a source of healing for believers—spiritually, emotionally, and physically. If emotional healing is the primary need, ask the person to tell you his/her story, focusing specifically on parts of it that continue troubling them. Your role in this moment is pastoral in nature. Be careful not to overwhelm the individual. Rather, stop throughout their story to pray for healing at the appropriate times. Help them recognize God's presence within their story.

Listen carefully for signs of bitterness and unforgiveness. If these are present, help them understand the importance of giving forgiveness as part of their healing process. It is important to be sensitive to people's experiences when dealing with this

subject, clearly communicating that forgiveness and trust are not synonymous. The Bible's teaching on forgiveness should never be misrepresented to suggest that people should endanger themselves or others. It should also be communicated that personal forgiveness does not excuse someone's actions. However, it is the common experience of pastors that people are not able to experience personal freedom until they embrace the decision to forgive those who have wronged them. Do not preach "at" people about this; instead, help them walk through the process.

Some ministers may find that it works best to work through the truth and the blood phase of the ISM simultaneously, asking one question and then immediately praying with the person about their response. Others may find it more fruitful to work through the entire assessment before moving into the time of repentance, renunciation, and prayer. The best approach may vary based on people's responses and based on the Spirit's prompting. Regardless of the order, the time of repentance and renunciation needs to be specific, and active trust should be placed in the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

ISM-Holy Spirit

If the person seeking help is demonized, it is probable that the ISM-Blood phase of this process will be met with demonic manifestations. If demons try to speak through the individual, it is not recommended for the minister to engage them in conversation. Rather, they should follow the example of Jesus, who told spirits to be silent (Mark 1:25, 34). Demonic manifestations often happen to try to interrupt the process of repentance and renunciation. Unclean spirits do not want to lose their hold on people, so they try to cause distractions.

When the Holy Spirit prompts the minister to cast out the spirit, he or she should do so immediately. However, the minister should never get drawn into a shouting match with a demon. If its grounds for being present have been destroyed, then it should leave by a simple command in the name of Christ. If it does not leave, the minister may need to return to the ISM-Blood. Regardless of when the demonized person is set free, do not neglect to fully walk them through the process of repentance. This ISM is about discipleship as well as deliverance.

The Holy Spirit's presence, guidance, and gifts are vital to the ISM. While the tools that are taught in the ISM-Truth and the ISM-Blood are important, only the Spirit can clearly identify the source of people's bondage and reveal the keys to their healing and deliverance. ISM-Holy Spirit should not be thought of as the final step in a three-part process. Rather, the Spirit oversees and directs the entire process, organizing and ordering things as He wills. Throughout the ISM process, the minister should pray in the Spirit, allowing Him to supernaturally supply insights. A goal should be for the one receiving prayer to have a personal encounter with the Spirit, allowing Him to accelerate the process of sanctification and bring lasting breakthrough.

APPENDIX F: PRETEST, POSTTEST, AND SEMINAR SCHEDULE



INTENSIVE SANCTIFICATION SEMINAR ASSESSMENT-PRETEST

Instructions: Respond to each of the statements by rating them on a scale from 1 to 5.	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I am confident in my ability to recognize demonic activity in the lives of individuals.					
2. I understand the ways that living in sin can impact the human mind.					
3. I feel prepared to guide believers into deeper levels of sanctification as part of their discipleship process.					
4. I am confident in my ability to recognize potential signs of mental illness.					
5. I can identify the patterns/actions in people's lives that may lead to spiritual bondage.					
6. I am familiar with psychological and biological conditions that can mimic demonization.					
7. I am comfortable working with medical doctors and mental health professionals to help those I lead.					
8. I am confident in my ability to differentiate between mental illness and demonic activity.					
9. I know the right questions to determine the root cause of someone's distress.					
10. I am adequately prepared to lead a demonized person through a deliverance process in a pastoral counseling setting.					
11. I can distinguish between demonic oppression, demonic possession, and other kinds of spiritual distress.					
12. I understand how liberation from evil spirits fits within the larger context of Christ's redemptive work in humanity.					
13. I understand the value of teaching as it relates to equipping believers for spiritual warfare.					

Instructions: Please indicate your credential level. If you do not hold ministry credentials, check "Lay Minister."	Lay Minister	Certified	Licensed	Ordained
	1	2	3	4
14. Credential Level				

Instructions: Check all that apply	Male	Female	Age 18 - 25	Age 26 - 35	Age 36 - 45	Age 46 - 55	Age 56 - 65	Age 66 +
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. Demographic Information								



INTENSIVE SANCTIFICATION SEMINAR ASSESSMENT-POSTTEST

Instructions: Respond to each of the statements by rating them on a scale from 1 to 5.	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I am confident in my ability to recognize demonic activity in the lives of individuals.					
2. I understand the ways that living in sin can impact the human mind.					
3. I feel prepared to guide believers into deeper levels of sanctification as part of their discipleship process.					
4. I am confident in my ability to recognize potential signs of mental illness.					
5. I can identify the patterns/actions in people's lives that may lead to spiritual bondage.					
6. I am familiar with psychological and biological conditions that can mimic demonization.					
7. I am comfortable working with medical doctors and mental health professionals to help those I lead.					
8. I am confident in my ability to differentiate between mental illness and demonic activity.					
9. I know the right questions to determine the root cause of someone's distress.					
10. I am adequately prepared to lead a demonized person through a deliverance process in a pastoral counseling setting.					
11. I can distinguish between demonic oppression, demonic possession, and other kinds of spiritual distress.					
12. I understand how liberation from evil spirits fits within the larger context of Christ's redemptive work in humanity.					
13. I understand the value of teaching as it relates to equipping believers for spiritual warfare.					

Instructions: Please indicate your credential level. If you do not hold ministry credentials, check "Lay Minister."	Lay Minister	Certified	Licensed	Ordained
	1	2	3	4
14. Credential Level				

Instructions: Please check "Yes" or "No"	Yes	No
	1	2
15. I have prayed with someone for deliverance from demonic control.		
16. I have received training in mental health counseling or coaching.		

Instructions: Check all that apply	Male	Female	Age 18 - 25	Age 26 - 35	Age 36 - 45	Age 46 - 55	Age 56 - 65	Age 66 +
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
17. Demographic Information								

Seminar Schedule

- 8:00 – 8:45
 - Registration and Breakfast
- 8:45 – 9:00
 - Introduction
- 9:00 – 9:45
 - Foundations of Liberation: A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization
- 9:45 – 10:30
 - Foundations of Integration: A Pastoral Perspective on Mental Illness
- 10:30 – 10:40
 - Break/Snacks
- 10:40 – 11:30
 - Ronnie Morris, Arkansas Assemblies of God District Superintendent
- 11:30 – 12:15
 - Jonathan Seubold, Mental Health Therapist
- 12:15 – 1:00
 - Lunch
- 1:00 – 1:45
 - Case studies in Mental Health and Demonization
- 1:45 – 2:30
 - The Healing Power of Community- Panel Discussion
- 2:30 – 2:40
 - Break/Snacks
- 2:40 – 3:25
 - Introduction to the Intensive Sanctification Model Part I
- 3:25 – 4:10
 - Introduction to the Intensive Sanctification Model Part II
- 4:10 – 5:00
 - Prayer and Commissioning

APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



RELEASE FORM

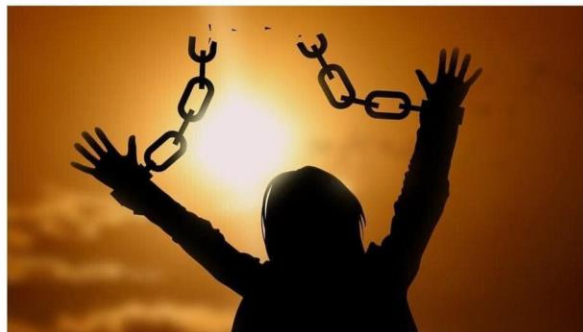
This seminar on “Liberation and Integration: Equipping Pastors to Help People Distressed by Demonic Influence or Mental Illness” is part of a research project of Robbie Willis as part of his D. Min. program at AGTS (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary). The event is voluntary and attendance in the seminar and completion of the survey is consent to participate in the no-risk research. This event will take about 8 hours. Any information obtained in connection with the seminar/survey that can be identified with you will remain confidential and in any written reports or publications, only aggregate data will be presented. Refusal to participate will in no way harm the relationship to the researcher. For more information, contact Dr. Cory Shipley, D. Min. Project Coordinator, at shipleyc@evangel.edu.

I, _____, am attending the “Liberation and Integration: Equipping Pastors to Help People Distressed by Demonic Influence or Mental Illness” seminar voluntarily and attest that I am at least 18 years of age and competent to give my consent. Further, I grant permission to use my image (photographs and/or video) taken at/during the event for use, even if it may lead to others recognizing my participation in the event. I hereby waive any right to inspect or approve the finished photographs or electronic matter that may be used in conjunction with them now or in the future, whether that use is known to me or unknown, and I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising from or related to the use of the image.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX H: SEMINAR FLYER, LETTER TO PASTORS, AND REGISTRATION FORM



INTENSIVE SANCTIFICATION SEMINAR THE TRUTH-THE BLOOD-THE SPIRIT

Equipping Pastors to Help People

- Assemblies of God ministers understand the reality of spiritual warfare. However, we are also keenly aware of our responsibility to distinguish between demonic influence and the various other physical, psychological, and spiritual struggles that can cause distress. Trauma, mental illness, and sinful compulsions prompt people to ask pastors for help. In fact, studies have shown that among those who battle mental health disorders, one-fourth choose to contact a member of the clergy. This seminar will equip leaders with tools for both accurate assessment and pastoral intervention to help people move toward holistic health.



ROBBIE WILLIS,
DISCIPLESHIP
PASTOR @LINK
CHURCH



RONNIE MORRIS,
ARKANSAS
DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT



JONATHAN
SEUBOLD,
MENTAL HEALTH
THERAPIST,
LPC-S, RPT-S



Scan QR code above
or click REGISTER to
be directed to the
registration form.

Increase Your
Capacity to
Distinguish Between
Mental Illness &
Demonic Influence

Celebrate the
Healing Power of
Community

Learn the
Intensive
Sanctification
Model of Healing

\$25/person-Lite
Breakfast, Lunch &
Snacks Included

LINK CHURCH

2424 W Clark Rd
Clarksville, AR 72830
(479)-491-4907
robbie@getlinkedchurch.org

Sept. 14, 2024
8:45am-5:00pm
Registration @ 8:00 am



Greetings Pastor,

I am the discipleship pastor at Link Church, an Assemblies of God church in Clarksville, AR. I have attached an invitation to our upcoming Intensive Sanctification Seminar, which is being held in cooperation with the Arkansas District of the Assemblies of God. Although the basic info is on the attached flyer, I want to take a moment to explain further what it is about. This seminar is the culmination of my doctoral work with AGTS in Springfield, MO.

As Assemblies of God ministers, we believe in healing and deliverance. Although we recognize the reality of demonic oppression and possession, we also know that some mental health disorders and physical illnesses can be mistaken for demonic influence. We also know that some spiritual struggles are better understood as matters of sanctification or as responses to unhealed traumatic experiences. Pastors are regularly called upon to discern these matters and offer guidance to people who are seeking help.

Having been in the Pentecostal movement my entire life and in active ministry for twenty-seven years, I have seen deliverance ministry serve as a catalyst for church growth, but I have also seen it become a source of confusion and controversy. As pastors, we know that it's possible to help without causing harm. Here are some of the perspectives I bring to this conversation:

- Ordained minister with the Assemblies of God
- Board certified mental health coach with an emphasis in suicide prevention and training in trauma-informed care
- Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Formation candidate
- Twenty years' experience in pastoral care and counseling
- Twenty-five years' hands on experience in deliverance ministry

The seminar itself is somewhat unique. It is designed to equip pastors with tools for assessment and, when needed, for intervention.

Session topics include:

- A Pastoral Perspective on Demonization
- A Pastoral Perspective on Mental Illness
- Why Does it Matter? A Superintendent's Perspective with Pastor Ronnie Morris

- Mental Health Panel with Jonathan Seubold, Director of Adolescent Services at Valley Behavioral Health
- Case Studies in Demonization and Mental Illness
- The Healing Power of Community
- Introduction to the Intensive Sanctification Model—the Truth, the Blood, and the Spirit

The Intensive Sanctification Model is a tool I have designed from Scripture that applies the truth of the Word, the cleansing power of Christ's blood, and the gifts and direction of the Holy Spirit to guide people into needed areas of breakthrough and healing. I would be honored by the opportunity to share this, along with substantial research on the relevant topics, with you and your ministry team. This link will take you to the registration page:

<https://linkchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/37/responses/new>. You can also scan the QR code on the flyer.

For those who need overnight lodging, The Hampton Inn at 2630 West Clark Road and the Holiday Inn at 2502 West Clark Road are both within walking distance from Link Church. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions. Email me at robbie@getlinkedchurch.org, leave a message at 479-491-4907 if you would like to visit by phone, or text 479-430-9608.

Blessings,

Robbie Willis

Intensive Sanctification Seminar Registration

Contact Information

First Name

Last Name

Email

Mobile Phone

Birthday

Gender

Other Information

Do you have ministry credentials?

Ministry Positions

Please list your current ministry position.

Home Church

Please list your home church

City and State

Food Allergies

Please list any food allergies below:

Registration Payment

Select zero to pay at event (skip online payment). To pay now, select the number of participants.

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