

## Demonic Possession - How Demons Take Control (Part 2)

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### How Do Demons Take Control of a Free Will Being?

God gives each person gifts and talents at birth, and the demons want to use and twist these assets for evil purposes. Some of God's gifts include a measure of faith, the ability to hear the Holy Spirit, intelligence, the ability to reason, reanalyze and remember, the capacity to love and be loved, and *most of all*, **free will** (Romans 12:3, John 16:13, Joshua 24:14,15, John 3:16, Revelation 22:17). When a person reaches maturity, God's gifts and talents enable that person to be a self-directed adult who becomes responsible to God and his neighbors for his actions.

The curse of sin mars God's gifts and talents in various ways. Each person is born with a propensity for selfishness, rebellion, and wrong-doing, and if this propensity is allowed to dominate God's gifts and talents, the results will be harmful. The demons know this so they prey on our natural propensity to do wrong. The shameful and vulgar ways of talented and gifted people today, a bulging prison population, and thousands of years of sordid human history reveal their many successes.

Demons understand the gift of free will. After all, each demon knows that he deliberately and willfully *chose* to rebel against God. Therefore, their greatest delight occurs when they can lead young people to make foolish choices because the demons know these actions can produce unbearable misery for a lifetime. The demons carefully study each of us from birth to determine how the inescapable consequences of sin can be used to ruin us. Demons are masters at gradualism; if it takes 20 years or even 50 years to ruin a person, this is not a problem. They have nothing else to do. If a well-known person's credibility and respect are ruined in later life by some defect in character, the demons are delighted! They watch to see which temptations are most effective, which natural traits of character are dominant, which opportunities where entrapment is possible, and they especially watch to see whom each person will choose for friends. One of their best tools for getting young people to make rash decisions is through friendship with bad people. The demons know, “**Bad company corrupts good character.**” (1 Corinthians 15:33) They have seen this phrase fulfilled billions of times!

The Bible indicates that demons are intelligent and they can speak their minds. (Matthew 8:29,31; Luke 4:33,34; Acts 19:15) God permits them to speak to human beings through the same spiritual channel the Holy Spirit uses to insert thoughts into our minds! The problem we have is that we cannot always identify the source of the voice. Each sinner has an imagination and can create evil thoughts because all sinners have a natural propensity for doing wrong. The demons are experts at doing wrong and they can insert their knowledge of evil into our minds. They are masters at using the power of suggestion. This power is not trivial and do not

confuse it with our own ability to generate evil thoughts on our own. Similarly, the Holy Spirit uses the power of suggestion, puts thoughts in our minds, and prompts us to obey God and do right. He also inserts thoughts that go beyond man's natural ability to think of good things to do! For example, consider the marvelous ministries of George Müller (1805-1898) or Mother Teresa (1910-1997).

I am convinced that a phenomenon called "mob mentality" occurs when demons insert the same evil thought into a mob of people at the same time. When a mob is caught up in a moment of passion, demons know the power of suggestion can become actionable and when this occurs, the result is a true phenomenon. It is as though the mob suddenly behaves as if it has "one mind." The fruit of demonic behavior is anger, hatred, violence, and destruction and when adrenalin induced anger goes beyond reason, you can be sure demons are present. Because demons are angry beings focused on our *total* destruction, we should not be surprised if their victims mirror them. In fact, the pigs in Matthew 8:32 displayed "mob mentality" when Jesus sent the demons into them and they all drowned.

Demons know our fears, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. They are masters at tempting and tormenting people. Even though demons live among us and are bent on destroying us, the Father has placed "a hedge of protection" around each sinner. Demons cannot penetrate this hedge of protection unless we willfully and knowingly do wrong. When we choose to do something evil, this hedge is momentarily removed and the demons start talking. If we continue to willfully and knowingly do wrong, the hedge becomes weaker and the demon's attacks become stronger. God has given us free will and if we want to give it over to demons, we can. Therefore, when we willfully sin, God allows a demon to insert evil thoughts and if we act on any of these thoughts, the demon will be back with a thousand more!

## **Demonic Influence and Oppression Is A Slippery Slope**

If you have been born again, you know that we live in a world that groans under the heavy influence of demons. Many people do not realize that billions of demons are hovering over us, ready to destroy. People go about their merry lives totally unaware of lurking demons because demons are invisible and we cannot see their predatory efforts and intimate involvement. People are also desensitized by the decadent state of human conduct. A pig farmer once told me, while I was gasping for breath, that if I lived near the pigs for a short time, I would not smell them. I have also had former pig farmers tell me that after being away from the pigs for a while, they cannot believe how badly they smell! This proves that whatever is usual soon becomes normal. Each day we learn through the media there are more murderers killing innocent people. Robberies, drug use, and corporate crimes are rampant; political hatred and infighting are disgusting, and sexual immorality is everywhere. This is our normal and people brush it off with, "the world is a crazy place." The devil is energizing this degenerate craziness. **"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."** (1 Peter 5:8)

There is a difference between mental illness and demonic oppression; however, distinguishing between the two can be difficult because demon possession can mimic mental illness. Of course, God knows the difference and He can heal any form of mental illness. He can terminate

demonic oppression or cast out any number of demons from a possessed person. Humanly from a medical perspective, demonic oppression can be difficult to distinguish from mental illness. Some people are sure they are demon-oppressed when, in fact, they have mental problems. Some people think they are not demon-oppressed when, in fact, they do have demonic problems. If a person thinks he has a demonic problem, he should seek a thorough physical and mental exam to make sure that a physical defect is not causing the problem.

To make matters even more complicated, there are different degrees of demonic oppression and many different routes lead to demonic oppression or possession, but the doorway is always the same: Free will. God insures that no one can be demon-possessed involuntarily, otherwise everyone on Earth would be demon possessed! In this article, I define demonic possession as a condition where the victim can no longer exercise free will. The victim has no self-control because demons have complete control. (Matthew 8:28, Mark 1:23-26)

Demonic oppression is different than demonic possession in that demonic oppression does not necessarily end with demonic possession. Demonic oppression occurs when demons begin to torment willful and deliberate sinners. Demons are able to agitate, incite, and upset their victims in various ways. For example, demons can rob a person of sleep and this one thing can create a train of physical problems. Demons will often magnify the innate tendencies of their victims. For example, a demon can make a person who has a tendency for paranoia extremely paranoid. A demon can make a person who has anger problems very explosive and violent. Demons can make people behave in rash and unpredictable ways. When demons switch these personality states off and on, mental health experts are baffled. Medication makes little difference. What can a victim do?

The detection of demonic oppression requires a gift from God. Notice these verses:

**“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”** (1 Timothy 4:1)

“To one there is given **through the Spirit** the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, **to another distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, **and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.**” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, emphasis mine)

Remember, the door to demonic oppression opens when we knowingly and willingly choose to do wrong and violate our conscience. Demons are not stupid. At first, their approach is gentle and benign because they want to work on us without us knowing it. They want us to think that their thoughts are our thoughts. Over time, the demons gain deeper access if we act on their suggestions. Demons will not stop oppressing a victim unless the sinner comes to his senses and takes a firm stand to stop doing the wrong that he has been doing. If a person resists the demons and hardens his heart against their suggestions, God requires the demons to back away. They have to respect our free will. Freedom from demonic oppression will come with a struggle and it will take time, but it does happen by standing firm for what is right!

If a victim of demonic oppression reaches a point where he realizes his true condition before God and is willing to sorrowfully repent of his sins and live by faith, God will receive Him. In turn, the Holy Spirit will give him additional strength to fight the good fight of faith! God is willing to restore and protect the free will of every sinner whether the sinner becomes a believer or not. However, God's hedge of protection only occurs for as long as the sinner will not willingly and knowingly do wrong. God generously provides this protection because He loves every sinner and wants each sinner to have the freedom to choose whom he will serve. God knows what is best for us, but we have to choose to serve Him. He wants us to put our faith in Him and obey His Word. Living by faith means doing what is right in God's sight regardless of the consequences. This is using free will for its highest purpose.

For some people, the road to demonic oppression can have an innocent and naive start. Bad friends may introduce addictive vices such as tobacco, drugs, alcohol, pornography, or violent movies and games. Given juvenile curiosity and peer pressures, many addictions have started in young people this way. For some people, the road to demonic oppression may have started with exploring the occult, sexual lust that led into sexual immorality or through abusive or unloving parents (or foster parents). Demons love to hurt children because children can grow up and hurt their offspring. Demon-oppressed parents can make a child feel self-loathing and shameful which results in the child having no self-esteem, self-worth, or self-value. Evil parents can physically, sexually, and emotionally abuse a child, causing great psychological damage, and they can cause a child to inordinately thirst for love and friendship, whether good or bad. These are just a few avenues that demons use to prey on children because they know that damaged children are vulnerable.

## Can Demons Possess Children?

In ancient times, certain physical defects or illnesses were believed to be the result of demonic possession (Matthew 9:32 and 12:22) and this is still true in certain parts of the world today. Because this was a prevailing practice in Bible times, I believe Bible writers sometimes lumped physical defects and illnesses into a general category called "demonic possession." This issue needs discussion because I believe that God does not permit minors to become fully demon possessed. I do believe that demons can insert thoughts in the minds of older children starting with early adolescence and oppress them, but only after the child has *knowingly and willfully chosen* to disobey the good that he knew to do (he exercised his free will to do wrong).

Consider this: If demons can possess children, what would keep demons from possessing all children? I know, sometimes it looks like the kids in the checkout line at Walmart have a demon in them, but that is a matter of poor parenting skills. There is a story about a little boy having a demon in the Bible. Three gospels relate the story and you have to study all three versions of the story to properly understand the situation. (See Matthew 17:13-20, Mark 9:17-29 and Luke 9:38-42.) The little boy suffered from a condition that caused him to foam at the mouth and to fall involuntarily into the water or fire. The father thought his son had a demon so he took him to Jesus' disciples because Jesus was unavailable. The disciples were publically humiliated because they could not cast out the demon or heal the little boy. Fortunately, Jesus showed up, rebuked the demon and the little boy was healed.

Whether the little boy had a physical defect like epilepsy, an unknown mental condition, or even a demon, Jesus healed him. This story is important because it reveals a profound point that many people misunderstand! A few weeks before this event occurred, Jesus gave His disciples a commission to go throughout Israel telling everyone that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus gave His disciples the power to heal sicknesses and cast out all kinds of demons to ensure their testimony gained traction. (Luke 9:1,2) Naturally, this power created quite a sensation in the towns and villages where the disciples went. So, when the father showed up with his afflicted son, he rightfully expected his son to be healed; and the disciples were totally confident they could do the job, but they were humiliated and embarrassed.

There is a simple reason for their failure. The public failure of the disciples stemmed from a hidden defect in character. While Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration – the remaining disciples were at the base of the mountain – and while waiting for Jesus to return, they had nothing to do. I believe they began discussing the miracles they had performed and the coming kingdom of God. This led to some argument about who would be greatest when Jesus set up His kingdom. Based on Mark's (Mark 9:33,34) and Luke's (Luke 9:43-48) comments, it is difficult to identify the location and timing of events that transpired that day. However, we do know that Jesus and His disciples headed for Capernaum shortly after Jesus healed the boy. (Mark 9:30) As they walked along, I believe some of the disciples continued their discussion privately about who would be the greatest in the coming kingdom of God because they were very excited about the coming kingdom and their position! However, when they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus asked **“What were you arguing about on the road? But they kept quiet. . . Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.’ ”** (Mark 9:33-35)

You have to understand that at that time, the disciples believed that Jesus was going to imminently establish the kingdom of God on Earth! (See Mark 1:15; 9:1; 9:34.) Therefore, when Jesus gave them power to heal the sick and cast out all kinds of demons, this amazing power caused them to think more highly of themselves than they should have. Jesus sent them out with this amazing power to validate a prophetic message but the disciples thought this power was a personal validation of their importance to God! Because of their arrogance, selfishness, and self-seeking (the original sins of Lucifer) they had broken their connection with God and this left them powerless and they did not realize it.

The Holy Spirit embarrassed the disciples by refusing to heal the boy when they called upon the name of Jesus! I imagine they took turns at healing the little boy and all of them failed. Later, when the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out the demon, Jesus did not mention their sin. Instead, He jumped to the point that the power to cast out demons is from God and this power is only given when God has a purpose for it. God will not be used by men; God uses men. The moral of the story is if any person is called to cast out a demon, let him seek God's will through fasting and prayer. If God informs the seeker that He will give him the power to cast out the demon, the seeker can humbly go and cast out the demon. Otherwise the seeker must report that God has not given him power to cast out the demon. He should excuse himself from the matter or the demons may beat him up! (See Mark 9:29 KJV and Acts 19:13-17.)

## **Demons Are Masters at Influencing People to Sin**

When a person chooses repeatedly, of his own free will, to knowingly and willfully violate his conscience and integrity, knowing that he is doing evil (for profit, thrill or because of peer pressure), that person is fair game for demons because there is no hedge of protection when he continues to willfully sin. (Hebrews 10:26,27) Such a person is on a road that can end without any help from God and the demons know this. So they watch for our response to temptation and when we let down our guard and *willfully choose* to do wrong, a door is opened for them to speak to us. They know how to use their power of suggestion to cause us to commit more serious sins than we would otherwise commit.

A person will often do a greater sin than he intended when demons are able to insert their suggestions into his mind. How many times have you heard a person say after his actions are presented on video, "That is not me! I'm not that way!" Each time a new low in conduct is reached, the demons rejoice. They keep careful records and they have good memories. If a sinner does not notice any immediate consequences for his wrong doing, demons know the sinner will minimize the event and soon forget it. This is exactly what they want. When the time and circumstances are right, the demons will insert another evil suggestion and if the sinner reaches another new low in conduct without any immediate consequences, the sinner becomes more comfortable with his unrealized downward spiral. This is how gradualism works. One sin opens a door for another. Soon, the thoughts inserted by the demons will drown the efforts of the Holy Spirit and this is what "the gentle giants" want. They know that everyone who sins becomes a slave to sin. (John 8:34) So, they make sin exciting, sensual, daring, and thrilling. The pleasures of sin may be many and irresistible, but the consequences are inescapable (Galatians 6:7) and they often prove to be unbearable later on.

As the old gospel song says, "Sin will cost you more than you want to pay and take you farther than you want to go." Sin is like the drug, Novocain. It numbs the conscience and causes the sinner to minimize the seriousness of his deeds. If a person does not stop violating his conscience and personal integrity and repent of his sins, the Holy Spirit will respect his free will and leave the sinner alone in his slavery. When a sinner complies with the thoughts inserted by demons, he will become increasingly degenerate and decadent. This is their purpose and goal. Over time, they strengthen their efforts.

One final point: Being set free of demonic oppression or demonic possession is not the end of the story. Jesus said,

**"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. . . "** (Matthew 12:43-45)

When a person is set free of demonic possession, he must understand that he cannot live as he previously lived. If necessary, He must abandon his previous life, friends, and family. He must totally separate himself from his past and make every effort to do what is right and holy in God's sight. He must read God's Word, hold on to God's truth, and claim God's promises,

asking for strength to do what is right or the demons will surely ambush him in a weak moment and his final condition will be worse than before!

If God did not overrule, demons would control the whole world. They have gained control of so many people that we now have the same situation that existed in Noah's day. If you want to be free of demonic oppression, then ask God for help! Make every effort to do what is right and honorable in God's sight. The Bible says, "**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.**" (James 4:7,8) If you know someone who wants to be set free from demonic oppression or possession, find someone who has spiritual discernment. He or she can meet with the victim and assess their condition. Then, they should fast and pray, seeking God's will and His power. This is not a trivial topic. We can be sure that with the Lord's help in removing the demons, they will come out fighting and shrieking as they lose their control over that person.