

Exercising Authority

Luke 10:19 (NIV)

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

We are told to exercise authority over evil spirits as part of our mission. How exactly are we to do that?

Acts 16:16-18 (NIV)

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days.

Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

Why did Paul cast out the evil spirit?

What insights can you gain from Paul's response to the evil spirit?

This type of interaction is what we call a "power" encounter. It is a straight-forward presentation of authority that commands the spirit to leave and the spirit must obey. This is needed in certain circumstances, but there are other dynamics we will now explore that may also come into play when trying to help a person long term.

Luke 11:24-26 (NIV)

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." ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes 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."

Spirits are comfortable with that which they are familiar (just like us). Once they find “rest” in a person, they establish their hierarchy, their realm of influence and control, their networks, their deception, and embed their destructive patterns in the person’s life. When a spirit leaves a person, it is at unrest and longs to return to what it had before.

In the meanwhile, with the spirit’s absence, the person put their life back in order. The spirit returns only to find the “dwelling place” cleaned up and empty. He then invites other spirits to join him in bringing destructive control back into the person’s life.

What would be needed to prevent the evil spirit from being able to return to the person’s life?

What are the implications for the slave girl if she does not acknowledge Jesus as her lord?

Simply casting a spirit out of a person is not the person’s final solution.
They need to have their dwelling place (their lives) filled by the presence of Spirit of Christ.

Is it possible for a Christ follower to be controlled by an evil spirit?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

What truths can we gain from the above passage?

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

If a person has areas in their life not fully surrendered to God, what are the implications for evil spiritual influence in this area of their life?

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Greek word for foothold: *topos* =

A dwelling place, position

An opportunity to exert power

What are some indicators that a person may be accompanied by an evil spirit?

Some red flags to watch for:

Quests for information (even if just for “fun”)

Ouija board, tarot cards, palm readings, etc.

Premonitions

Voices and visions

Spirit guides

Sustained Fears

Other possible indicators:

Ongoing nightmares

Inability to sing praises

Blank scripture pages

Drowsiness during spiritual discussions/bible studies

Mental interference during discussions about God and truth

Intense sinful feelings

Ongoing Despair

Sin patterns that can't seem to be broken

Etc.

For more insight into potential foothold areas refer to *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* by Neil Anderson.

If a Christian comes under the influence of an evil spirit, how can they become free?

This following process is what we would identify as a “Truth” encounter. It differs quite a bit from a power encounter as the goal is to identify the lie, replace it with truth, and in so doing break the hold an evil spirit has on the person’s life. The benefit of this approach is that it removes the foothold or point of permission in the person’s life so that the spirit has no grounds for returning.

Use the following scriptures to give insight in to the freedom process.

Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

John 16:8 (NIV)

When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

1) _____

John 8:31-32 (NIV)

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Ephesians 6:17 (NIV)

Take the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

2) _____

James 4:7-8 (NIV)

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

3) _____ any evil spirit that has been attached to you due to that lie

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

4) _____

**You do not have to be a victim.
You are seated on the throne beside Jesus.
You have authority over evil spirits.**

Do not let Satan fool you into believing otherwise.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 (NIV)

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

Romans 16:20 (NIV)

*The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

Days 1-4

Read through “**The Steps to Freedom in Christ**” booklet by Neil Anderson very slowly and carefully. The goal at this point is not so much to pray the prayers, but to **understand the content**.

Make sure you reflect on all the points raised and make note of any specific areas that relate to you.

Day 5

Set aside a couple of hours to go back to the beginning and pray through all the prayers in *The Steps to Freedom in Christ*. It is best to do this all at once as opposed to broken over several days, but this is not a rule.

Share with your group at the next meeting as to how the process went for you.

Was anything revealed?

Was any freedom gained in any specific area?

Was it a meaningful exercise?