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Should Dialoguing with Demons Be Used as an Approach to Setting People Free from Evil Spirits?

Many current practitioners in the area of setting people free from evil spirits practice and advocate the importance of dialoguing with demons when involved in a ministry of deliverance. Is this a practice that Seventh-day Adventists should use? What are the dangers involved? And if asking evil spirits questions in order to receive information during the deliverance session is dangerous and should not be used, what alternative methods can be used to ascertain why evil spirits have a hold on a person? These are the questions that this short article seeks to answer.

Current Practices Advocated by Many

The majority of current practitioners advocate commanding evil spirits in a person in the name of Jesus to reveal to them why they have a hold and a right to remain in the demonized person. Notice what several of them say:

Francis MacNutt, a well-known Catholic author of the book *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual*, suggests that “if it is a great help to know when an evil spirit is present, it is even more useful to know the spirit’s nature and identity” (1995:83). He goes on to say in a later chapter of the book that “while you can work by ordinary discernment—figuring out which spirits are present by talking to the demonized person or by commanding the spirits to name themselves—the ideal way (if you do not have the gift [of discernment] yourself is to have someone on the team discern (1) whether a spirit is present; (2) the identity of the spirit” (1995:155, emphasis mine).

MacNutt places less emphasis on commanding the spirits to name themselves than many others do. For example, an Adventist practitioner writing under the pen name Vaughn Allen says, “I asked, ‘Demon, In the name of Jesus Christ, tell me who you are.’ The answer came, ‘My name

is immaturity” (1993:45). Allen goes on to say that “demons do not like to tell their names. Only rarely do they reveal this information voluntarily. I believe that revealing their names weakens their power and influence. In several instances I have heard demonic voices say, “I don’t want to tell my name because then I will have to leave” (1993:46).

Perhaps the best-known evangelical deliverance specialist is Charles Kraft. He wrote *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer’s Life* in 1992 with an updated edition in 2011. He dedicates a complete chapter on the topic of “Getting Information from Demons.” In 2015 he came out with *The Evangelical’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare: Scriptural Insights and Practical Instruction on Facing the Enemy*. Both of these books place a heavy emphasis on commanding evil spirits in the name of Jesus to reveal (1) who they are, (2) when they entered the person, and (3) why they have a right to be in the person.

Kraft offers six reasons why it is helpful to get information from evil spirits in the process of setting people free.

1. Much information can be obtained that can be used against the demons.
2. The information received can speed up inner healing and lead to quicker deliverance. For example, if a demon reveals when and why they are in a person that helps the deliverance minister get to the root cause quicker.
3. Inner healing of the person requires more information than just knowing that a demon is present.
4. Forcing evil spirits to give information weakens them, making it easier to force them to leave their victim.
5. When the victim hears the demons confess their lies and how they have trapped the person it gives the person confidence that freedom is possible.
6. When the victim learns to recognize the demon’s voice during the deliverance session it makes it easier for the person to recognize that same voice if the demon comes back later (1992:165–170).

Kraft also mentions six cautions when getting information from evil spirits.

1. Don’t trust what demons say without cross-checking.
2. Since evil spirits are lying spirits, it is important to command them in the name of Jesus to tell the truth.
3. Demons are also deceitful—they often tell half-truths in order to mislead.
4. Never let demons take control of a deliverance session.
5. One of the most common tactics demons use is to bluff and intimidate in order to keep control of their victims.

6. There is no magic formula that guarantees that you can get the information you want, so Kraft suggests that each practitioner experiment to find his or her best way (170–175).

To be fair to Kraft, it is important to note that he also recognizes that information on the why and when of demonization can be gained through the gift of discernment, prayer, listening to what God is saying concerning the situation, through experience, and common sense.

Michael Bradley offers detailed suggestions for casting out demons in a person. He advocates that the deliverance practitioner should “call up the head chief demon and command him to tell you what additional legal rights there may be that you are not aware of” (n.d.). He then goes on to suggest wording to use in such a situation.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I am now calling up the head chief demon who is still on the inside of John. Head demon, I now command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come forward right now and identify yourself by the function name that you are operating on with John. Come forward right now, in the name of Jesus Christ, and identify yourself by your function name and reveal yourself both to myself and to John.

Head demon, you are now standing before the throne of Jehovah God, and you cannot and will not tell a lie before Him. So again, in the name of Jesus Christ, I now command you to come forward and tell me what your function name is and what the other legal rights are that we are both aware of that is allowing you to continue to remain in John like you have been doing. In the name of Jesus Christ, tell me right now what your assignment is with this man. (Bradley n.d.)

These are a few examples of practitioners who advocate getting information from evil spirits to help the deliverance process. In the next section I will look at biblical examples of people who dialogued with Satan or evil spirits.

Biblical Examples of Dialoguing with Demons

There are a few biblical examples of individuals entering into dialog with Satan or evil spirits. In Mark 5:1–20 and in the parallel passage in Luke 8:26–39 Jesus’ encounter with the Gerasene demoniac is recorded. Jesus commanded the demons to tell him who they were, and later he continued the conversation as the demons begged him not to send them out of the territory but to allow them to enter a nearby herd of pigs.

Also, at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and during the temptations in the wilderness he carried on at least a couple of conversations with the devil. When people ask me about these situations, my reply is that I am not Jesus. I do not know where my tipping point is, so I have decided to

draw a line and not allow evil spirits to speak through their victims, nor do I seek information from them.

Another reason why I have made that decision is that the devil and his evil angels are masters of deception and deceit. Notice how the devil twisted information to entice Eve to sin. The serpent asked, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" (Gen 3:1). What God had said was that Adam and Eve were free to eat from any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16, 17). The devil then went on to suggest that if Eve ate, she would not die, but rather that her eyes would be opened and she would become wise like God knowing good and evil (Gen 3:4, 5). We know that the devil and evil spirits are liars and are masters of deception and half-truths, so why would we want to depend on such a source for information to help people find freedom from them.

Types of Things Evil Spirits Say

Another reason why I am against dialoguing with evil spirits is the type of things that evil spirits say. They often threaten to harm the group ministering to the victim, or say things that further intimidate the victim to feel that no one or nothing can help them be free of the oppression they are suffering from. One spirit spoke through one of the victims I was ministering to saying, "You're really bugging me. Why don't you get out of here?" Why would a ministry team want to listen to such threats? I have found it better in such situations when the spirits begin speaking through their victim to just tell them, "In the name of Jesus Christ, be quiet!"

Another ploy of the spirits is to begin to reveal sins committed by members of the deliverance team in order to embarrass them and get them to quit the session. When I was in India a group of Spicer College students was conducting Bible classes on the University of Pune campus that is just down the road from Spicer. One Sabbath afternoon, one of the Bible students became demonized, so they placed him in a side room and began to minister to him. One by one they came out, heads down, embarrassed, because the evil spirits pointed out unconfessed sin in each of their lives.

The solution to this type of situation is (1) to be ready at all times to minister with no unconfessed sins; (2) do not allow the spirits to talk, accuse, threaten, or intimidate; and (3) if a member of the team is confronted with unconfessed sin, have that person pause, confess the sin, then get back to ministering freedom to the victim. Evil spirits are good at bluff and bluster. They will try to do anything to interfere with ministry that would set their victims free.

One other thing that evil spirits often say when they are allowed to speak through their victim is, "She belongs to me. You can't help her. She

is mine.” Again, why would you want to allow things like that to be said? The solution when this happens is to simply say, “In the name of Jesus, be quiet!”

Other Dangers of Dialoguing with Demons

I believe one of the greatest dangers associated with interacting and talking with demons is that there is the very real danger that in the course of going back and forth in speaking with the demon the deliverance minister may have his or her curiosity aroused by something that is said and may then ask further questions that have nothing to do with setting the victim free.

Several years ago, Vaughn Allen, the Adventist practitioner visited my class here at Andrews University. We had quite a discussion on this point of whether or not it was safe to enter into dialog with demons. About 15 minutes later as he was sharing a story of how he had ministered to a woman in Florida, the spirits speaking through the woman mentioned something about the Bermuda Triangle. He then asked the spirits if there really was anything supernatural connected with the Bermuda Triangle. I pointed out to him that he had just illustrated my greatest concern about dialog—crossing the line, asking questions that have nothing to do with setting the person free. In such a case there really is not much difference in speaking to demons than in going to a séance.

Another danger of allowing evil spirits to talk through the victim is that the practitioner opens up the possibility that he or she could lose control of the session and allow the demons to take over and dominate the deliverance session. Demons will do whatever they think they can get away with to disrupt the session. Their goal is to hang on to their victim. So, if they are allowed to talk they will use that vehicle to spread confusion, insinuate that they are strong, that they are in control, or threaten and intimidate the deliverance team.

Alternative Methods for Getting Information

Instead of depending on demons to give useful information to help understand when and why evil spirits are harassing a person I recommend several alternative methods for getting information.

Prayer

Anyone who has been involved in a deliverance session realizes the importance of prayer. There are at least three specific types of prayer that I believe are important when seeking freedom for a victim of demonic oppression. Before beginning a deliverance session I often pray a prayer like this:

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Father, as we meet today, in the name of Jesus Christ I command any evil spirit that is present in this room to leave.

I claim this place, this time, and these people for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, please send your Holy Spirit to give wisdom and discernment that we might be a blessing to _____.

Thank you for power and authority to minister in your name to release captives and bring healing.

We ask for protection in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ over everyone present, for our families, our friends, our work associates, our property, finances, our health and everything else connected with us. Thank you Father for your protection from any attack from the evil one.

If there are any evil spirits in this place, in the name of Jesus Christ we forbid them to interfere in what takes place here. Father, send angels excelling in strength to surround us with their protection.

I further forbid any spirit inside of ____ to cause any violence, throwing up, or other disturbing behavior.

Thank you, Father, for your power and authority to set people free. Amen.

(Adapted from MacNutt 1995:285).

A second type of prayer is ongoing during the deliverance session. I and the other members of the team are constantly praying and asking God to give us wisdom, to give us discernment, to help us better understand the underlying reasons why the spirits have a hold on the person. Evil spirits infest people for a reason, and unless the root causes are dealt with, even if the name and power of Jesus Christ expels the spirits, they will often return.

Charles Kraft uses the analogy of rats and garbage. Let's say I am a very piggy person. When I work in the kitchen, I just leave the garbage in the sink and on the floor. When it becomes too much, I just shovel it out the back door. Such habits soon attract rats. Now I can get a gun and shoot the rats, but they can breed and multiply faster than I can kill them. The solution is to clean up the garbage, to take away their breeding grounds.

It is the same way for people who are harassed with evil spirits. We need to do more than just set them free in the name of Jesus Christ. We need to help them identify the spiritual garbage in their lives, then help them deal biblically with the sin in their lives so there are no reasons for the spirits to return. Therefore, prayer throughout the deliverance session is focused on seeking God's guidance in determining the underlying reasons for the demonization.

A third and final type of prayer that I use in connection with deliverance sessions is a prayer for cleansing at the conclusion of the session.

Lord Jesus, thank you for sharing with us your wonderful ministry of healing and freeing captives from the power of the evil one. Thank you

for the way you have healed people today. Please cleanse us from any sadness, negativity, or despair that might have affected us. If our ministry has tempted us in the areas of anger, impatience, or lust, cleanse us of those temptations and replace them with joy, love, and peace. If any evil spirits have attached themselves to us or oppress us in any way, I command them to depart in the name of Jesus Christ.

Come Holy Spirit, renew us and fill us with your power, your life, and your joy. Strengthen us where we are weak and cover us with your light. Fill us with life. Jesus, please send your holy angels to minister to us and our families, guard and protect us from all harm and accidents, and give us a safe trip home. Thank you for your protection and care. Amen. (Adapted from MacNutt 1995:285).

Discernment

Another alternative to seeking information from evil spirits is to depend on the gift of discernment. Usually among the members of a team involved in ministering freedom from evil spirits you will have at least one member whom God has gifted with discernment. The Holy Spirit gives knowledge and insight concerning the underlying reasons why and when evil spirits took up residence in the person. This type of information is helpful and can be used to encourage the person to confess sins of the past that have opened their life to demonic influences. I would much rather depend on information given by the Holy Spirit than to take at face value anything said by an evil spirit.

Questionnaire

One of the most useful tools I have found to better understand why a person is demonized is to use a questionnaire. There are various models in the literature dealing with setting people free. I have adapted one from a book, *The Healing Touch*, by Norma Dearing (2002:156–161).

The questionnaire asks a series of 22 questions concerning involvement with fortune-tellers, spiritualism, contact with the occult through various activities, use of sorcery or magic, devil worship, witchcraft, or suicide, the use of drugs, involvement with pornography, sexually deviant behaviors, or any relationship with an abortion. Again, this type of information can be used to help a person confess, forsake, and renounce any past involvements with activities that could give the evil one a foothold in their life.

In answer to the question, Should we engage in dialogue with demons? I personally have made a decision not to do it. I believe the dangers far outweigh the advantages of such practices. I would much rather depend on information gathered through a questionnaire and from information

given by the Holy Spirit than misinformation, lies, and threats from demonic sources.

Isaiah has some good advice: “Someone may say to you, ‘Let’s ask the mediums and those who consult the spirits of the dead. With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do.’ But shouldn’t people ask God for guidance?” (Isaiah 8:19, 20a NLT)

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