

## The Powerful Word

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When Jesus was confronted by the Devil himself, Jesus put the Devil to flight by employing the memorized Word of God (Luke 4:1-13). The key to defeating the temptations of this life and the devious plot of the enemy is to wield God's powerful Word. Scripture memorization enables us to immediately recall the promises of God and to use his holy Word to defeat the enemy: "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

So too, participation and membership in a local church afford us the opportunity for intercessory prayer in the time of our greatest need. Fellowship with God's people and the preached Word of God empower the Christian life and set us on a trajectory of greater faithfulness.

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## Demon Possession & the Christian Life

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## What are Demons & What is Demonic Possession?

Demons or “unclean” or “evil spirits” are creatures that inhabit the spiritual realm and who seek to negatively influence and destroy those who bear the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

Demons are incorporeal and thus do not have a physical body akin to human beings. Like Satan (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:11-19) demons were originally beings who served God but turned to sin and rebelled. Subsequently, these evil spirits were deported from the presence of God (Rev. 12:7-12; cf. Luke 10:18) and are either in a place of torment awaiting judgment (2 Pet. 2:4) or are permitted to roam the earth as with Satan (1 Pet. 5:8). It is important to note that demons are infinitely inferior to God and are not like God. Whereas God is utterly sovereign, demons are mere creatures who are under the dominion of God.

Demonic possession is a rare condition in which an individual is given over to the control of an unclean spirit. Demon possession is more than mere demonic influence as those who are possessed have been effectively taken over by a demonic agent.

The marks of demon possession include unusual knowledge about spiritual things (Mark 1:23-24; 5:7; Acts 16:16) and erratic and violent behavior including self-harm (Mark 5:3-5; Matt. 17:15). Thus demon possession is a serious and even fatal condition that presents in a variety of ways including extreme immorality including the modern iterations of sociopathic behavior.



## Can Christians be Demon Possessed?

Fearing Jesus’ increased popularity and his undeniable miracles, the religious leadership of Jerusalem sent emissaries to spread the rumor that Jesus was conducting his healings and exorcisms by means of the power of the Devil (Matt. 12:24). Jesus responded to these claims by pointing out their absurdity since a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Matt. 12:25-28).

Following this encounter, Jesus gave an analogy for demon possession: “How can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house” (Matt. 12:29, ESV). In other words, Jesus can exorcise demons “by the Spirit of God” who is stronger than any demon. Following this discussion, Jesus explained that when a demon is removed it may return and the person could potentially be worse for it (Matt. 12:43-45).

When a sinner comes to Christ in acknowledgment of his sin and his need for reconciliation with God by faith in Christ, that person receives the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14). Christians are “born from above” or “born again” (John 3:1-15) and are indwelt by the Spirit of God (Titus 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 4:15) from the moment of conversion. God lives in the believer and thus Christians cannot be demon-possessed since no demon is more powerful than God himself.

## Demonic Oppression & the Christian Life

While Christians cannot be demon-possessed since they have been indelibly changed by the grace of God and are now indwelt by the Spirit of God, Christians can be targeted, harassed, or oppressed by demons.

The Devil and his demonic horde seek to devour Christians (1 Pet. 5:8) and raise many schemes against God’s people (Eph. 6:11). Just as Satan sought to tempt Christ (Luke 4:1-13), Satan seeks to tempt and destroy the lives of Christians.

The apostle Paul wrote of a “messenger of Satan” who sought to harass him (2 Cor. 12:7). The phrase “messenger of Satan” (Greek: *angelos Satana*) or “angel of Satan” is a reference to a demon who sought to afflict Paul and oppress him. However, Paul notes that although this demon sought evil against Paul, God intended this trial to keep Paul from becoming conceited in light of the success and impact of his ministry.

Like the apostle Paul, when Christians are striving to expand the kingdom of God and are pursuing personal holiness, we are at risk of being targeted by the enemy. For this reason, Paul instructed the Church to put on the full armor of God in order to withstand demonic oppression (Eph. 6:13-18). Remaining a student of the Scriptures, staying in prayer, and holding fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ will enable every believer to withstand the schemes of the devil.