

"Cast out Demons"

According to Mark, when Jesus chose the twelve, their three functions were to be with him, to go out to preach and to cast out demons (Mark 3:15). Jesus seems to have spent a great deal of time casting evil spirits out of people, and his followers were to do the same. We will therefore take it that this is a major aspect of the calling of believers today.

For many years, I would not have been able to make that statement. When I was at school, we sometimes had to read parts of the Gospels for homework. The references to evil spirits always surprised me, as I was not aware of them nowadays. I grew up believing that there were none around today; I presumed that their activity had ceased after Jesus left the earth.

This view was challenged in 1986 at a conference, where the speaker said that evil spirits were like germs. I suppose he meant that there are ever so many of them; you can't see them, but you can see their effects.

For most of this chapter, we will consider how the work of demons can be observed in our society, largely by means of illustrations. Once we have begun to grasp the reality of the demonic realm, we will be in a better position to consider how to combat it. The chapter will close with a few practical suggestions.

To begin with, the germs analogy is worth pursuing. Some folk are obsessed by germs. Occasionally, people attempt to go to all lengths to escape from them, only breathing air that has been through air conditioning, only touching things through sterilised cloths, and so forth. Other people can develop a mania for washing hands many times a day. However, most of us are aware that germs exist, but apart from taking a few basic precautions, we carry on with life without letting germs bother us too much.

This may be a helpful attitude to have towards evil spirits. There may be legions of them, but there are legions of angels too, and God is so much greater than any evil spirits that if we have God on our side, we do not need to worry. Jesus once said that he cast out demons "by the finger of God (Luke 11:20)". This suggests that demons can be flicked away, by God at any rate, like a crumb off a tablecloth. Believers too are to trample down snakes and scorpions, assured that nothing will hurt them (Luke 10:19). There is no need to get obsessed by demons, or be fearful of them. They are just part of the world we live in, and to be dealt with as they occur.

However, having said that, in the case of germs, we are aware that if we eat properly and take good exercise, then we will be fitter and healthier than if we don't. Germs will have less hold on us. Similarly, those who have a good daily spiritual diet, and who take godly exercise, as it were, will have less trouble with demonic problems than those who are lax (1 Tim 6:3-10).

From time to time, I am called on to clean up a foul germ-infested mess in the home. I put rubber gloves on first, and wash my hands thoroughly afterwards, and generally use plenty of disinfectant to be on the safe side. So with demons, the fact that we are promised protection from them does not mean to say we should be casual about them. They are nasty things, and are to be treated with respect.

Nevertheless, although I don't go around looking for opportunities to clear up a nasty mess in daily life, I don't shrink from it if one occurs. If I did, the problem would grow worse, and the whole house would begin to smell. Flies would begin to gather, and I suppose in due course, if no steps were taken, unwelcome animals might be attracted and even start moving in, and the house could eventually become uninhabitable. So with demons. It is not helpful to overlook them; the secret is to deal with them before they establish a thorough grip on our lives.

Most people are aware that it is unwise to live in an unhealthy environment. Friends of ours once bought a house by a pond which looked lovely on the right day, but which often had mist hanging over it in winter. Not surprisingly, a tendency for bad chests became worse rather than better. That particular couple would have done better to live somewhere else. Similarly, if believers choose to live in situations that are spiritually unhelpful to them, then they should not be surprised if they end up with demonic problems.

This brings us to a final insight from this germs analogy. I believe it is true that every time we breathe in, we take in bacteria. Normally, there is nothing for these germs to grip on, so they leave just as quick as they come, as we breathe out again. However, a person with a weak chest like my friend, or someone with a poor immune system, or who is run down health-wise, will be at greater risk. So it is in the spiritual realm. To give an example, one person may be able to turn past the horoscope page in a magazine with no difficulty at all; he hardly notices what the page contains. However, another person who has dabbled extensively in fortune telling and the occult may have a very different response. He may experience a great temptation to read his horoscope as he glances at the page. So believers do well to be aware of their weak areas, and be wise in their choice of activities.

To give another illustration, when I was younger, I used to be worried that a pusher might approach me with drugs. A friend once told me not to worry; no-one who dressed in the conformist way I did would ever be offered drugs. Pushers would know from the way a person dressed whether he would be a good candidate for drugs. His words proved true; I have never been approached. My clothing was my protection. This idea has been applied to Christians by Paul; believers can decide what attributes to wear as their clothing, as it were (Col 3:12; contrast Ps 73:6).

To speak bluntly, some people, by the way they behave, are virtually inviting demons to come and take up residence. As Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Gal 6:7-8)." Note that the deception works both ways. We tend to think we can get away with behaviour we know is wrong, that it will have no lasting effect on us. In fact, if we go down that road, we end up addicted. Similarly, it is sometimes easy to think that all the effort we put into behaving well is doing us no good. This too is untrue; if we keep at it, we will reap a harvest of righteousness in the end (Heb 12:11, James 3:17-18).

We see, then, that to some extent, we can encourage or discourage demonic activity in our lives by our own choice. However, this is not the end of the story. In the same way as some people are born with deficiencies which make them prone to illness, so some people may be more of a target for demons than others. Sometimes too, people get taken over by events before they are even aware of what is happening. And the book of Job tells of someone intensely harassed by Satan who had done nothing wrong at all. So while sins committed may be an invitation to demons to enter, not all demonised persons are in that state because of sins committed. Some people can be affected by demons because of their parents and ancestors, for example, and have not yet learned of their rights to be free of these curses (Gal 3:13-14). On other occasions, there appears to be no explanation for people's demonic problems.

Jesus once compared a demonised person to a house which has a strong man in it (Luke 11:21-22). While the title deeds state that number 24 Redway Gardens belongs to Mr. Smith, the stranger standing in the living room with a loaded sub-machine gun suggests a very different state of affairs. Whose house is it now? Mr. Smith will only enjoy his right to the house again when a stronger man still comes and sets him free. We might wonder who is to blame for this state of affairs. Although Mr. Smith may have been at fault - perhaps he left the front door standing wide open for hours or even days, he might also have had the house well secured, only to find the intruder breaking in (Matt 24:43 cf John 10:1 & 10).

Anyone who feels that they are no longer in control of their own lives can appreciate what Jesus meant by his story of the house taken over by the strong man. Problems can become too large to cope with. What began as a flirtation has ended up as something that cannot be let go. We often use the phrase "playing with fire" of such activities. Fire in its proper place, firmly under control, is useful, but if the fire is out of control, it effectively controls us. Once again, we notice that the problem may not have been our fault in the first place, and the fire may have been started by someone else.

We notice that both the occupied house and the raging fire share one feature, namely that the switch between the two states can be rapid. After a period of growing threat, control passes swiftly from the house-owner to the strong man. A fire that is thought to be under control one minute can be master of the situation the next. How many people there are who thought they were indulging a whim one moment only to find themselves in bondage later on.

In our attempt to understand a demonised person, we will focus on this issue of control. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control (Gal 5:22). A person who has self-control has freedom to choose what he does. One of the aims of Satan is to remove our self control, and put us into bondage instead. The bondage could be to other people, to habits, to patterns of behaviour that get the better of us, to fear of death (Heb 2:14-15), or whatever. The list is endless. Put simply, a frequent characteristic of a demonised person is that he does not have freedom to choose what he does. Jesus came to undo the devil's work, by setting people free (Acts 10:38). His followers are to share in this task, sent by Jesus just as he was sent by the Father (John 20:21).

Setting people free recalls the book of Exodus. Earlier, we quoted Jesus' remark to the religious leaders that he cast out demons by the finger of God. We will take it that he was addressing them as people who knew their Scriptures, and would recognise his remark as a quotation from Exodus. When Pharaoh's advisers were confronted by a plague from God, they acknowledged that this was the finger of God at work (Exod 8:19). In other words, Jesus was effectively saying to his audience, "If you want to understand what is going on when I cast out demons, then read Exodus".

We will attempt to give a brief overview. The Book of Exodus, taken as a whole, suggests a helpful parallel to deliverance from demons. The Israelites were in slavery, through no fault of their own (Gen 46:1-7, Exod 1:6-14). God took pity on them, and chose the reluctant Moses to deliver them. Moses learned to speak the words of command that God gave him, and because God backed the words by powerful acts, the Egyptian taskmasters were forced to release their slaves. The process took some time. There was a powerful climax, in which the power of God was clearly seen, when the people went through the sea dry shod, while their oppressors were drowned. They were free! However, that was not the end of the story. They were delivered into a desert, in which they had to learn to survive by the word of God alone, and learn how to walk in God's laws. The golden calf episode showed that despite their deliverance, they still had a struggle getting free from the foreign gods that had held them captive; although it had looked as if they were merely the captives of men, they had actually been subject to spiritual forces (Exod 12:12). They then had to learn from God what their real worship or service was to be.

It seems to me that every stage of this process has its parallel in delivering someone who is severely demonised. It can take many years before the person is ready to admit that they need deliverance. Getting free can involve a struggle, and be a long process. People are not delivered just so they can relax; once free, they have a lot of learning to do, and new patterns of life to establish, as the Israelites did. Although a human agent may be involved, people are delivered by God, who has a purpose in mind for them. This purpose is over and above any problems of readjustment they may face once they are set free from a destructive pattern of living. The golden calf episode reminds us how easy it is to slip back into the old ways. A person delivered from demonic problems has then to learn to rebuild the house of their life on the secure foundation of acting on Jesus' teachings (Matt 7:24-25). All this takes time and effort.

In the early days, the Israelites wished more than once that their deliverance was not happening, as the task masters were more harsh with them once Moses was on the scene than before (Exod 5:4-9). So today, it can be tempting to sidestep the issue and leave the demons in charge. When major problems surface that seem too big to deal with, some people try to survive by damping themselves down with pills, or by going in for strict regimes of self-discipline. This may be all very well, but we should not confuse it with true deliverance. When a demonic stronghold is broken, then there is true freedom, rather than the appearance of freedom that can sometimes result from long-term medication, or rigidly enforced efforts of will-power over a habit.

In discussing the Exodus, we have been considering severe demonisation. Nothing is too great for God to deal with. But many demonic problems are slight by comparison. As with germs, which vary from trivial to life-threatening, there seems to be a wide range of demonisation.

I find the garden image helpful here. Paul said that the life of a believer is like a field or garden (1 Cor 3:9). It would be nice to think that there were only flowers and fruit trees in the garden of our lives. In practice, all gardens need weeding. Weeds vary, from something a child could pull out, to extensive underground root systems. Some weeds look nice, but are dangerous, like deadly nightshade. As an occasional mower of lawns, I have learned that the beautiful-looking, apparently innocent dandelion seed, wafted romantically over the hedge by the wind, is lethal for the lawn if left unattended. In fact it is striking how the dandelion plant sends down a tap-root. If you pull them out when they are still small, the root generally comes out. But larger plants tend to break away when you pull, and the root stays imbedded. Going over the top of dandelions with the mower is all very well - at least the flowering stems are removed, but the plant soon grows up again.

If I am honest, I am lazy when it comes to gardening. Small wonder that a year or two back, it crossed my mind to rename our home "Dandelion House". The thought in the back of mind is that I could probably get the place dandelion-free if I chose to, without too much effort, but so long as they don't take over, I will live with them.

Such thought patterns are fatal in the area of bad habits and demonisation. Satan loves to lull us into a sense of false security. Believers with this kind of approach to their lives will never be much use as soldiers in the army of God (2 Tim 2:3-4).

My casual approach to the lawn is the first stage of a process. We all know what happens to a garden if it is let go for a long time. Some years ago, we applied for an allotment, and were surprised at the prompt response from the council. We could have allotment number five on a certain site. We went to look. It turned out that number five was at the far end of the allotments. As we made our way down the numbers, 39, 37, 35 and so forth, I noted what good shape the gardens were in. But when we reached 5, I had difficulty in even identifying it. 11 had been marked, so this must be 9, and that 7, but where was 5? We presumed that it was so overgrown with couch grass and long-stemmed weeds that the paths and borders had disappeared long ago. Untamed forces of nature had taken over.

Part of the reason we had trouble identifying number 5 was because of the woodland beyond it. Surely there should have been allotment numbers 3 and 1? On closer inspection, we noticed that beyond a number of well-established trees and bushes, there was an old wall, almost invisible in places, but discernible. Clearly, the thicket in front of us must have been allotment numbers 1 and 3 many years ago, but now the word 'undergrowth' would be an understatement for what had taken root there. It occurred to me that foxes might be living there now, and perhaps other more hostile animals. I wasn't sure how comfortable it was going to be working on number 5, unless I had a shot gun loaded and cocked on the ground beside me.

The Bible sometimes refers to cities being deserted and turning into ruins, becoming the haunt of wild animals (eg. Jer 50:39-40). This may be a helpful picture of a demonised person. Sadly, there are too many people around, whose lives might be described as having gone to rack and ruin. How good that in the passage Jesus quoted at Nazareth about his ministry in Luke 4, God promises to restore the ancient ruins, and to cause righteousness and praise to come up like a young plant (Isa 61:4 & 11).

We stood and stared at allotment number 5 for a while, before finally deciding to pay the first quarter's rent. I bought a bottle of expensive weed killer, and sprayed it on. When we returned after some weeks, it was clear that this had made no impression whatever. However, in the meantime, what looked as if it might be number 4 nearby had been transformed. Someone had converted thick couch grass similar to ours into a square plot of well-dug bare earth; the circular patterns in the soil indicated that a rotary digger had been hired.

We finally decided to give up on our allotment. Presumably, number 4 made a success of it over the coming months. The difference between us was in the equipment. There had been nothing wrong with my weed killer, but it was inadequate. I did not use the right tools for the job. And I did not have enough enthusiasm to get going on the project. Maybe the council were able to re-let the plot to someone else.

The pictures of germs and the strong man that we discussed earlier, suggested a sudden invasion of a life by demons. The allotment suggests a gradual, creeping growth of a demonic stronghold over the course of years. Couch grass does not overtake a garden overnight. To give an example, we referred earlier to the statement "Envy rots the bones (Prov 14:30)." This, surely, is not an initial pang of envy, which we all feel from time to time, but envy persisted in year after year. Such an attitude is an invitation to demons to come and take up residence, little by little at first, then more and more as the stronghold gains a grip. Occasionally we talk of someone as being eaten up with envy. This strikes me as an instance of demonisation; there is an evil spirit at work in such a person, which needs to be cast out.

There are two sad observations to be made here. Firstly, some people seem to be content to stay in a state of this kind, maybe still bitter over something which happened decades ago. They would not want to be set free; they don't even recognise it as a problem. Perhaps they have become used to it, and learned to live with it.

Secondly, if we reflect on the allotments briefly, why didn't the other allotment holders do something about the growing threat from numbers 1 and 3? It was in no one's interest to have a breeding ground for foxes developing on the site. I suppose the answer is that everyone was involved only in their small patch.

This mentality too can be seen in churches. All too often, there has been a failure to get involved where the world is most hurting. Too many churches have been content to leave the homeless unemployed out on the streets rather than do something to help, for example. I don't believe it is an exaggeration to say that since the second world war, our society has become progressively more demonised (Matt 12:45 refers to a demonised generation). We seem to be surrounded by a rising tide of problems that are growing out of control. Are Christians and churches going to get our hands dirty cleaning up the mess in the coming years, I wonder? The longer we leave it, the greater the task, it seems to me, and the greater the temptation to ignore it.

Dealing with the overgrown allotment parallels a struggle to get someone free from major problems. By now, we may be tempted to not even start. We need to recognise that this ministry can be demanding. However, it is not all daunting. Demons can go quickly and easily, as I once discovered. The first demon I cast out of someone else was by accident. Steve had come to the rail for prayer at the end of a service, for no specified purpose. He preferred not to talk about his situation. I placed my hand above his head, and was praying quietly in tongues wondering how to proceed, when Steve started yawning strongly. This kept on for some time. My reaction was one of astonished delight; demons were leaving, I presumed, and I had discovered by accident that even I could cast them out. Afterwards, he explained that at present, every time he went for prayer, he found he did a lot of yawning. He was pleased, and thanked me.

Following our gardening analogy, there are generally small weeds that anyone can pull up. I suppose I had been doing that for Steve. But there are bigger things that require much more effort. The principle is the same, namely get them out, root and all (Luke 3:9), but the more entrenched the weed, the harder the work.

George runs a landscape gardening business. He was once asked to quote for removing a tree from a front garden. He heard nothing more. Some months later, George met a friend in a pub. "Do you remember quoting for removing a tree?" asked the friend. "I think you'll be hearing from that lady again." So it proved. George was given the job after all. When he and the team arrived, they found a large hole had already been dug, and some roots severed. It transpired that another firm had put in a lower quote, and been accepted. However, after they had arrived and sweated away for a morning, they finally said they could not do it, and went off. So George and his team, with the proper equipment, soon had it down, as the job was already part done.

Jesus appears to have sorted out the most horrendous cases of demonisation easily, such as the man known as Legion (Mark 5:9). As a beginner, that has not been my experience. In early days, I remember being physically exhausted for the rest of the day, after a session casting out spirits from a Christian, who was committed to the process. I have also experienced ministering to someone as part of a small team with great energy, with no apparent results. But on other occasions, demonic powers seem to have left someone with little persuasion.

I find the comparison with weeding the garden helpful. We can use the tools available, like the power of the shed blood of Jesus, and the name of Jesus, and statements in the written Word of God, and impressions we receive from God (Eph 6:17). There are books to read on these matters.

Praise is also a powerful weapon. One Sunday, the sermon had been on praise getting Paul and Barnabas out of prison, itself a picture of deliverance (Acts 16). Later on, something left someone who received ministry after the service, simply through praise. We found ourselves gently singing a current praise song over and over again.

"All you angels round his throne, praise him
All you creatures on earth below, praise him
Oceans wide and mountains high, praise him
Beasts of the field and birds of the sky, praise him
Give him praise!" (Marc Nelson, Mercy Publishing, 1989).

We sang it with authority, with deliverance in mind - this nasty thing, whatever it was, had to join in with giving praise to God, or leave. It went. Demons will not hang around long in a life full of praise.

We can do what we feel comfortable with in one session. However, people seldom clear a whole garden in one day. But although it is sometimes tempting to think that nothing is happening, it is a mistake to give up. Often the biggest bushes to be got out of an overgrown plot can only be reached by pulling out smaller stuff in their way. And getting out the smaller weeds is good practice for the larger ones to come. A really tough root might take several sessions of digging round, pulling this way and that, before it finally comes out with a rush. But it will come out in the end.

Some may consider that this gardening analogy has been over-pressed. However, it has biblical allusions, at least. Jesus said "My Father is the gardener" (John 15:1), and was himself mistaken for a gardener when he rose from the dead (John 20:15). We note too that in the garden of Eden, in the story of creation, God gave man dominion, or control, over nature. At the fall, as a result of his wickedness, man was told that creation would now produce weeds and briars and thorns. It has been pointed out that in drug addiction, rather than man having dominion over weeds, a weed has dominion over man. Deliverance ministry is of real help to those ruled by drugs. It is as if believers are called to re-cultivate the garden of a person's life. So I believe that gardening is a helpful metaphor to pursue.

Maybe it would have been better to have considered snakes and scorpions in this chapter, being the words of Jesus, but there are good reasons against this. For a start, I am entirely ignorant of snakes. I am aware that in the UK, we have harmless grass snakes and poisonous adders, but as I don't know one from the other, if ever I meet any snake, I will run away from it without hesitation.

This is one problem with demons. The instinctive reaction of most readers will be to want to have nothing to do with demons at all. But this is not an option for believers, once they grasp that Jesus has called them to cast out demons. So a gardening analogy, which is likely to be familiar to most readers, seems far less threatening.

This is not to ignore the serious nature of the deliverance ministry. Gardening, after all, can be dangerous. A Christian lady once felt a thorn go in under her nail while she was pulling up weeds. She thought no more about it. When she woke up next morning, her whole arm was aching. The doctor diagnosed septicaemia, and put her on strong antibiotics. If she had ignored her pain, she might have had very serious problems. Most people are aware of such dangers, and wear strong gardening gloves; but they don't allow the risks to stop them from gardening altogether.

I imagine it is the same with snakes. People who live in a country where there are lots of snakes learn how to deal with them, and they become less of a threat than they would be to people from the UK.

Perhaps a helpful comparison in our culture would be catching lobsters. I once heard that if you wish to seize a lobster by the neck, then go for its tail. This is because its instinct is to go backwards through the water, when attacked, and grip the attacker with its strong claws. If you aim for the neck, you will encounter the claws, but if you aim for the tail, you will catch hold of the neck.

Personally, I have no intention of trying this yet, for two reasons. Firstly, the information came from a member of my family, and not an expert, and nearly twenty years ago at that. I am quoting from my memory, which I do not fully trust. Secondly, I have never seen a lobster caught in this way. If I had seen the trick done a dozen times, then I might feel differently, and be willing to have a go, provided I had gloves on, and there was someone there to encourage me.

So with deliverance. There is plenty to put us off getting started. The issue at the end of the day is one of obedience. How much love do we have for people? If we believe that Jesus has committed power and authority to his followers to cast out demons, then we will be prepared to get involved in this ministry, no matter how distasteful, weird, frightening or exhausting it seems to be.

Further, we will not allow ourselves to get discouraged. This is another point to be drawn from Exodus. Every few chapters in the story, there were good reasons for Moses and the Israelites to give up altogether. The promised land seemed impossible to reach. But like God in Exodus, love never gives up (1 Cor 13:7). Love holds out its hands all day long even to those that oppose it (Rom 10:21). This is the call to those who would be Christians. If we choose to neglect deliverance ministry in our churches, then we will find that we have little to offer to those with problems in alcohol, drugs, prostitution, crime, fear, personality disorders, and so forth. I list these as people whose lives feel as if they are no longer under their own control, as we discussed earlier. Such people will conclude that the church cannot help them.

A third source of ideas for understanding the nature of the deliverance ministry today came to me in a dream, which I had on two occasions. In the first dream, I was in the bathroom. The bath was covered with something like hatching frogspawn, all up over the sides and everywhere, and clearly needed a good clean. Then I realised there was also a crocodile lying in the bath. The dream ended. A few nights later, I dreamt of cleaning down the work-surfaces in the kitchen with a cloth, presumably with some disinfectant on it. Then I stepped back, and noticed that there was a crocodile under the work surface. This had been lying there quietly, but now it had been spotted, it began opening its jaws at me.

There seems to be some spiritual applications here. To begin with, it seems that while some demonic problems are easily dealt with (the frogspawn), others are not (the crocodile). Our gardening analogy helped us see that much deliverance can be achieved by ordinary Christians, without special gifts. The dreams show that there is a more serious dimension. They suggest that there may be hidden powers "under the surface". Personally, I would not like to tackle a crocodile without training, equipment, and others helping. As Scripture puts it, "If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again! (Job 41:8)." So if you encounter problems, don't be shy of calling for help.

The aim of this chapter has been to open people's eyes to the demonic, rather than to provide a deliverance methodology. However, we will end with some practical suggestions. Firstly, only Christian believers should attempt to deliver someone (Acts 19:13-16). Also, they should only attempt to deliver other believers from demons, at any rate to begin with.

When involved in this work, believers need to have their armour on, as detailed in Ephesians 6:10-18, and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. I take this to mean that they are determined before God to be totally truthful, thoroughly righteous, etc. I remember a speaker advising us that it is no good for a man trying to deliver a lady from demons, for example, to allow himself to be attracted by her body at the time. He will simply end up with demonic problems of lust himself.

Wherever possible, work in a group of 2 or perhaps 3. Before starting, pray for protection for yourselves and all the members of families. On ending, see to it that all confidential information is left with God and not taken away by anyone. You can pray along these lines; "Father, we put all that we have discussed back in the file, and replace it in your filing cabinet, and we sever all links between ourselves that may have come about through this session, in Jesus' name." Problems are shared for God to deal with them, not for believers to carry away with them (1 Peter 5:7).

The gift of the discernment of spirits is highly useful (1 Cor 12:10). In some of the most productive sessions I have witnessed, the person being delivered had this gift, and would announce the name of the next spirit to cast out. We then commanded this spirit to leave, and after manifestations, it went. But it would be a mistake to hang back from deliverance because of not having this gift. I have found that as we wait on God, one member or other of the group will receive an idea of how to proceed, which generally bears fruit, but not always. Our attitude is that we are all learning together. Further, we discussed earlier that you cannot establish whether you have a gift for teaching until you have done a considerable amount of teaching. So the thing to do is to get started. Jesus did not say "If you have a gift of the discernment of spirits, then cast out demons"; what he said was, "cast out demons". So by all means begin, even in fear and trembling (1 Cor 2:3). Don't feel you have to be a "Croc Dundee" level believer before you can become involved.

By 'cast out', I understand Jesus to mean giving a word of command. We discussed how to use our authority in an earlier chapter. If you need a formula to get you started, then how about "Evil spirit, I command you to leave ... in the name of Jesus". Keep insisting until it goes. (Remember the stubborn plant).

If there has not been absolute and full repentance, for example from adultery, then a spirit of adultery will not leave. If the person has not turned from every aspect of the occult, then the evil one has a right to stay. So we need to keep checking the basics, in ourselves and in the one being delivered.

If you feel uncertain, but want to take the material in this chapter seriously, then my advice is to start with yourself. This is to resist the devil, as believers are told to do (James 4:7). Read Graham and Shirley Powell's book, *Christian Set Yourself Free*, and act upon it (Sovereign World, Tonbridge, 1983). It will be time well invested; in my opinion it is the most useful Christian book I have ever encountered.