

Deliverance Ministry

A Consensus Statement from Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Historic Evangelicals

Drafted by Gerry Breshears, Ph.D.

Presented on video by David Feddes, Ph. D.

If you take the Bible seriously, you take demons seriously. And if you take demons seriously, you need to know how to drive them out and resist their attacks. You need a biblical understanding of deliverance ministry. If you're a Christian leader, you will meet people who need deliverance ministry, whose lives have an enormous influence from a demon and whom you need to bring the authority of Jesus to bear against the activity of the demon in their life.

Deliverance ministry is urgently needed in some situations. But some ideas about deliverance ministry stray far from the Bible, and some ways of practicing deliverance ministry can do dreadful damage. Recognizing this, a group of pastors and professors got together to discuss spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries. Participants in this group came from various church backgrounds: charismatic and Pentecostal, as well as historical evangelicals such as Baptist and Reformed. They have different opinions about some things, but together they found agreement in a great many areas about deliverance ministry.

Dr. Gerry Breshears, a professor at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, put their consensus statement into writing. What I'd like to do is read through that statement, and as we go along, I'll offer some comments of my own.

God reigns supreme

God reigns supreme over the whole universe, governing it to His ultimate glory (Ps. 33:10-11; 103:19; Isa. 14:24-27; Eph. 1:11). He decisively defeated the powers of darkness, disarming and triumphing over them at the cross (Col. 1:16; 2:13-15; 1 Pet. 3:22). God is ultimately in charge of all affairs of His universe and we are not to fear a satanic victory (Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:20-22).

When we speak of deliverance ministry, we do so based on the fact that God has already won. And we don't think of this as a battle between equals, God on one side and Satan on the other side as a nearly equal power. God is supreme, and God is triumphant.

Demons are real

Satan and demons are frighteningly real. They are personal, evil, supernatural spirits. These fallen angels are at constant warfare against the cause of Christ and His church. They are subtle, crafty, malicious, and unrelenting in their attacks. One cannot reduce the demonic in Scripture to primitive explanations of psychosis.

There may be some who try to psychologize everything and say that there are no malevolent personal spirits that cause trouble in people's lives. But that is not biblical. Demons are frighteningly real, and we must be able to face that reality and address it.

Countering demonic power

As prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2), Satan exerts his power against believers and unbelievers. Jesus Christ advances His kingdom against that of Satan through a combination of prayer, evangelism and edification. Believers share in His victory and authority over demons (Col. 2:9-15). In the case of demonized persons, exorcism is one means of accomplishing this kingdom purpose (Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:1-11).

As we think of deliverance ministries, Jesus' kingdom advances primarily by what we might call ordinary things—prayer, evangelism, spreading the gospel, and building up believers. This is vital. We shouldn't try to get fancy and think there's always going to be a sensational exorcism wherever the kingdom of God advances. But sometimes, exorcism is one way of driving back demons and advancing the kingdom of Christ.

Spiritual warfare

In spiritual warfare believers seek

- *to redeem unsaved persons from the realm of Satan by proclamation of the gospel (Acts 26:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:4-6);*
- *to resist demonic assault against themselves and the church by submitting to God, standing firm in the faith, and putting on the armor of God, i. e., prayerfully practicing the essential disciplines of spiritual growth within a local body of believers (Eph. 6:13-18; Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Pet. 5:6-9).*

Not everybody is possessed by a demon or has a demon living in them, but they're still in the realm of Satan and under his domination if they have not come to know Jesus Christ. So a big part of spiritual warfare is simply calling unsaved persons through the proclamation of the gospel.

Belonging to a local church, daily praying, reading the Word of God, occasionally fasting, having times of silence and solitude, and spending time with the Lord—as well as engaging in evangelism and service—these are all methods of spiritual warfare and spiritual growth. The healthier you are in Jesus, the less able the demons are to succeed in assaulting you.

Demons can't possess believers

At conversion God redeems people, transferring them out of Satan's realm, the dominion of darkness, into Christ's realm, the kingdom of the beloved Son of God (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). At the time of conversion, they become children of God, fully justified, fully forgiven, sharing the inheritance from Christ... Therefore, believers in Jesus Christ are never possessed by demons, i. e., are never the property of Satan and his minions, are never totally controlled by an evil spirit.

If you have come to Jesus Christ and truly put your faith in him, you are never owned by the devil again, and he never has total control over you. So in that sense, demons can't be said to possess someone who is a follower of Jesus Christ.

Demons can assault believers

Some say that believers are immune to demonic assault. The examples of Jesus and Paul as well as such specific statements as 1 Pet. 5:8 prove this a fatally dangerous lie.

1 Peter 5:8 say, "The devil goes around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." So it's a fatally dangerous lie to think believers are bulletproof, or that the devil doesn't even come after them anymore, or that his demons never attack people who belong to Jesus. That's just living in La La Land. The Bible constantly warns believers to be aware of demonic powers, their influences, and their strategies.

Alert, not fixated

Believers are to be aware of Satan and his schemes so that we may stand against them. However, we must be cautious that we not give Satan undue attention by excessive study of him or his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). This can lead to a fascination, fearfulness, overestimation of his power or even a form of Satanic worship.

You can get so wrapped up in ideas about spiritual warfare and figuring out everything about demons that you're not paying much attention to God anymore. Sometimes it's exciting and kind of sensational to think about what the demons might be up to, but that can be very unhealthy. We need to give our primary attention to God and pay attention to Satan and his demons only as necessary to deal with them and fend them off.

Aware of Satan but focused on Christ

We acknowledge Satan's existence, study, think and speak of him but only as pastorally necessary, and always to renounce and resist rather than respect him. Believers' focus should be on Christ's power and provision to resist evil forces, giving all glory to God alone.

Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, as Hebrews 12 says. Always stay focused on Jesus, and then pay attention to the demons only as necessary to call Christ's power and authority against them.

Deeply entangled believers may need special help

Believers may be tempted, deceived, accused by Satan and may yield to these attacks (though they do not have to). If they do not resist Satan (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9), they may become entangled in the behavior so deeply that they cannot escape it without special help from other believers (1 Cor. 5:1-5; Heb. 12:1-13).

Scripture indicates that even believers can fall into a trap of Satan, becoming ensnared in a pattern of behavior from which they can't escape without special assistance.

Demonic domination of a believer

A person, believer or non-believer, could be dominated by a demon in a way akin to a wife being dominated by an abusive husband. It could be to the point of alteration of their personality and loss of a sense of personal control. However, such a person [if a believer] will never be abandoned by the Holy Spirit or left to merely human resources as in the case of an unbeliever (Psa. 27; 90; Isa. 41:10-16).

This is a very serious point and might be disputed by some believers. But this group is saying there are persons—even if they're believers—who can still fall under the domination of a demon, just as a Christian wife might fall under the domination of a cruel, abusive husband, to the point where it twists her judgment and makes her lose a sense of her own value and worth. If that could happen in relation to a human, sometimes demons could similarly dominate someone, even though they can't totally possess or control them because they are believers. This is based, in part, on experiences of having dealt with people who seem by all indications to have been genuine Christians, and still are, yet experience such a powerful tug, twisting, or torment from a demonic force. So this takes very seriously the full extent of how a demon might still attack, harm, and twist you without saying the demon has every right to you or that God has completely abandoned you.

Don't play with fire

Believers are commanded to avoid every form of contact with demonic practices including astrology, divination, new age meditation and mantras, demonic movies and books, satanic music, magic, seances, seeking after spirits of the dead, ouija boards, etc. (Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:9-13; Jer. 27:9-10)

The Bible again and again warns against the occult and trying to contact spirits. It is not a game—don't play with the fires of hell. Don't play with the powers of demons. That's an important warning this group is issuing, which all Christians should agree on and take very much to heart.

Jesus, not "Christian" magic

Demons are properly expelled only by the power of God based on the triumph of Jesus Christ through the potency of the Holy Spirit. No magic, divination, bargaining, or ritual, no matter how effective it may appear to be, can replace reliance on the name of Jesus Christ and the power of His work at Calvary (Col. 2:10-15). The use of sacred objects, holy water, or crosses runs the risk of being viewed as Christian magic.

Some people might say, "I'm kind of an expert on exorcisms, and I always sprinkle some water here, or I always hold up a cross, and that really scares the demons." But exorcism is done by God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the authority of Jesus' name. Don't get into conversations or make bargains with demons. Don't try to use objects as though they have some sort of magical power to drive out demon powers. Demons run from only one thing: the power and authority of Jesus Christ that God the Father has designated and the Holy Spirit unleashes. If

you want to be involved in effective deliverance ministry, it must be Christ-centered, not some sort of Christian magic.

Prayer addresses God, not demons

Some say that a believer cannot be delivered of a specific sin or obsession from a demonic source except by a deliverance prayer rebuking the demon. Such warfare prayer directed toward Satan and demons has no precedent in Scripture and is contrary to the nature of prayer as family fellowship with God. Rebukes are directed to Satan and demons as a part of deliverance (Matt. 16:22; 17:18; Mk. 1:25; Luke 4:41), but they are not prayers. Prayer to God for power to resist temptation, for wisdom and strength to stand firm in face of Satan's attacks is a vital part of warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil.

Warfare prayer directed towards Satan and the demons has no precedent in Scripture. It's contrary to the nature of prayer. Prayer is family fellowship with God. Your prayer time is time with God. You're talking to God, not talking to demons. Keep your prayer directed toward the Lord God. You can talk, in a sense, to Satan and the demons very briefly—but it's not prayer; it's a rebuke. Prayer is very important in spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry, but there's a difference between praying to God and rebuking a demon. Don't mix the two up.

Taking responsibility for sin

Nowhere does the Bible command or describe exorcism or casting out of a demon as a solution for such sins of the flesh as anger, bitterness, envy, or lust. Deliverance is not a shortcut to spiritual or personal maturity. While demons may tempt a believer to commit such sins, as Satan did with Jesus, God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear and overcome (1 Cor. 10:13). Moral failure is ultimately the choice and responsibility of humans rather than Satan (Jas. 1:12). Giving a demon credit for causing a sin may lead to an erroneous sense of helplessness or defeat. No believer can correctly say, "The Devil made me do it."

Just because you've got a chronic sin problem and evil desires does not mean you've got to have a demon kicked out, and then suddenly you'll be rid of those sins. Hey, you've got enough sin on your own without demonic help. Deliverance is not a shortcut to spiritual or personal maturity. You've got to grow up in the Lord. You don't instantly go from being a know-nothing baby who is helpless under the power of Satan to being strong in the Lord and in His might just by having a demon kicked out. We all have to grow up in the Lord. So we're to take responsibility for sin in our lives, not claim it's all the devil's fault or think our sin problem will vanish if we just kick out this or that demon. Sometimes a demon does need to be driven away, but even when that's done, we've still got our own habits, our own sin nature, to fight against and overcome.

There's an old story—I heard it from James Boice in one of his books—about a little girl named Marianne who was being rebuked by her mother because Marianne yanked her brother's hair and kicked him in the shins. The mother said, "How could you let Satan lead you to kick your brother's shins and pull his hair?" Marianne replied, "Well, Mommy, maybe pulling his hair was an idea from the devil, but kicking his shins was my idea." That's pretty decent theology. We do

have sins of our own. Satan may tempt us, but at the end of the day, a lot of our sins are our own fault, certainly our own idea, and we need to take responsibility for sin. When Eve said, "Oh, the serpent tempted me," did that mean Eve wasn't responsible anymore? No, she was responsible for listening to the serpent—the devil—rather than to God. And if we listen to a demon, it's not because we have to, it's because we chose to, and we are responsible.

Repossession by demons, or reoccurrence of sin?

Repeated demonic possession may be possible but many so-called possessions are really the reoccurrence of a sin of the flesh.

There may be a person who experienced an exorcism where demons were expelled in the authority of Jesus Christ, and then later, they slip back into a characteristic sin that they had been committing. Is that because the demon took over their life again? Well, it's possible, but not likely. It's more likely that they're simply slipping into old wicked habits. We can consider the possibility that they fell back under the domination and influence of demonic power, but the more likely explanation in most cases is that they're just letting sin get back into their life and allowing it to become a habit again.

Unbiblical deliverance methods

Contemporary deliverance procedures usually involve finding the name of the demon, what sin allowed it to invade, the demonic hierarchies involved, and rebuking it before casting it out. Such procedures contain many elements that are not described in scriptural exorcisms. Any practice or technique of spiritual warfare that has no scriptural warrant is always suspect. Other elements appear only once in Scripture. They are not established as normal practices in exorcism. The difference between the common contemporary practices and the biblical descriptions gives us considerable concern.

Any practice or technique of spiritual warfare that has little or no scriptural warrant is always suspect. For instance, Jesus drove out many demons, but on only one occasion did he ask for the name of a demon. But modern deliverance ministries say you must ask the name of a demon, find it out, and discover what happened before you can expel it. That's just not so—at least not according to the Bible.

Demonization is obvious

In the Bible demonization involved easily recognizable phenomena which were supernatural and evil in both source and appearance. There was no need for extended or mysterious discovery procedures to uncover hidden demons. Contemporary deliverance methods, which rely heavily on such techniques, differ significantly from biblical patterns.

In the Bible, demonization was pretty obvious, with somebody falling down, or frothing at the mouth, or screaming out blasphemies, or yelling at Jesus when he was in their presence. Nobody went around saying, "Boy, I wonder if there might possibly be demonic influence." When there

seemed to be a person who had a demon, people knew it. Today it's common that if someone has any kind of problem in their life, the deliverance "expert" will dig and dig until they find out what demon is causing the problem. This was not the case in the Bible. In the Bible, when someone was afflicted by a demon specifically, it was pretty obvious.

Deliverance is total

Biblical exorcisms delivered unbelievers completely from the demons that had possessed them. Their former habitation and dominion was thereby rendered open to the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit through the new convert's faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:43; Luke 8:35; 9:42-43).

In Scripture there were not partial deliverances or deliverances lasting ten minutes and then having the demon return, causing even bigger trouble. True biblical exorcism meant the demon was kicked out, and the Holy Spirit and the power of God moved in. In deliverance ministry today, that's what we should expect: in the authority of Jesus, any demon who had influence in someone's life is going to be expelled completely. We should assure the people to whom we're ministering of this.

I remember a guy who talked to me about needing a job. He prayed and prayed to God but didn't get the job. He prayed for months on end. Finally, he thought, "I'll try something different." He prayed to the devil, and he had a job in less than a week. You can imagine, a while later, what that was doing to him. He was tormented by the thought that he would belong to the devil forever and that there was no hope for him. I was able to tell him, in the authority of Jesus, "You need to repent of that, and we need to rebuke any demonic influence on your life." I didn't tell him it "might" work or there was just a smidge of a chance. He had to know that when you're delivered, you're totally delivered from the domination of demonic powers. Deliverance is total.

Sickness is rarely a direct result of demonic attack

While demons are one possible cause of sickness as the book of Job indicates, it is not generally caused by demonic attack. Jesus clearly distinguished between the healing of sickness and the casting out of demons. When sickness is caused by willful sin or natural causes, then attempting to cast out demons will not bring a cure.

Although there are cases where a health problem comes from the devil, most of the time it's not. Most of the time we get sick simply because of the weakness to which human nature is vulnerable since we have fallen as a race into sin, making us subject to sickness and death. We shouldn't expect every sickness to have a demon connected with it. Saying, "I cast you out, demon of the common cold," is something people come very close to doing, but it's not biblical. If someone has cancer because they smoked for thirty years, or if they have cancer due to natural causes unrelated to their actions—just something that happens in a broken and decaying world—then don't try to exorcise demons to get rid of the cancer. It's devastating to a sick person to immediately translate their sickness into the notion they're being dominated by a demon. You can't kick out a demon of cancer or the common cold or any other sickness unless it's very clear, and made clear by God, that the particular sickness is attributable to the direct

action of a demon. But that's quite rare. We should more often expect that sickness is simply sickness, and demon possession or demon domination is something quite different.

Prayer: no magic formulas

Warfare prayer may degenerate into a magical formula where specific phrases such as "binding Satan" or "placing a hedge of thorns" or "by the blood of Jesus" are deemed necessary or take on an effectiveness by use of the words themselves. The power of the prayer is in the truth of the concept rather than in the phrases spoken. It is a mistake to believe that apart from specifically worded prayers to bind Satan from tempting, or attacking persons or even entering a room, believers are unprotected and helpless. A prayer binding Satan is no more effective or necessary than prayer to God for his power and protection. Another mistake is to assume that believers become virtually divine, fighting spiritual battles by the power prayer generates with little need for God's involvement. The power of prayer comes from strengthened relationship with God and the cleansing and sensitivity to godliness it brings.

Some people seem to think that unless you speak in exactly a certain way, with just the right words, the demons have no obligation to flee. But the power of prayer is in the truth and the reality of Jesus, his authority, his triumph on the cross, his victory over the demons—rather than in the phrases spoken. Saying, "I mispronounced that word," or "I forgot to say that phrase," does not have any effect at all on whether an exorcism can be effective. Thinking, "Oh no, I forgot to pray that all the demons be kicked out of the room; therefore, I was just subject to the demons," is incorrect. As long as you're praying for God's protection—even if you forgot to pray specifically against the demons—God is your help, and you're protected. We shouldn't get into the habit of thinking we must always say exactly the right words or everything is lost. In fact, saying, "I'm a prayer warrior; I'm saying the right words," can eventually become so much about me that it's no longer about God. If you want to be strong against Satan, don't try to be Mr. Macho Warrior against demons. First of all, become a friend of God, know him well, live in his cleansing, and be sensitive to his leading. An awful lot of demons are going to be mighty scared of you.

Never invite a demon in

It is neither biblical nor wise for ministers of deliverance to invite a demon into themselves in order to get it out of a demonized person. The rationale for this practice is that the trauma of exorcism will be eased because transferring a demon into another body is less difficult than casting it out into bodiless existence. Nowhere is there warrant in Scripture for willfully inviting demons to enter a person. Jesus' allowing the demons in the Gadarene demoniac to go into pigs in no way validates the practice of transferring demons into people.

Sometimes people might watch movies too much instead of reading the Bible, and they see in a movie in which some priest or somebody else invites a demon out of the afflicted person into themselves. What lunacy! Never invite a demon into your own life. Just call on the authority of Jesus to kick the demon out of somebody else's life, and Jesus will do that. You do not need to offer the demon a different home inside of you. That is ridiculous, foolish, and devastating.

Demons are spirits, not spit

There is no scriptural warrant for coughing up, choking out or spitting out demons as a pattern for exorcism though there may be some physical reaction to deliverance (Mark 9:20, 26).

We know from the Bible that sometimes people would just collapse as though dead after they were delivered from a demon, and then Jesus would lift them up again. But some deliverance ministries claim, “Oh, you’ve got to choke or cough,” and they encourage that in somebody. But demons are spirits, not spit. They are expelled by spiritual power from God, not by any physical act of spitting out, vomiting, or anything else. If there is some sort of physical reaction from time to time, don’t make it a vital part of the deliverance itself or tell people that it’s a big part of how you kick out demons.

Information about demons

Scripture is the only reliable source of information about demons. The contemporary demonologies, including such matters as demonic hierarchies, motives and methods of demons, are largely composed from information gathered from the demons themselves. Satan and his demons are liars by nature (John 8:44). At best information from them will be tainted by untruth and evil motive or half truths in a misleading way. Believing demons' reports will often bring great harm to the cause of Christ. Therefore information gained from demons should not be used for any purpose.

People involved in deliverance ministries who had a wrong idea of spiritual warfare would ask demons about themselves—for their names, what they were doing, and so on. But how can you trust information from demons?

We know from the Bible that there were a few times when demons spoke and told the truth. The demons would say of Jesus, “We know who you are—the Holy One of God.” And Jesus would tell them to shut up, and he would kick them out. Jesus didn’t say, “Thanks for the advertisement.” If you read Acts 16, the missionaries Paul and Silas met a girl with a spirit who followed him around, saying, “These men are telling you the way to be saved.” In a sense, that was a true fact—that’s exactly what Paul was doing. But Paul didn’t want demon advertisements. He rebuked the demon, kicked it out of the girl, and set her free from that demon.

Now, if even Jesus and Paul would not let demons spread information that was accurate, why would anybody think we should do interviews with demon-possessed people and ask the demons themselves for information? Or command them to tell us what the demons are up to? The demons are going to lie. And even if they tell the truth, you really couldn’t trust what they’re using the truth to accomplish. So get whatever information you have about demons from the Bible only—never from the person or from the demon claiming to indwell a person. Don’t get your information on deliverance ministry from books that say, “Here’s what I learned from my various encounters with demons, and what I told them to tell me about themselves—their names, their hierarchies,” and so on. Those books—you might as well throw them into the fire if they’re claiming to know a bunch about demons from what the demons themselves said. You’ve got to stick with the Bible, or you’re going to be misled by those liars.

No conversations with demons

Under no circumstances should Christians carry on conversations or arguments with demons. Such contact is prohibited in Scripture (Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:9-13; Jer. 27:9-10) and it is patently unwise since it increases the opportunity for demons to counter attack. The only attention demons should receive is that of rejecting, refusing or resisting them. The brief interchange in Mark 5 is quite different than contemporary practices involving extensive fact finding.

Do not try to contact spirits. Don't interrogate a demon. Don't interview a demon. Don't debate with a demon. Don't have a conversation with a demon. That's not how you deal with demons. You kick them out, and you leave them alone.

Stay out of cosmic warfare

There is spiritual warfare on the cosmic level between holy angels and demonic spirits (Dan. 10; Jude 9). However, the Bible neither describes nor mandates believers' involvement in that battle. Discerning the names, assignments, hierarchies of these spirits and praying against them has no scriptural warrant. We are commanded to deal with the demonic at the personal level.

Daniel 10 speaks of the "Prince of Persia," a demonic spirit influencing the affairs of the Persian Empire, and the "Prince of Greece," a demonic spirit influencing the affairs of Alexander the Great and the spread of the Greek Empire. So, there are demons who work at a cosmic level and influence the affairs of nations. This is a fact revealed by the Bible. We know that stuff is going on, but we're not the ones who have to figure it out or fight those battles. We had better let God and the angels worry about what's going on behind the scenes at the cosmic level. We can be aware that such things are happening, and when we see terrible things done by certain agents, we can say, "That seems to have a demonic influence behind it." But to try to figure it all out and say we know what's going on in the demon realm behind the scenes—that's more than we're called to do. We need to deal with demonic power as the demons tempt us in our own lives, and sometimes we may need to expel them from the life of another person.

Demons are not inherited

Demons often work effectively within ungodly families who have a wicked influence on their offspring, but there is no scriptural warrant for so called "ancestral" or "generational bondage," i. e., inheriting personal demons from ancestors apart from personal involvement by the child. Passages such as Exodus 20:4-5 speak of the consequences of sin being visited to the third and fourth generations, but never of inheriting demons. The consequences of sin may be the natural result of a sinful lifestyle, such as babies born with AIDS. They may be the judgment of God falling on relatively innocent persons such as the babies who starved in the siege of Jerusalem. Children raised in an occultic environment will normally come into contact with the demonic and may be influenced toward personal demonic involvement as a result of their environment. However, the believer is delivered from all demonic authority by the triumph of Christ. The protecting and empowering work of the Spirit is sufficient for all believers no matter what their family background.

If your father was afflicted by a demon, that does not mean you automatically inherit that same demon. It is a big leap in logic and away from Scripture to speak of generational bondage as something automatic. Certainly, your grandparents, parents, or family can have an influence—potentially negative—and if they subjected you to demonic rites, there might indeed be demonic issues to address. However, you should not scour your past assuming every problem is due to generational bondage or inherited demonic power. There is no scriptural precedent for interpreting issues in this manner.

Parents' sins do impact their children. Even if children were not the primary sinners, yet they suffer due to their parents' wickedness. At times demonic influences may need to be addressed—but not because of automatic inheritance or generational bondage. It's due to personal exposure and involvement stemming from that environment. Believers raised in such environments are delivered from all demonic authority through Christ's triumph. The protecting and empowering work of the Spirit is sufficient for all believers, regardless of family background. When a person comes to Christ, moving from darkness to light and from Satan's power to God's power, they do not need to worry about discovering or removing ancestral demons. Upon accepting Christ and renouncing evil, they are secure and shouldn't waste time worrying about generational demons.

Who gets credit for deliverance?

Spiritual warfare should always glorify God rather than the human minister.

Beware of books or teachings that glorify individuals as having special insight or power over demons. A true warrior for God gives glory to God, works in God's power, and always acts according to God's Word.

These cautions, boundaries, and guidelines for deliverance ministry emphasize the seriousness of demonic attacks and activities. We must recognize the reality of demonic influences, even in Western cultures and especially in cultures with extensive involvement in spirit worship. We must be prepared to encounter and deal with demonization. Yet, we should avoid sensationalism, constantly looking for demons everywhere, or becoming obsessed with demonic activity. Instead, we must live in God's power, always giving glory to Him.

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A Consensus Statement from Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Historic Evangelicals Drafted by Gerry Breshears, Ph.D.

The following paragraphs represent a sixth draft of a statement of principles developed by a diverse group of pastors and professors representing various evangelical traditions. The principles listed below represent areas where we have consensus among ourselves. Silence in any area means neither support nor lack of support for a particular belief or practice. In some cases we say nothing because our work is not yet complete. In others we say nothing because we do not agree among ourselves.

1

God reigns supreme over the whole universe, governing it to His ultimate glory (Ps. 33:10-11; 103:19; Isa. 14:24-27; Eph. 1:11). He decisively defeated the powers of darkness, disarming and triumphing over them at the cross (Col. 1:16; 2:13-15; 1 Pet. 3:22). God is ultimately in charge of all affairs of His universe and we are not to fear a satanic victory (Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:20-22).

2

Satan and demons are frighteningly real. They are personal, evil, supernatural spirits. These fallen angels are at constant warfare against the cause of Christ and His church. They are subtle, crafty, malicious, and unrelenting in their attacks. One cannot reduce the demonic in Scripture to primitive explanations of psychosis.

3

As prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2), Satan exerts his power against believers and unbelievers. Jesus Christ advances His kingdom against that of Satan through a combination of prayer, evangelism and edification. Believers share in His victory and authority over demons (Col. 2:9-15). In the case of demonized persons, exorcism is one means of accomplishing this kingdom purpose (Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:1-11).

4

In spiritual warfare believers seek

- to redeem unsaved persons from the realm of Satan by proclamation of the gospel (Acts 26:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:4-6);
- to resist demonic assault against themselves and the church by submitting to God, standing firm in the faith, and putting on the armor of God, i. e., prayerfully practicing the essential disciplines of spiritual growth within a local body of believers (Eph. 6:13-18; Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Pet. 5:6-9).

5

At conversion God redeems people, transferring them out of Satan's realm, the dominion of darkness, into Christ's realm, the kingdom of the beloved Son of God (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). At the time of conversion, they become children of God, fully justified, fully forgiven, sharing the

inheritance from Christ... Therefore, believers in Jesus Christ are never possessed by demons, i. e., are never the property of Satan and his minions, are never totally controlled by an evil spirit.

6

Some say that believers are immune to demonic assault. The examples of Jesus and Paul as well as such specific statements as 1 Pet. 5:8 prove this a fatally dangerous lie.

7

Believers are to be aware of Satan and his schemes so that we may stand against them. However, we must be cautious that we not give Satan undue attention by excessive study of him or his schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). This can lead to a fascination, fearfulness, overestimation of his power or even a form of Satanic worship. We acknowledge Satan's existence, study, think and speak of him but only as pastorally necessary, and always to renounce and resist rather than respect him. Believers' focus should be on Christ's power and provision to resist evil forces, giving all glory to God alone.

8

Believers may be tempted, deceived, accused by Satan and may yield to these attacks (though they do not have to). If they do not resist Satan (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9), they may become entangled in the behavior so deeply that they cannot escape it without special help from other believers (1 Cor. 5:1-5; Heb. 12:1-13). A person, believer or non-believer, could be dominated by a demon in a way akin to a wife being dominated by an abusive husband. It could be to the point of alteration of their personality and loss of a sense of personal control. However, such a person [if a believer] will never be abandoned by the Holy Spirit or left to merely human resources as in the case of an unbeliever (Psa. 27; 90; Isa. 41:10-16).

9

Believers are commanded to avoid every form of contact with demonic practices including astrology, divination, new age meditation and mantras, demonic movies and books, satanic music, magic, seances, seeking after spirits of the dead, ouija boards, etc. (Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:9-13; Jer. 27:9-10)

10

Demons are properly expelled only by the power of God based on the triumph of Jesus Christ through the potency of the Holy Spirit. No magic, divination, bargaining, or ritual, no matter how effective it may appear to be, can replace reliance on the name of Jesus Christ and the power of His work at Calvary (Col. 2:10-15). The use of sacred objects, holy water, or crosses runs the risk of being viewed as Christian magic.

11

Some say that a believer cannot be delivered of a specific sin or obsession from a demonic source except by a deliverance prayer rebuking the demon. Such warfare prayer directed toward Satan and demons has no precedent in Scripture and is contrary to the nature of prayer as family fellowship with God. Rebukes are directed to Satan and demons as a part of deliverance (Matt. 16:22; 17:18; Mk. 1:25; Luke 4:41), but they are not prayers. Prayer to God for power to resist

temptation, for wisdom and strength to stand firm in face of Satan's attacks is a vital part of warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil.

12

Nowhere does the Bible command or describe exorcism or casting out of a demon as a solution for such sins of the flesh as anger, bitterness, envy, or lust. Deliverance is not a shortcut to spiritual or personal maturity. While demons may tempt a believer to commit such sins, as Satan did with Jesus, God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear and overcome (1 Cor. 10:13). Moral failure is ultimately the choice and responsibility of humans rather than Satan (Jas. 1:12). Giving a demon credit for causing a sin may lead to an erroneous sense of helplessness or defeat. No believer can correctly say, "The Devil made me do it."

13

Repeated demonic possession may be possible but many so-called repossessions are really the reoccurrence of a sin of the flesh.

14

Contemporary deliverance procedures usually involve finding the name of the demon, what sin allowed it to invade, the demonic hierarchies involved, and rebuking it before casting it out. Such procedures contain many elements that are not described in scriptural exorcisms. Any practice or technique of spiritual warfare that has no scriptural warrant is always suspect. Other elements appear only once in Scripture. They are not established as normal practices in exorcism. The difference between the common contemporary practices and the biblical descriptions gives us considerable concern.

15

In the Bible demonization involved easily recognizable phenomena which were supernatural and evil in both source and appearance. There was no need for extended or mysterious discovery procedures to uncover hidden demons. Contemporary deliverance methods, which rely heavily on such techniques, differ significantly from biblical patterns.

16

Biblical exorcisms delivered unbelievers completely from the demons that had possessed them. Their former habitation and dominion was thereby rendered open to the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit through the new convert's faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:43; Luke 8:35; 9:42-43).

17

While demons are one possible cause of sickness as the book of Job indicates, it is not generally caused by demonic attack. Jesus clearly distinguished between the healing of sickness and the casting out of demons. When sickness is caused by willful sin or natural causes, then attempting to cast out demons will not bring a cure.

18

Warfare prayer may degenerate into a magical formula where specific phrases such as "binding Satan" or "placing a hedge of thorns" or "by the blood of Jesus" are deemed necessary or take on an effectiveness by use of the words themselves. The power of the prayer is in the truth of the

concept rather than in the phrases spoken. It is a mistake to believe that apart from specifically worded prayers to bind Satan from tempting, or attacking persons or even entering a room, believers are unprotected and helpless. A prayer binding Satan is no more effective or necessary than prayer to God for his power and protection. Another mistake is to assume that believers become virtually divine, fighting spiritual battles by the power prayer generates with little need for God's involvement. The power of prayer comes from strengthened relationship with God and the cleansing and sensitivity to godliness it brings.

19

It is neither biblical nor wise for ministers of deliverance to invite a demon into themselves in order to get it out of a demonized person. The rationale for this practice is that the trauma of exorcism will be eased because transferring a demon into another body is less difficult than casting it out into bodiless existence. Nowhere is there warrant in Scripture for willfully inviting demons to enter a person. Jesus' allowing the demons in the Gadarene demoniac to go into pigs in no way validates the practice of transferring demons into people.

20

There is no scriptural warrant for coughing up, choking out or spitting out demons as a pattern for exorcism though there may be some physical reaction to deliverance (Mark 9:20, 26).

21

Scripture is the only reliable source of information about demons. The contemporary demonologies, including such matters as demonic hierarchies, motives and methods of demons, are largely composed from information gathered from the demons themselves. Satan and his demons are liars by nature (John 8:44). At best information from them will be tainted by untruth and evil motive or half truths in a misleading way. Believing demons' reports will often bring great harm to the cause of Christ. Therefore information gained from demons should not be used for any purpose.

22

Under no circumstances should Christians carry on conversations or arguments with demons. Such contact is prohibited in Scripture (Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:9-13; Jer. 27:9-10) and it is patently unwise since it increases the opportunity for demons to counter attack. The only attention demons should receive is that of rejecting, refusing or resisting them. The brief interchange in Mark 5 is quite different than contemporary practices involving extensive fact finding.

23

There is spiritual warfare on the cosmic level between holy angels and demonic spirits (Dan. 10; Jude 9). However, the Bible neither describes nor mandates believers' involvement in that battle. Discerning the names, assignments, hierarchies of these spirits and praying against them has no scriptural warrant. We are commanded to deal with the demonic at the personal level.

24

Demons often work effectively within ungodly families who have a wicked influence on their offspring, but there is no scriptural warrant for so called "ancestral" or "generational bondage," i.

e., inheriting personal demons from ancestors apart from personal involvement by the child. Passages such as Exodus 20:4-5 speak of the consequences of sin being visited to the third and fourth generations, but never of inheriting demons. The consequences of sin may be the natural result of a sinful lifestyle, such as babies born with AIDS. They may be the judgment of God falling on relatively innocent persons such as the babies who starved in the siege of Jerusalem. Children raised in an occultic environment will normally come into contact with the demonic and may be influenced toward personal demonic involvement as a result of their environment. However, the believer is delivered from all demonic authority by the triumph of Christ. The protecting and empowering work of the Spirit is sufficient for all believers no matter what their family background.

25

Spiritual warfare should always glorify God rather than the human minister.