

The Battle for Deliverance

God is building up an army of soldiers who are engaging in spiritual warfare and setting the captives free. We are in a cosmic spiritual war between evil and good. I have learned the importance of the hard-fought freedom that comes with true deliverance, and I hope to share my experience and passion as I equip you in this powerful ministry.

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It's no secret that evil is raging against humanity. Not everything that happens on earth is a result of God's divine decree. Sickness, death, tragedy and poverty are not part of God's mysterious plan. Our heavenly Father is good and desires to do good. Not only is there no evil in Him, but He is at war with all evil.

Jesus, the Son of God, stepped into our realm to reveal God's perfect will. He healed the sick, drove out demons, calmed the storms, fed the hungry, raised the dead and so much more. He was doing God's will. Therefore, we should not be passive spectators of this war, for we are enlisted into His army to be active participants.

Sadly, many Christians today have embraced a vacation-based worldview in this time of war. But those engaged in the battle understand the truism that "it's better to be a warrior in the garden than a gardener in war."

God prepares you for public victories by taking you through private battles. Before God publicly used David to kill

Goliath, He led him privately to face a lion and a bear (see 1 Sam. 17:34-37).

I suspect David was not too fond of facing lions. I can imagine thoughts such as Why am I being attacked? and Where is God in all of this? must have crossed his mind. When David experienced an attack from a lion and saw his sheep disappear, he could have wallowed in defeat and self-pity. He had to make a decision not to live in regret because of his failure—losing a sheep—and choose instead to get up and fight to regain what the lion had stolen. In the moment, David did not realize the battles with lions and bears would one day give him the courage and determination to publicly confront the Philistine giant Goliath.

From Bondage to Freedom

I still believe in casting out demons. I believe in deliverance, not only because I have seen it in my ministry and have witnessed how people's lives change after it but because Jesus Himself commanded us to cast out demons. In fact, I have experienced liberation myself after various circumstances brought me into bondage.

In my early teen years, I came across pornographic images. At that time, I did not consider nor understand the impact of this exposure and the effects of this material on my life. I was 13 years old when my family immigrated to the United States. Everything was new—the country, the friends and even the language. Little did I know that I was about to discover a new addiction that would require God's deliverance.

Six months after our family immigrated to America, my neighbor asked me if I would house-sit for a week. I was extremely curious to find out how Americans lived. Besides the daily routine of cleaning the house, feeding the cats and mowing the lawn, I looked forward to checking out the entire house.

In doing so, I came across a set of VHS tapes, tapes that, as

you probably have guessed, were pornographic. After first discovering this, I went ahead and watched the entire video. At that moment, I felt something enter me. Although demons cannot possess true followers of Christ, they can still wreak their havoc and leave even Spirit-filled believers in bondage. In my case, guilt and shame overtook me, leaving me disgusted with myself. I promised God that I would never do such a thing again and quickly repented.

Before the week was over, I had broken my promise.

In the next few years, I found myself engulfed in pornography. Yes, I knew it was wrong, but I could not stop watching it. It did not matter how hard I tried to quit by confessing to my pastor and fasting every week; all it took was one moment of weakness and I was back to sinning.

I knew I could not live like that much longer; I was desperate for freedom. In my youthful eagerness to serve God, I had instituted many personal disciplines, but none of them helped. I needed deliverance. Yet this idea was the furthest thing in my mind because I believed it was only for those who practiced witchcraft or other elements of the occult.

One day, as I read Jack Hayford's book *The Finger of God*, the Holy Spirit showed me that I had unwelcome company. My problem with lust had deeper spiritual roots that must be dealt with through deliverance, not just more discipline. I had opened doors in my soul to the spirit of lust when I was first exposed to porn, and I needed to close those doors through repentance and renouncing.

When I received that revelation, I renounced the spirits of lust, pornography and perversion. I was bold, using my authority to command the evil spirits to exit my life. During that prayer of deliverance, I felt something leave me and realized a bond had been broken.

From that point on, a drastic change occurred, and I gained

what I never had before, regardless of how much effort I applied: grace, self-discipline and the power to control myself when I was tempted.

I now walked in a level of freedom I had never thought possible. Not long afterward, I started to see other people delivered from demonic oppression as well. I quickly learned that God sets us free to free others through His power.

Just as with Moses, whose escape from Egypt was not just for himself but to prepare him to deliver God's people from Egyptian bondage, I had to gain freedom myself before helping others experience victory over the enemy. Even Jesus Christ—prior to casting out demons from people—had to face the devil in the wilderness. Therefore, you too must win private battles against lions before you win public battles against Goliath.

From Deliverance to Discipleship to Destiny

Deliverance from demons and demonic oppression is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is at war with the kingdom of darkness. When Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit after His temptation in the wilderness, demons were exposed and expelled (Luke 4).

The same is true today. God's Spirit through you can bring demons out of hiding into the open, where they experience forced removal by the power of God. Deliverance causes the kingdom of God to make its dynamic appearance.

Thirty-three recorded miracles of Jesus appear in the Gospels; 16 of those are healing and seven are deliverance. In fact, Jesus referred to the ministry of deliverance as a miracle.

Deliverance from demons in Scripture was not only a showdown between the two kingdoms but it also brought liberty to the captives. For the woman who had issues with her back, deliverance meant brand-new health (Luke 13:11-13). For the

two men who were cutting themselves, living among tombs and running naked, deliverance meant a new lease on life (Matt. 8:28-34). For the mute man who was set free, deliverance meant the ability to speak (Matt. 9:32-33). For the little boy who experienced episodes of throwing himself into fire, deliverance meant a new life and peace for his parents (Mark 9:20-27).

Deliverance is not only a ministry of power but also one of compassion. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in setting the captives free, the sick get healed, tormented minds are liberated, those trapped in repeated cycles of sin get freed and those who wanted to end their lives now live for Jesus. However, deliverance is not a solution to every issue, nor does it replace the need for someone to deny himself, pick up his cross and follow the Lord. Everything is not a demon, but many things have demons behind them.

The greatest story of deliverance happened in the book of Exodus, when God heard the cries of His children and rescued them. Israel was God's own people, but they were oppressed and enslaved by Pharaoh. God's people needed liberty, not a lecture. No matter how hard they tried, they couldn't work their way out of their bondage. In fact, the more they worked, the stronger their oppressor got.

Just as I experienced, discipline is good, but it's powerless against demonic oppression. Demons must be cast out, and the flesh must be crucified. We need deliverance to experience true freedom. You can't crucify a demon or cast out the flesh. Israel in bondage needed deliverance, not a sermon. That's why God raised Moses to tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go."

Moses aimed his message not at Israel but Pharaoh. That portrays how the ministry of deliverance works; it's a direct confrontation with the devil. Demons can't be negotiated with, counseled or begged; they must be confronted and commanded out. Jesus gave us only one way to deal with demons: cast them

out (Matt. 8:16; 9:33; 10:1, 8; 12:28; Mark 1:34, 39; 3:15; 6:13; 16:9, 17; Luke 13:32).

We can debate whether or not Christians should interrogate demons, but one thing is clear: You can't get rid of demons if you are not willing to confront them. Jesus cast them out with the Word, and we must do the same. Notice how Moses confronted Pharaoh and kept coming back with a word from God until Pharaoh was defeated and God's people were liberated.

Upon leaving Egypt, which was their place of deliverance, the children of Israel entered the wilderness, all according to God's sovereign plan. In the desert, He gave them His law, showed them His presence, provided manna and organized them as a nation. They were no longer a bunch of runaway slaves. Deliverance must lead to discipleship; otherwise, it will lead to disappointment.

Jesus told us in the Great Commission to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19). Deliverance is essential and must be accompanied by discipleship. Without deliverance, true discipleship is impossible; many discipleship programs fail because they don't start with deliverance. God didn't give Israel the Law with its commandments, rules and ministering duties in Egypt, where the people were too defeated to receive it. Teaching new believers to deny their flesh is critical, but if they are not freed from demonic influence, they will fall back into the same cycle of defeat.

You can deliver people without discipling them, but you cannot disciple people without delivering them. Having said that, deliverance without discipleship leads nowhere.

Jesus once told His followers to find a donkey, loose it and then bring the donkey to Him. He then sat on the donkey and went into the city of Jerusalem. Similarly, every person who is found and loosed must be brought to a foundation of Christian values and purpose.

The donkey portrays the process of going from deliverance to discipleship to destiny. The same was true for the Israelites, who came from Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land. The disciplines of reading the Word, praying, fasting, giving and joining a community of believers are all vital to building a foundation for God's purposes.

From Bondage to Battles to Dominion

Deliverance is like the excavation, digging out demons and the dirt of curses so the foundation of discipleship is laid and built upon. If we attempt to build a foundation on bare land without excavating first, our construction might not withstand the test of time. As the pastor of a local church where deliverance has been a part of our culture, I can't emphasize enough how important deliverance is to the discipleship culture and how important discipleship culture is to the ministry of deliverance.

God's plan of getting Israel out of Egypt was not the final goal but only a means to that goal: for the Israelites to take possession of the promised land. What I find fascinating is that God didn't just give it to them. In Egypt, the Israelites did very little to receive deliverance, but they would have to fight to take possession of and keep what was promised to them. In fact, the children of Israel only possessed what they fought for, not what they wished and hoped for.

What was true for them is also true for us today. God delivers us from the cruel Pharaoh, but He expects us to conquer the wicked Philistines. Although the Israelites were delivered from Egypt by the supernatural power of God, they had to take authority and dominion to receive the promised land. And that's what we must learn to do as well.

Fighting battles is not the same as fighting bondage. Engaging in battle is a designated privilege of free people. Bondage is bad; battle is good. Bondage makes you a slave; battles make

you a soldier. Believers need the renewal of the mind to accept the notion that fighting a battle from a place of victory is good. In fact, it is a key to true victory.

All this means that the battles don't stop when you get delivered. In some ways, they only begin. David writes in Psalms, "Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle" (Ps. 144:1, NKJV). God does not deliver you from all battles, but He trains you for them. Like it or not, we must fight. Israel finally entered the promised land, yet they still had to fight to take it and maintain possession of it.

A shift is taking place in the body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit is empowering everyday believers to set the captives free and to operate in the authority that is already theirs through Jesus Christ (see Psalm 149:6-9). I encourage you today to stop complaining and admitting defeat. Stop preaching what the devil is doing. The high praises of God must be coming out of our mouths, and our hands must securely hold onto the double-edged sword that is none other than the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). This sword of the Spirit is to bind and execute punishment on the enemy.

I love this part of the psalm: "This honor have all his saints" (v. 9b). Victory, dominion and a fighting spirit are an honor. The honor to take dominion—to trample upon the forces of darkness and to bind the enemy—has been given to all His saints, all of God's children.

God is now preparing a mighty generation to put the enemy in bondage, to put chains on the forces of darkness through the authority of Jesus' name. He is building up a dynamic church that will not tolerate the torments of the devil but instead will torment his demons. The time has come for demons to cry out as they did during the days of Jesus, "Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29b).

I'm sure you know some people who are tormented and oppressed by demons, who are in bondage and in desperate need of deliverance. But did you know that you are the one called and entrusted to bind the enemy and bring torment to demons just as Jesus did? Don't just expect God to cast out every enemy. Start walking in dominion and the power of the Holy Spirit.

So what are you waiting for? Bring deliverance to God's people, disciple them and lead them to dominion.

Vladimir Savchuk leads the HungryGen movement and pastors a multi-cultural church with a clear-cut, focused vision to see the salvation of souls, healing, deliverance and the raising of young leaders. He leads the annual Raised to Deliver conference. Vlad was born in the Ukraine into a Christian home, immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 13 and became a youth pastor at the age of 16.