

# When Foolish 'Prophets' Spew Witchcraft Curses Over You

The promise of **personal prophecy** always draws a crowd. Many long to hear the voice of God and either don't have confidence in their prophetic listening skills or are simply seeking confirmation about something they think God spoke to their heart.

I remember what it was like as a new believer when visiting prophets would roll through town. I waited in anticipation, hoping I would be the one called out to receive a life-changing **prophetic word**. Although I believe wholeheartedly in personal prophecy—and although I've attended many prophetic conferences—I've only had a "prophet" call me out with a word once. It was so far off base that it cured me of chasing personal prophecy.

Still, I get it. I understand that believers are sincerely hungry to hear God's voice. And that, unfortunately, is one of the reasons **prophetic ministry** is so abused in this hour. It's one of the reasons anyone who claims to be a prophet can so easily fleece some sheep or offer false prophecies that lead people away from God instead of closer to Him.

## When 'Prophets' Release Witchcraft

Indeed, I've seen and heard of some prophecy lines where so-called prophets humiliated and even released witchcraft curses over the saints in the name of Jesus. Actually, I witnessed and experienced it firsthand some years ago at a prophetic gathering that featured a pastor from another nation who was convinced God had shifted his ministry into the prophetic office. He'd worked alongside a very accurate prophet for years and now claimed he was coming into his own **prophetic ministry**. God can certainly shift you into a new anointing. The problem was, not only did he lack accuracy—he was flowing

in the wrong spirit.

I stood on the front row of the church for hours while the special guest literally prophesied over at least 100 people, one by one. I didn't hear every single word but I heard a lot of it because he carried a microphone. What I heard turned my stomach more than once. This pastor-prophet had nothing but negative words to offer most people; words about how they needed to do this better, or do more of that or quit doing something else.

It seems he forgot the Scripture about the simple **gift of prophecy** in 1 Corinthians 14:3: "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Nothing I heard him say edified anyone, exhorted anyone or comforted anyone. Rather, it tore them down, condemned them and dis comforted them at best. And in my case it released spiritual witchcraft against my mind that left me seeking someone else to lay hands on me and break the **word curses**.

### **The Power of False Prophetic Words**

Because I was in a leadership position in a controlling church, there was an unspoken rule that we had to go up for prayer after everyone else had their turn. If we didn't go up for prayer, we'd be rebuked later. I learned a hard lesson that day, but I'm glad I learned it then because it has helped me moving forward.

If the spirit of prophecy was there, it had long ago left because the **prophecy** grew more questionable as the lines dwindled. By the time I had my turn, the prophecy was the antithesis of the truth. He clearly missed it and everyone there knew it. When he released the words over me, it came with a spiritual force that made me feel as if I had been covered with goo. My eyes began burning. I felt like I was in a daze. It was spiritual witchcraft.

As spirit beings created in the image of God, our words are

not just sounds or vibrations—our words are spirit (John 6:63). Proverbs 18:21 says “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Spiritual witchcraft sometimes manifests in **prophetic ministry** that’s impure, immature or presumptuous. Witchcraft can tap into the death-and-life-producing power of the tongue, which James called a fire and a world of iniquity (James 3:4). James also called the tongue an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:8). Witchcraft relies on the power of death and life that is in our tongues—and other people’s tongues—to release its attacks.

### **Dealing With Erroneous Prophecy**

And that’s just what happened. It turns out I was not the only one who left the prayer line feeling like they had been covered with goo, with burning eyes, and otherwise dazed and confused. I had several folks come up to me asking about the harsh “prophetic words” they received. Some just dismissed it as poor prophecy, but others were hurt.

When a prophet leaves a cloud of erroneous or outright false prophecy behind him as he heads off to the next city on his itinerary, it’s important that we handle the aftermath with maturity. I helped some people work through those issues by dismissing the poor prophecy and breaking the words over them in the name of Jesus. Others helped me deal with the witchcraft-laced words spoken over me.

When the issue of the poor and hurtful prophetic utterances was brought to the leadership of the church, those who questioned this man’s ministry were sorely rebuked. This was probably the saddest part of all. Even the most accurate, mature prophet can miss it. As Spirit-filled believers we have the right and responsibility to judge prophetic words over our lives. We should embrace the true prophetic words and dismiss—and even break the power of words—that are not from God. The paradigm that sets prophets on a pedestal, not to be questioned, must end. Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at [jleclaire@charisma.com](#) or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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## **A Stealth Spiritual Warfare Weapon Satan Can't Stand**

My imagination was running wild. I couldn't comprehend how someone who claimed to be a Christian could leave town on Christmas Eve without finishing the construction work in my home he was paid to complete a month earlier. I was literally shocked that this man, who I'd known for years, would essentially leave me living in a construction zone without any way to take a shower or cook a meal.

Over and over again, I rehearsed in my mind what I would say to this brother. I would have to wait, because he was off on a tropical island with \$10,000 of my money enjoying the holiday with his family. I was planning on giving him a piece of my mind. I mentally rehearsed what I would say, imagined how he would respond, planned what I would say next, and so on.

I was seething mad. But I was also violating Scripture. The Bible tells us to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled (2 Cor. 10:5-6).

When we meditate on the thoughts the enemy puts in our minds, we are setting ourselves up for destruction. In this case, the enemy was playing on the injustice to set me up for

bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness. Thankfully, I caught on to the enemy's plan and brought those thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ, being quick to forgive and trusting God to be my Vindicator.

### **Forgiveness: Your Stealth Weapon**

If the weapons of our warfare are not carnal—if they are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 10:4—then forgiveness may be among your stealthiest weapon. The enemy never sees it coming. Think about it for a minute. God used forgiveness to deliver us from the enemy's camp. All we have to do is repent and receive that forgiveness to remain free from oppression and condemnation the enemy heaps on our souls when we sin.

But there's another side to that truth: When we walk in forgiveness toward others, the enemy cannot put us into bondage to resentment, bitterness and unforgiveness. When you look at forgiveness through this lens, it becomes a powerful weapon that keeps your heart free and clean. Indeed, obeying God's command to forgive opens the door for God to "punish all disobedience" that caused you harm.

Forgiveness is a double-edged sword. If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you (Matt. 6:15). Unforgiveness hinders your fellowship with God and affects your anointing. You may still command devils in the name of Jesus, but authentic spiritual authority is diluted when you fail to obey God's command to love people. Love and unforgiveness do not flow from the same spring.

If you do not forgive, it will hinder your prayer life. Jesus said, "Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). Spiritual warfare falls under the umbrella of prayer. How can you effectively bind devils when you yourself are bound with

unforgiveness? Unforgiveness puts you at clear disadvantage on the spiritual battlefield.

### **Overcome Evil With Good**

Spiritual warfare is more than binding devils in Jesus' name. Spiritual warfare is forgiving those who oppose you, hurt you, or persecute you. And not only forgiving but blessing. And not only blessing but trusting God to avenge you.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offered revelation on how to deal with people who mistreat you: "I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:44). How can you apply that revelation if you aren't willing to forgive?

Paul wrote, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19-21).

You may not feel like forgiving. You may feel like giving that someone a piece of your mind. You may not feel like blessing your enemy. You may feel like telling the whole town what they did. You may not feel like showing kindness. You may feel like putting your wrath on display. But when you do you give the enemy a toehold, which can lead to a foothold, which can lead to a stronghold.

The weapon of forgiveness is mighty not only to pull down strongholds, but to prevent the enemy from establishing a stronghold in the first place. Indeed, forgiveness is a powerful weapon—one that is too often neglected in our binding and loosing exercises. So before you head to the battlefield,

consider that the Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger, and abundant in mercy and loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression (Numbers 14:18 AMP).

The Lord is a warrior—and He never loses a battle. When you follow His lead and forgive—when you set your heart to overcome evil with good and allow God to take vengeance—you can't lose. Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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## When Spiritual Abuse Brainwashes the Saints

When I read about the two Westboro Baptist daughters' decision to leave the hate-mongering congregation last week, I rejoiced! Their bravery is likely to embolden others to escape this radical **cult**. I expect to hear other reports of people leaving Westboro Baptist—and denouncing their vile practices—in the days ahead.

Yes, I rejoiced when I heard that the **Holy Spirit** broke in with light and set Megan Phelps-Roper and her younger sister, Grace, free. But soon that joy turned to **intercession**.

I understand all too well the hateful rhetoric that will harass these women for weeks, months or even years to come. No, not from those Westboro has persecuted in the past. Indeed, the sisters have received a warm embrace from many

Christians in the wake of their high-profile departure. Rather, these brave women are facing a barrage of backlash from those who claimed to love them, yes, from the ones who yell anti-gay or anti-Jewish slogans at funerals of servicemen.

Although Westboro is an extreme example, verbal **persecution** is common when folks escape churches where **spiritual abuse** reigns. I've endured this type of persecution first-hand—and I've heard from many others who have also experienced the cursing and judgment that often chases those who escape the clutches of spiritual abuse, Christian cults and controlling ministries. (Check out my past articles on spiritual abuse and how to recognize cults.)

### **Extreme Spiritual Abuse**

Why do I keep writing about **spiritual abuse**? Because it still exists in religious organizations, and too few want to even acknowledge it—much less talk about it and reach out to those who need the love of Christ to restore their damaged souls. Again, although Westboro Baptist church is an extreme example of spiritual abuse—most churches aren't so obviously hate-inspired—the church's response to the Phelps's granddaughters parallels what people typically face when they exit a controlling church.

For example, the Phelps granddaughters say their family “now considers us betrayers, and we are cut off from their lives.” This is the outcome when you leave a spiritually abusive church. If anyone asks what happened to you, they are told not to contact you—just to pray. Not-so-subtle insinuations suggest you've backslidden or even turned your back on Christ altogether. People who were once your spiritual family mark you as a traitor. And you lose your once-beloved Christian community in the twinkle of an eye.

Shirley Phelps-Roper responded publicly the day after the news

of her daughters' departure made headlines, saying, "The New Testament is full of people that start right, but then fall away." Can you imagine a mother—a mother!—so quickly dismissing her children? There was no mention in her statement about praying for her daughters. She seemingly wrote them off, quoting 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Such is the power of a spiritually abusive system. It brainwashes its members to the degree that they will often turn against their own family before they will consider any possible wrongdoing within the organization. Shirley Phelps-Roper's indictment must have cut the girls at the core. What a painful statement to hear from your own mothers' mouth!

### **Judgment and Curses**

Next, Westboro Baptist Church spokesman Steve Drain told *The Kansas City Star*, "Those two girls were kind of straddling the idea that they wanted to be of the world but that they would also miss their family, the only thing they ever knew. If they continue with the position that they have, those two girls, yeah, they're going to hell."

What? So now Drain is playing God, judging their eternal salvation? This is part of the cult mentality that believes it is the only one that has truth or eternal security. And this is the type of backlash people who leave spiritually abusive systems endure—whether they ever read it in the newspaper or not. As I said, I've known spiritually abusive pastors to judge someone's salvation after they departed a controlling church—or declare that they will lose their anointing, miss their destiny and walk in circles for the rest of their lives.

Where **spiritual abuse** rules, you don't have to leave to meet with **persecution**. There's plenty on the inside. Case in point:

Lauren Drain, author of a memoir entitled, *Banished: Surviving My Years In The Westboro Baptist Church*, was excommunicated from the church in 2007. Drain in a 2010 interview, “I saw some hypocrisy, and I mentioned it to them and they hated it. You’re not supposed to question anything.”

Spiritually abusive churches want you to join the yes-man club. You are not allowed to question the pastor (in a right, sincere spirit) about anything. If you do, you are labeled a troublemaker and shunned, stripped of any authority you may carry, or sometimes forced to leave.

### **Signs of Spiritual Abuse**

These are just a few of the insights we now have into how Westboro Baptist Church operates internally. But I know this from my research and my personal experience: Where you find cults and spiritual abuse, you’ll also find unspoken expectations, “can’t talk” rules, power-posturing, isolation tactics, an inappropriate demand for loyalty, and all types of Scripture violations.

Westboro Baptist Church may be one of the most visible cults in our time, but I am convinced based on the hundreds who reach out to me about this topic that **spiritual abuse** remains a major problem—sometimes even in what appear to be friendly, **charismatic** churches. That’s part of the problem with spiritual abuse. You typically don’t see it manifest until you are sucked so far into the system that it’s hard to escape.

So, will you join with me in praying for the Phelps’ granddaughters and others who are trapped in Christian cults, controlling ministries and spiritually abusive systems? Will you intercede for the captives that need to be set free? It was for freedom that Christ set us free (Gal. 5:1). Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her

website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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## Could Bonnke's Prophetic Declaration Spark a Great Awakening?

You've surely heard the growing body of **prophecies** declaring the impending **judgment of God** on America. Indeed, *The Harbinger*—a book that many believe holds the secret to America's not so pleasant future—has remained on the *New York Times*' best-seller list for more than a year. Rabbi Jonathan Cahn's prophetic message is resonating with believers and unbelievers alike—and for good reason.

So when Evangelist **Reinhard Bonnke** stood on the grounds of the Vero Beach Airport proclaiming “All America Shall Be Saved” in early February 2013, the declaration demanded my attention. After all, this is the same German evangelist who declared “All Africa Shall Be Saved” and witnessed more than 55 million African souls make a decision to renounce Islam, witchcraft and other strange gods—and commit to follow Jesus Christ—in just a nine-year period. 55 million souls.

Despite the judgment prophecies, despite the rising gay agenda, despite the increasing persecution against Christianity in the United States, Bonnke made a bold declaration for the devils in Vero Beach and beyond to hear that night: “All America Shall Be Saved.”

As I sat listening with my spiritual ears to Bonnke announcing that the Vero Beach Gospel Fest is the beginning of something

greater, tears filled my eyes and hope filled my heart. And when Bonnke said the **Holy Spirit** spoke to him about going to other cities around the United States and filling stadiums, I began to see prophetically the magnitude of what was unfolding in that very moment.

It's been prophesied that Florida is a "forerunner state." John the Baptist was a forerunner—a voice crying in the wilderness who was called to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight (Mark 1:3). And just a few feet in front of me stood one of the most effective soul-winners in church history—in the so-called "forerunner state"—talking about how the Holy Spirit was going to launch him out from here to the nation. Again, declaring "All America Shall Be Saved!"

We know that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom. 10:13). But it was clear by the masses that flooded the altar that night—some of them weeping and others falling to their knees in repentance—that many Americans have never heard the simple gospel of Christ. They have seen the picture of the Last Supper hanging up in grandma's house. They have channel-surfed past TV preachers pontificating on prosperity. They have visited a local church on Christmas and Easter. Yet too many have never heard the pure gospel of Christ.

Could that be because the American church culture largely prizes headcounts over heart change and therefore pushes programs instead of clear gospel presentations? Don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that we craft every Sunday morning message with a purely evangelistic thrust. Believers need the meat of the Word to grow. But what are these meat-eating believers doing between Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m. when the church doors close and the next Sunday morning at 10 a.m. when the church doors open again?

In other words, what are our local churches doing to present

the simple gospel of Christ in the neighborhoods in which God has established our congregation? Many are doing great works. But many of us need to break out of the four walls of our air-conditioned building and reach out to the lost and unchurched in the name of Jesus. Too many of us are cozied up in the comfort of our Christian social club in the name of religion. And that's why Bonnke's anointed words so penetrated my heart and revived hope in my soul.

For every prophecy about judgment on America, there seems to be another prophecy about a revival, renewal or awakening. The Lord has spoken to me—and many others—about another **Great Awakening**. Nearly six years ago, He told me it would grow darker before the light shines brightly in this nation again. It has indeed grown darker. I believe it will grow darker still, but the darkness will not overpower the light.

Evangelism brings the light of the gospel to darkened souls who don't understand what's truly at stake—their eternal position. Could it be possible that Bonnke's declarations from a small airport field in Vero Beach could be the spark that sets off a fire of evangelism in this nation? Could it be possible that even as we see signs of God's discipline upon our nation that the **Holy Spirit** could begin sweeping from coast to coast in response to years of prayer for revival? Could it be possible that what occurred at the Gospel Fest was a prophetic declaration of God's will in this hour?

I believe so. I've attended a lot of meetings. I've listened to a lot of sermons. I've witnessed a lot of prayer rallies. But nothing moved me like Bonnke's declaration of God's will: "All America Shall Be Saved." Imagine how the culture would shift if 55 million Americans made a decision for Christ in the next nine years? Lord, show mercy on this nation, stretch out your hand of protection over this land, fill stadiums with lost souls who need to hear the simple gospel, and save souls, in the name of Jesus! Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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# Why Traditional Religion Is Threatened by Women in Ministry

Last week, J. Lee Grady asked a pointed question in his *Fire in My Bones* column: What part of Galatians 3:28 don't we understand?

Galatians 3:28 declares, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Lee went on to debunk "6 Gender Myths in the Church."

Some may say Lee was asking for it with the headline and even the subject matter, for that matter. His heart may have been on his sleeve as he defended the God-given rights of women to find their place in ministry. But in reality, his six points weren't all that edgy.

If you strip out the emotional triggers, Lee was merely suggesting that women are suited for more than children's ministry, interceding, mothering and following. He suggested that women can lead worship and teach the Bible with men in the room—and they shouldn't be labeled as Jezebels if God called them to the work.

I thought in this day and age we could all agree on those simple points. But the article set off a firestorm of debate—and it got nasty as the religious spirit manifested.

Mind you, Lee did not assert that women should usurp men as senior pastors of churches or as heads of households, yet that was the point on which many of the vitriolic responses to his column centered. The comment boards became a showcase of traditional, legalistic religion—and flesh-spilling out all over my screen.

Surely, Paul the apostle—whose words about women remaining quiet in church and having no authority over a man are often trumpeted in these types of debates—would have rebuked some of the men commenting on Lee's article for seemingly disregarding the value of women in ministry altogether.

If God can use a donkey to minister to a prophet, can't he use a woman to minister to a man? But rather than arguing all the points in the Bible where God used women in powerful ministries—or even pointing to examples through modern history where God used women to preach the gospel to the masses with signs following—I'd like to address the spirit of religion that oppresses women (and men and children, too).

The nasty comments, flesh, and wrong attitudes expressed in the comments under Lee's article lead me to believe that women who are on fire for God and making an impact in ministry are a threat to some men. Perhaps, better stated, these women are a threat to the religious spirit that's influencing them to launch their oppressive word bombs. I'm by no means a feminist (I can hear that accusation in the spirit even now) but I have a hard time watching so-called men of God degrading women of God. How it must grieve the Holy Spirit!

Something else that grieves the Holy Spirit is false Jezebel accusations. Some people like to accuse women in ministry of being Jezebels. I just wrote a book on the spirit of Jezebel

that will make its way to bookstore shelves in June 2013. So false Jezebel accusations hit a nerve with me. A “Jezebel” is not merely a controlling woman.

Jesus called out that woman Jezebel for teaching and seducing His servants to commit sexual immorality and serve idols (Rev. 2:20). When you accuse someone of flowing in a Jezebel spirit, you are accusing them of doing something far more sinister than operating in control and manipulation—you are accusing them of operating in the realm of immorality and idolatry.

Traditional religion works to prevent people from entering the kingdom (Matt. 23:13). As I read through the comments on Lee’s article, I wondered how many souls died and went to hell while the religious spirit was having a field day breeding strife, twisting Scripture and degrading women. Some people seemingly spent the better part of their day arguing over women in ministry. Did it change anything? Did it save any souls? No, the devil had a field day with it.

One commenter, Alan Mowbray, perhaps said it best: “If we exerted as much attention to seeking God’s heart and introducing the lost to Jesus as we do in arguing who does what in the body of Christ, would this even be an issue?” Amen.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That? You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.*

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# Defeating an Unbelievable Enemy of Your Faith

With Babylon rising, cruel bondage is a reality for many in the body of Christ. Many blood-bought believers are running what feels like an endless rat race that steals their energy—and often their dreams and visions of a better tomorrow.

I assure you there is a way of escape, a path to rest, a sure route to enter your Promised Land. But there's a behemoth standing in between you and God's best for your life. It's an enemy so insidious that it's difficult to recognize and perhaps more difficult to cast out, because its very nature is to rob the faith you need to overcome it. But nothing is too hard for God!

That enemy is called unbelief, and it's often the result of deferred hope that makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12). This is not a new enemy. Rather, unbelief is an ancient foe that continues to oppress modern day "believers" despite the centuries-old revelation that the just shall live by faith (Heb. 10:38).

## Falling on Deaf Ears

Indeed, when the Lord made promises of **deliverance** to the children of Israel in Exodus, those promises fell on deaf ears. Since faith comes by hearing, the spirit of unbelief works to deafen our ears so we can't listen to what the Spirit of God is saying to the church. And unbelief often works through oppression.

God said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel: 'I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own

people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt. I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!’ So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery” (Exodus 6:2-9 NLT)

Is that you? Do you tune out during church because you’ve heard it all before and nothing ever changes? Have you stopped your daily devotions because you are too exhausted from work to spend time with the Lord? Does your speech sound like one who is defeated rather than one who is victorious? What types of thoughts go through your head when you lay down at night? What about when you get up in the morning? Are you discouraged by the brutality of Babylon?

The Amplified Bible translation of Exodus 6:9 says, “they refused to listen to Moses because of their impatience and anguish of spirit and because of their cruel bondage.” The Message says they were “beaten down in spirit by the harsh slave conditions.”

Babylon (the world’s system) will certainly beat you down—and enslave you—if you let it. But you don’t have to let it. You can take a stand by the choice of your will to believe God’s promises and shut out the work of unbelief. You can renew your mind and send unbelief running.

### **Shaking Off Unbelief**

I used to have a spirit of unbelief. I was studying Kenneth Hagin’s classic materials on faith at the time, so it was somewhat ironic when a **deliverance minister** confronted me with the cold hard truth. Although I was studying faith, I simply was not able to apply the principles of faith with any success. I even doubted my own salvation. I was also full of

fear and doubt, two other combatants to faith. Even still, I recognize unbelief trying to creep into my soul and put me in back in bondage. We all have to fight the good fight of faith—every day (1 Tim. 6:12).

I'm declaring to you right now that it's time shake off the impatience. By faith and patience we inherit the promise of God (Heb. 6:12). It's time to shake off the anguish of spirit. God has not given us a spirit of anguish. He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). It's time to shake off the bondages in our lives, whether that's debt, religion, or some type of sin that's hindering intimate fellowship with God.

Saints, it's time to combat the spirit of unbelief that's keeping us from our Promised Land. It's time to fight the good fight of faith with fiercer determination than ever before. I'm not talking about a prosperity gospel or a name-it-claim-it theology. I'm talking about walking in the victory Christ died to give you. I'm talking about walking free from every bondage, including unbelief, that's holding you back from your destiny. I'm talking about resisting the devil. He has to flee. Amen.

*Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including Doubtless: Faith that Overcomes the World. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.*

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## **When Demon-Inspired Believers**

# Lay Hands On You

You've probably fallen victim to malicious gossip through the lips of another Christian. But physical assault gives a literal meaning to wrestling **principalities and powers**, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

Indeed, when a demon physically attacks you through a believer, a wrestling match with the flesh and blood that's hosting the foul spirit can ensue.

I've had several "wrestling matches" with people seeking **deliverance** and I've witnessed many more. Some of these precious people manifested with strength that far surpassed their human stature. On one occasion, a spirit of fear manifested so strongly through a 110-pound woman that it took five people—including two full-grown men—to restrain her while commanding the spirit to bow in the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:10).

Despite many years of participating in **deliverance ministry**, though, I've never experienced anything quite like what I'm about to share.

We were holding a special event. The atmosphere was charged with God's presence. The service was bathed in prayer and worship. The leadership—from several different ministries—was in perfect harmony. Every gift was in its place and the anointing was flowing. We all expected a great move of God. Of course, when God begins moving demons often begin manifesting. We expected that, but not in the way it panned out.

## **Wild-Eyed, Demonic Prayer**

I was scheduled to preach in a few minutes when I noticed a wild-eyed person praying in what sounded like a demonic language and laying hands on a visiting leader from another

nation.\* I looked around hoping to dispatch an usher break up the incident but everyone was deep in worship—and no one in the young church had been in this type of situation before. They were stunned. I walked over and gently nudged the wild-eyed person, who was widely known among the congregation, and asked them to sit down. This person was not assigned to the altar and had no authority to lay hands on people.

When the wild-eyed one refused to loosen the strong grip on the visiting minister, I began to pull them away with more force. The person held tight and refused to let go. I would not relent, in the name of Jesus. That's when the person suddenly lunged toward me, smacked me in the head and began spewing forth curses and releasing **witchcraft**. It was a literal wrestling match at the altar! Although it was intense, it only lasted seconds because the demon has to bow at the name of Jesus. But it still caused quite a stir.

Jesus cast out devils everywhere he went and some of them caused violent reactions in the person carrying them before they came out at His command. When Jesus cast an unclean spirit out of a man in the synagogue, the spirit convulsed his human host and cried out with a loud voice first (Mark 1:24). On another occasion, a demon was throwing a boy down and convulsing him (Luke 9:42). Still another time, a demon threw the man down before finally coming out (Luke 4:33-35).

### **Breaking Demonic Curses**

When you encounter these types of demonic attacks, you have to think quick on your feet. “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn” (Isaiah 54:17). But sometimes you have to break word curses demon-inspired people release at you in the midst of the battle. I was completely covered in witchcraft after the encounter I mentioned, and yet had to step into the pulpit in minutes. Two leaders were savvy enough to recognize the attack and break off the assignment quickly.

By the same token, the visiting minister who was the initial target of the demonic attack soon began experiencing head, neck and back pain from whatever assignment the wild-eyed, demonized person unleashed against her. We broke that assignment off and the pain left. After leaving the service for some time, the wild-eyed person returned to the sanctuary and started releasing word curses against me as I preached. One leader literally saw the fiery darts in the spirit coming against me. We had **intercessors** stationed around the sanctuary to combat the onslaught. Again, no weapon formed against you can prosper. But that doesn't mean you ignore the fiery darts flying toward you. And it doesn't mean you wrestle solo.

Of course, God prevailed. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). I delivered a prophetic message despite the warfare. The enemy created a disturbance in hopes of robbing people in the room of their faith to receive the message. And, truth be known, the demonized person's attacks did scare some in the congregation who had never seen an outpouring of the Spirit of God, much less demonic resistance to the movement.

But nothing is too hard for God (Jer. 32:27). At the name of Jesus, every knee must bow—and every knee did. When we made the altar call, many were filled with the Spirit, many received **prophetic words**, and many were delivered from hurts and wounds. Indeed, many experienced a touch from God they had never experienced before. The demonized person chose not to participate in the altar call, but was treated with love, kindness and forgiveness—and offered counseling.

I said all that to say this: When you move in the things of the Spirit you can expect resistance. You can expect manifestations. You can expect full-blown attacks. You might not anticipate how or when—or through whom—the attack will come, but ultimately you can take authority over it in the name of Jesus, even if the demon does cause a stir before it bows. Don't let the commotion distract you from what God has

in mind for His people. God is there in the midst of the resistance, the manifestations and the full-blown attacks to set the captives free. Your job is to walk in love and authority and refuse to let the enemy's shenanigans rob from the people God has called you to serve. Amen.

*\*I changed some insignificant details to protect the identity of the people involved.*

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## **Why I Don't Sell Personal Prophecy and Dream Interpretations**

Every week I get at least a handful of digital requests from precious people all over the world desperately seeking a **prophetic word**. Some come begging. Others come demanding. Still others come with money in hand to buy a prophecy or **dream interpretation**.

Seriously, this happens just about every day and more than once on most days. It's an unfortunate symptom of modern-day **prophetic ministry**—prophetic ministry that has too often taught people to depend on prophets to “go to the throne” and “get a word” for them instead of fulfilling the Ephesians 4:11 mandate to equip the saints.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not at all against **personal prophecy**. In fact, over the next two weeks I'll be ministering on prophetic promises at my church. I fully expect the **Holy Spirit** to move. I fully expect many hungry believers to receive prophetic words. Personal prophecy—edifying, exhorting and comforting believers—is vital in this hour.

### **The Rise of Internet Prophets**

But prophetic ministry doesn't operate like a gumball machine. You can't put in a quarter—or send an e-mail or Facebook message—and out comes a prophetic word. It just doesn't work that way. Part of this misunderstanding is rooted in the proliferation of what I call the "Internet prophets." Some actually take out Google Ads promoting how you can get a personal prophecy (even every day). Others promise a prophetic word delivered to your e-mail inbox for about the price of a tank of gas.

When I see this sort of stuff, it grieves me for two reasons. First, the gifts of the Spirit are not for sale. We saw Simon the Sorcerer try to buy the ability to lay hands on people and get them filled with the **Holy Spirit**. And we saw Peter sorely rebuke him for it. In fact, Peter said, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23).

And let's not forget Elisha's servant Gehazi. After Elisha helped Naaman find a cure for leprosy, the commander of the Syrian king's army offered him a gift for his service. Elisha refused, even when Naaman urged him to take it. Gehazi ran after Naaman to collect a reward. Elisha found him out and Gehazi ended up a leper (see 2 Kings 5). I'm not saying that

prophets cannot receive offerings for ministry. But we must be careful not to merchandise the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus said, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

Here's my bottom line: I don't believe in asking for "love offerings" in exchange personal prophecy. I think that relegates the prophet to the domain of your local palm reader who charges \$5 for a 15-minute session. And I'm not sure the results of such an exchange fare much better for the one seeking supernatural guidance.

### **Don't Put Prophets in Pedestals**

When people come to me seeking, demanding, or offering money for **prophetic words** it also bothers me because, again, this is often learned behavior. These precious believers genuinely want to hear from God and they don't know it's inappropriate to approach a prophet like a psychic. Again, many saints have been conditioned to run to the prophet every time they need to hear from God. That's not healthy. It puts the prophet up on a pedestal. Every believer can and should be able to hear from God for themselves. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

Believers may need training in order to separate the voice of their mind from the voice of the devil from the voice of the **Holy Spirit**. One of the functions of five-fold prophets is to help impart that discernment through practical teaching and training, as well as prayer. But too many prophets—and especially Internet prophets—have set themselves up as the answer man. In doing so, they are robbing believers of more than money. They are robbing believers of a chance to pursue a more intimate relationship with God.

Again, don't get me wrong. I believe in **personal prophecy**. And I believe sometimes you need a word from a prophet or

prophetic minister as confirmation. There are many voices out there and when you are under tremendous stress; when you are at a fork in the road and don't know which way to turn; when you have pursued God with all your heart and remain confused... personal prophecy can build you up, offer you direction and warnings, and comfort you.

### **Prophetic Ministry Still Misunderstood**

So when I get phone calls, e-mails and Facebook messages begging, demanding and offering to pay for prophetic words, it grieves me because I can see clearly that there is still a major misunderstanding about **prophetic ministry** in the body of Christ. And that can put these precious believers in danger of getting merchandised, deceived, and otherwise steered in the wrong direction in the name of sincerely "seeking God." I don't have time to respond to each and every one in detail about the role of the prophet, why it's inappropriate for prophets to charge for prophecies, or how to hear from God.

But let me assure you of this: God wants to speak to you. In fact, He's probably speaking to you more than you realize. I have a free prophetic teaching series on YouTube about how to discern the voice of God. It's old and the quality isn't the greatest, but it may help you. There are also many books on the topic.

Precious saints, God wants to speak to you directly. Don't run to a prophet—and don't pay a prophet—for prophetic words. Run to God and sow your time into fellowshiping with the **Holy Spirit**. You won't be disappointed and you won't walk away with a manufactured poor prophecy that leads you in the wrong direction. The Holy Spirit will lead you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). That's a promise from King Jesus. Amen.

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## **A Prophetic Word for 2013:**

# Return to Antioch

I was taking a long drive from South Florida to Orlando, praying in the Spirit, and asking the Lord to reveal some prophetic direction for 2013. I must have prayed in the Spirit for two hours before I heard these three words: "Return to Antioch."

With a long, dark stretch of highway still in front of me, I could not readily dive into Scripture to seek understanding about what the Holy Spirit was trying to tell me. So I continued praying in the Spirit and meditating on those three words: "Return to Antioch."

When I opened my Bible to Acts 14, prophetic revelation for the body of Christ—particularly the leadership of the body of Christ—began to unfold:

When Paul and Barnabas were serving together in the mission fields, they made a return visit to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. With the return to Antioch, they had a clear mandate: to "strengthen the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

I like how the Amplified Bible draws out this verse: "Establishing and strengthening the souls and the hearts of the disciples, urging and warning and encouraging them to stand firm in the faith, and [telling them] that it is through many hardships and tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

And the Message Bible puts it this way: "putting muscle and sinew in the lives of the disciples, urging them to stick with what they had begun to believe and not quit, making it clear to them that it wouldn't be easy: 'Anyone signing up for the kingdom of God has to go through plenty of hard times'."

As I meditated on this verse, it became abundantly apparent how different the apostles' message was to what we hear in most local churches—and on most Christian TV channels—today. The apostles understood that we are in a spiritual war against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (see Eph. 6:12). The apostle urged and warned believers to fight the good fight of faith—not for cars and houses and bigger ministries but pure faith in Christ that refuses to compromise the gospel. And the apostles made it clear that it wouldn't be easy.

We need to “return to Antioch.” We need to return to sound doctrine that strengthens the spirits and souls of the disciples, encourages them to contend for the true faith, and refuses to sugar coat the Christian walk. We need to “return to Antioch” and leave behind the Hollywood Christianity, the pillow prophets, the prosper-me gospel and the other foolish practices that have crept into the 21<sup>st</sup> century church while we were sleeping. We need to “return to Antioch” and walk with Christ no matter what it costs us. We need to be found faithful when the Lord returns.

The apostles knew that a Great Falling Away was a reality. Today, I believe we are seeing the shadows of the Great Falling Away—and some leaders in the body of Christ are escorting their disciples through the doorway that leads to compromise. Some are giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. Some are speaking lies in hypocrisy. Some have iron-seared consciences. Some are deceived, being deceived and deceiving others.

When the apostle's returned to Antioch, their message was clear. And their message rings as true in this hour as it did 2,000 years ago: “We must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.” There's no getting around that no matter what famous television pastors tell you. So, leaders, I implore you

to return to Antioch. Strengthen the believers. Encourage them to continue in the truth faith, not the perverted “gimme-gimme” faith that is so prevalent in the Western culture. Please, return to Antioch. Amen.

Click here to watch a video of this message.

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