

Why This Common Misunderstanding of Demons Is So Dangerous

It's a Tuesday night, and it is hot in the sticky way that the state of Georgia becomes all too often. I'm sitting in a chocolate-brown microsuede reading chair that was clearly chosen by someone who cared more about quaint charm than comfort. The smell of burnt coffee beans mingles nicely with the vaguely European jazz, interrupted only by the occasional sharp hiss of steam.

A girl sits at the table across from me. A demon is creeping up her back—a sniveling, pathetic looking thing with bony limbs and dead, gray skin. It starts at the leg of her chair, the look on its face a strange perversion of a 2-year-old taking a tentative step toward an open cookie jar. She doesn't react as the demon puts a hand on her leg. As if this is the signal to go, the demon hops onto the back of the chair and, with twitching fingers, grabs a small handful of her hair in its oily palms.

Now the girl reacts—whether she realizes it or not—reaching back and running her fingers over the spot where the demon grasped. The black oil from the demon's hand, which was almost invisible in her dark hair, is all too plain on her otherwise clean fingers.

A look of frustration cuts across her face. She pinches the bridge of her nose with dirtied fingers, and then runs them along her cheek, leaving smears all the way. It's subtle, but I see the look on her face move from frustration to sadness for the briefest of moments. The demon sees this better than I do, seizing the opportunity to lean in and whisper something into her ear. I can't hear what he's saying or read his

lipless mouth, but I know what he said: "You're not good enough. No one loves you. You're not worth it. This always happens to you." He tells her the same accusations that assault all of our minds daily.

Fortunately, the girl isn't having any of it. She shakes off the sadness almost as quickly as it comes, straightening her shoulders with a deep breath that sends the demon tumbling off the back of the chair. It skitters away with folded arms and a hurt look in its eye. I am happy to see her shake off the lies, but the girl's face still has those smudges. I imagine they will stay until she decides they don't belong.

I've seen angels, demons, and other spiritual things for as long as I can remember. I see them whenever I have the mind to look, and I see them with my eyes, just as I would see you if you were sitting in front of me.

Movies, overzealous preachers and an underdeveloped sense of identity in Christ have caused many misconceptions about demons. Some think the world is stuffed full of evil forces poised and ready to pounce the moment you pick up that heavy metal album or step into that horror movie. Others think the only thing holding back the torrent of darkness that aches to pour into your life is a healthy diet of good deeds and teeth-gritting resistance to temptations of the flesh and eyes.

The truth is that demons are more attracted by what you think than what you do. The deeper truth is that knowing who you are in Christ determines how you think. The only way to know who you are in Christ is to know what He thinks about you. That is to say, if you know what God has to say about you, then the lies of the enemy seem silly. This is the majority of what you need to know about dealing with demons.

The girl in the coffee shop didn't do anything wrong. Maybe she saw a friend say something bad about her on Facebook, maybe she got frustrated at a homework assignment or maybe it

was just the end of a hard day. Whatever the reason, the demon was attracted to her distress not because he wanted to tempt her to commit some sin but because he wanted to use that moment as an opportunity for accusation.

The demonic tries to hold our mistakes in the air as proof that we have failed as children of God. It's ironic, since Jesus came and died so our inadequacies would no longer be capable of keeping us apart from Him. I think that's why He tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to pursue prophecy. If you know what God has to say about you, it doesn't matter what anyone or anything else has to say. {eo}

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