

There are multiple stories in the Gospels about Jesus casting out demons  
61 verses mention the word demon in the Gospels  
We often don't know what to do with this because it feels so foreign to our experience

Additionally, Matthew, Mark and Luke record that Jesus gave the disciples authority over demons<sup>i</sup>  
Jesus sent out the 12 and also 70 to go among the people  
He gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits and heal the sick  
In Luke 10:17, we read, *'The seventy returned with joy, saying,  
"Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!"'*  
In Acts 16:18 Paul speaks to the slave girl telling fortunes and making her owners very rich  
*"I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."  
And it came out that very hour.*

It still feels foreign to our experience and we sometimes dismiss it as not applicable to us  
Or we explain away demons as just illnesses that were not understood in Jesus' day  
And relegate the cure to modern medicine rather than prayer

For a long time, I didn't know we could do this—until there came a time that despite professional help,  
someone I knew was escalating with fear and could not be calmed  
Not knowing what to do or how to pray and feeling desperate, I prayed hoping it would help  
"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Satan, you must leave now!"  
To my amazement, things returned to normal  
It felt surreal but I was entirely grateful for the normality which returned.

There were other times that I was surprised at the dramatic way in which I saw unholy spirits respond  
I began to recognize that what scripture said, was true—  
God has given us authority over the unholy spirits  
I began to notice that sometimes things were their right size—even when something negative  
But other times, it was inflated—bigger than seemed reasonable—blown up  
It was in these times, that I realized that an unholy spirit had inflated the situation  
Those were times I was given the authority to speak to the unholy spirit and demand it leave

Walter Wink<sup>ii</sup> helps us understand that all people, institutions, governments, powers, etc.  
Have an outer presence—the outer is what we see, the physical manifestation  
It is the body, the building, the organization, the structure that is visible  
But they also have an inner aspect—that we don't see, an inner spiritual ethos  
If redeemed, we experience it positively  
But if the inner aspect or spiritual ethos is fallen, it takes on a negative presence  
Wink talks about ways in which the network of Powers become integrated together  
around idolatrous values and become the Domination System  
This Domination System is powerful and exerts control over those it encounters  
These are the inflated unholy spirits that I began to notice

This is what we have noticed in our world today that is troubling us so much  
We've talked the last two weeks about the sense that something is terribly wrong  
We feel it in our bodies, in our emotions, in our spirits  
It is present in actions in our government, in natural disasters, in sexual abuse  
It seems that there is no escaping the rampant way that it moves over us

We were tempted to call it political, but it is more than that—it is an unholy spirit presence  
It is a darkness that seems overwhelming

We know that Light dispels the darkness—we know that physically when you light a match  
*John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*  
But lately, the darkness has seemed to be closing in  
We are looking for tools that will shine Light into the darkness  
Just like when the power goes out—I get my flashlight, matches, candles, lantern  
We have named tools—to tell the truth, we are enough, fear not, wear the protection of God  
But we have also been given authority to speak to the unholy spirits that inflate the darkness

We are given authority to stand in the Presence of God and say no to the evil around us  
We have the authority of Jesus to speak to unholy spirits and say No! No more! Leave!  
If we, as Christians, took our full authority and place here, things would change  
We can say a Holy No! to the unholy spirits that surround us

We think we aren't powerful enough to do this—we don't have to be  
I didn't have a clue what I was doing that first time, but I had to do something  
In calling on the name and power of Jesus to dispel evil—it had to go  
When I do that, I bring the full power and presence of Jesus to bear in my Holy No!  
To speak in the name of someone, means that I carry their authority to speak

You have everything you need to stand and say no to evil in the name of Jesus  
Start by asking God to show you how to pray and when to pray  
What is ours to do today? God, how would you have us pray into this situation?  
We name the truth of this darkness that surrounds us  
We Listen for God's wisdom and direction about which piece is ours to pray into  
True, whether it is big or small, whether it pertains to our home or the world  
Often God will give us an image or picture which informs our prayer  
We acknowledge that when we are given our piece, we have authority to speak  
In the Name and Power of Jesus, we speak to the unholy and tell it to go  
In the Name and Power of Jesus, we speak to the unholy and tell it a Holy No!

Never leave the clean "house" empty or the spirits return in mass—Matthew 12:43-45  
Those places we are called to cast out spirits from—we want to fill up with Holy Spirit  
We must stand and take our true place as People of God—inhabiting the house  
Fill every crook and cranny with Holy Spirit scrubbing bubbles and sweet Presence of God

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 10:1-15; Mark 3:13-19; 6:6-13; Luke 10:1-24

<sup>ii</sup> Walter Wink's books, *Engaging the Powers* and *The Powers That Be*, talk about this in much greater detail.