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SET UP BY THE DEVIL

I have been ministering in prisons for 15 years or so, and a trip at the end of last month was the best ever. Barry and I drove over Monarch Pass to Canyon City, 250 miles, on a Friday, while Mary and Cheryl drove down from Ft. Collins to lead music and help with the personal prayer ministry. About 85 guys showed up for the first two hour session, and their enthusiastic participation made it clear that it was going to be a good weekend. Following is a brief synopsis of my teaching outline:

FRIDAY EVENING:

My testimony. Told how after I had received Christ as my Savior and had entered the ministry I backslid into the ugly sins that had ruled my life B. C.: alcohol, pornography, pride, and anger toward my wife. That God started a rescue operation by leading me to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that only after that did He lead me into a deliverance experience; that is to say, demons were cast out of me. At the time, having gone through a liberal Methodist seminary, I did not even believe in a literal devil, much less in demons. So that exhilarating experience with the Holy Spirit, and that shocking, frightening experience with the demonic drastically altered my worldview and my life. Shortly afterward, God gave me a vivid dream in which He informed me that He was going to continue the process of healing my heart so that I could start living the Christian life I had been preaching about. (It's a good idea if our secret life lines up with our public profession. Don't you agree?) So God started healing me little by little, and I started trying to learn how to minister to others. Much to my surprise, I learned that the church was filled with people who were in as desperate condition spiritually as I had been. (And it's still true!)

- **The heart.** God is not after our church membership, money, service, or even our prayers and Bible study. These are all important things, and they will find their place in our lives after the FIRST thing is taken care of. The FIRST thing that God is after is our heart. This is another way of saying He is after our life. Your heart is who you really are. *Out of the heart come the issues of life.* Have you ever said something like the following to God: "Lord, I surrender my will to you; I give you my life to use according to your will; I yearn to know you better; I love you so little and desire to love you with my whole being; Lord, I give you my heart." If you have never said that to God, not once but many times, you probably have just enough faith to make you miserable but not enough to give you that peace that passes understanding **But what about those Christians that have truly surrendered themselves to God but still seem incapable of leading a Christian life?** If there are wounds, sins, and lies stuck in your heart, perhaps without your conscious awareness, they are like hooks from the devil that drag you down. For instance, if you were rejected by your father (or mother); if he ignored you, cursed or beat you; if he was an alcoholic, or if he had other women; if he divorced your mother and abandoned you, that is a deep wound in your heart that will impede you in knowing and serving the Lord. That wound can turn into sins such as unforgiveness and bitterness. And it can turn into lies, such as: "God doesn't really love me or He wouldn't have given me a bad father or mother." "I am a loser and can't change." The good news is that Christ came to heal wounded and broken hearts, to forgive our sins, and to deliver us from lies that have paralyzed our lives.

SATURDAY MORNING:

- **Anger.** Anger can destroy your life! (Many of the guys in prison admit that anger is the main thing that got them sent there.) Anger is not a sin, for we know that Jesus was angry on occasion but never sinned. And Ephesians says, *Be angry, but sin not. Don't let the sun go down on your anger.* Jesus said, *Offences will come.* (It is inevitable in this fallen world.) It's human to become angry when we are offended, but if we don't deal with it quickly then darkness will come, and Satan works in darkness. This is the sequence that God wants for our lives: **Offence – anger – forgiveness – work the matter through with the person who offended you – peace.** (See Matthew 18:15) This is the sequence that the devil wants for our lives: **Offence – anger – unforgiveness - bitterness – hatred – vengeance – murder.** Anger and unforgiveness are the seeds of murder! Really! Have you ever been filled with bitterness toward someone? In your heart, didn't you really want them to die? (See Genesis 4)

Anger and bitterness can be a decision within your heart. You can choose to hate and despise someone who offended you. The solution is to repent of that choice, forgive that person in your heart, and seek to work through the situation and to love that person.

Anger can also be a spirit, a demonic entity that attaches itself to the emotion of anger. The solution is to renounce and cast out that spirit of anger, or to have someone minister to you and perform that deliverance. (This is or should be normal Christian ministry.)

- **Word Curses.** According to the Bible, words are tremendously important. God created the universe through His words, and the Son of God is identified as the living Word of God (John 1, Hebrews 1) Then we are told that *Words have the power of death and life.* (Prov. 18:21) This is not just a figure of speech! This is literally true. I could share innumerable stores of how evil words not only destroyed relationships, but destroyed health and brought on early death. Just talk to any wife or child who lived with an abusive, angry, cursing husband or father and let them tell you how it affected them. Our words can bless and comfort and heal, or our words can curse and wound and kill. Our words have spiritual power. . . One time at the Dream Center in Hollywood a young Japanese man told me that his mother was in the hospital, dying. She was filled with disease and pain and her hair was coming out in clumps. He said that twice a week his grand parents would visit her and that his grand father would start berating her. He would stand above her, point his finger in her face, and say, “You stupid fool! You should have sent your children to college so they could make a lot of money. You have brought shame to our family!” He would go on like that for about an hour, and he did that every time he visited his daughter. She was literally withering up and dying, as if he was beaming some sort of death-ray at her. . . . These evil words can get inside a person's heart and mind, and she can start beating herself constantly with words that are soul-destroying. (See the teaching on my website, Overcoming Word Curses, also Overcoming Self-Condensation.)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON:

Occult and Witchcraft - The average American Christian is put off by the topic, “Spiritual Warfare.” Yet the New Testament addresses this theme from beginning to end. Jesus taught more about the devil and demons than anyone in the Bible. According to the Bible, Jesus is the One through whom the Father created the universe. Could He have been mistaken about the nature of reality? Jesus taught that the devil is real, that he has power, that he rules a kingdom of evil beings in a demonic hierarchy of principality and powers. We are in a desperate battle, a wrestling match, *We wrestle not against flesh and blood...* Mr. Average Christian relegates this subject to nonsense and superstition. I thought that way also until demons were cast out of me, and I started making mission trips to Mexico. I quickly ran into people that I could not help until I started learning how Jesus trained His disciples to do this ministry. I learned that CURSES are among the devil's weapons, Word Curses (as covered above), Generational Curses, and Witchcraft Curses. The devil uses these curses to trap and immobilize sincere Christians. The good news is that *Christ came to set the captives free*, and that *Christ became a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'* (Gal. 3:13) Christ not only *died for our sins* and *suffered for our sicknesses*, He also *became a curse for us* so that by His authority we can break the power of the enemy and cast out demonic invaders. This is exactly what Jesus said He came to do in Luke 4:18, and it is what the resurrected Christ authorized the church to do in Mark 16:15-18. (Read it for yourself.) If you or your family ever dabbled in the occult, you may be having spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical afflictions that you will be powerless to overcome until you receive ministry. Jesus specifically said that the church has authority *to bind and to loose* these powers. (Matt. 16:19 & 18:18)

Trauma – Traumatic experiences open people up for awful emotional, mental, physical, spiritual afflictions. The leading cause of disability among service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is PTSD. Likewise, traumas caused by automobile accidents, fire, flood, earthquake, physical and sexual abuse, sudden death of loved ones open people to a huge variety of sicknesses. Of course there are ways to analyze and treat these victims through science, medicine, and psychology. But I try to see this matter through the lens of biblical revelation and spiritual warfare, and by God's grace I have probably seen more victims of trauma dramatically healed than any other category. (See my website, the teaching on TRAUMA) I prayed for a lady, age 45, who had suffered from severe arthritis and pain in her hips for 15 years. When I learned that the sickness began immediately after she had been raped by her cousin, I had her forgive her cousin, took authority over the spirits that came in at the time of that trauma, and immediately all pain and arthritis left. Glory to God! I have taught on trauma scores of times, and I believe I have seen people healed every single time.

Following my teaching on Trauma, I asked if there was someone present who had a lot of pain who would come up in front of the group and let me minister to him. A good-looking young man I will call Ramon immediately came forward. He said, “Everything you taught about describes me! My father was a drug addict, and he hated me. He cursed me constantly and beat me ever since I was little. My mother was also a druggie, and she didn't care what my dad did to me. They were involved with all kinds of witchcraft, and I started using drugs and doing occult stuff. I have bad pain constantly, in my left

shoulder, my stomach and prostate.” I asked him when the pain started. He told me it began about a year ago, after he was sent to prison. He said, “I killed my girl friend.” He said her grandmother was a witch and all her life she cursed her grand daughter and told her she was going to be murdered at an early age. I felt so much sorrow about what Ramon had told me and that this handsome young man was going to waste his whole life in prison that tears started running down my face. I said to the group, “Guys, Ramon was set up by the devil! Do you see it? Ramon was set up and trapped by the devil. He didn't choose to be born to a drug addicted, violent, occultic father and mother. Am I saying he wasn't responsible for the things he did? Of course not. He got involved in all kinds of sinful things, and he knows he did wrong. But do you know how God feels about Ramon? God loves him with all His heart as a precious son. Christ died for Ramon's sin, and for yours and mine, and God is going to heal Ramon and set him free today.” And God did. I briefly led Ramon through the steps of repenting for his sins, and especially for the sin of murdering his girl friend, of forgiving his father and mother, and so forth. I commanded demons to come out of him, and he felt a great release. I prayed for healing and commanded all pain to leave, and instantly he felt relief and said that all pain left his shoulder and his stomach. God did it!

- **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit** – My final teaching at the prison in Canyon City. There are a huge number of different teachings on this subject in the various denominations, but for me it was such a liberating and empowering experience that I can't find words to do it justice. It opened me up to an entirely new relationship with the Lord, a new way to perceive His Word, and a new way to minister to the broken people that He loves. I received power to witness, spiritual gifts (healing, word of knowledge, tongues, etc.), and authority to cast out demons. I don't promote a certain understanding of receiving the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, but I declare that you and I desperately need more of the Holy Spirit, and I exhort you with all my heart to seek the filling, the empowering, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we see the things that are happening on the world scene, we want everything that God has so graciously offered us. Don't let fear of man and unbiblical teaching rob you of what God wants you to have! About 30 guys came forward to seek the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. PTL!

LOVE, NOT SELFLESSNESS

Many years ago I heard someone say that God's intention for us is to be loving, not selfless. For some reason, that statement stuck in my mind. I think that this is an important distinction.

The curse of our fallen condition results in our focus on self. “How do I feel? How do I look? What impression am I making on this person, that person? What do they think of me? Am I comfortable? Am I secure? Etc, etc, etc.” (I have found that the more I focus on myself, the more depressed and cynical I become.)

Jesus says that, *You must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me*. What is this self we must deny? Is it our soul, spirit, heart, fallen nature? Is it this prideful tendency to focus on self? One author said he believes this self we must deny is the false identity that has been assigned to us by the world and the devil and that we have bought into. (That's good, isn't it?)

Selfless is probably a good word, but Jesus never tells us to be selfless, He tells us to love. *Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself*. The definition of selfless is: “Unselfish; altruistic; self-sacrificing; devoted to others' welfare and not our own.” That's all good, but the trap is if I start focusing on my selflessness and goodness and strain my arm patting myself on the back.

Jesus' command to His followers is simple and clear: “Love God and love others.” (The order is important also.) If we will concentrate on loving God and others, it will go a long way toward setting us free from self.

GOD'S UNFOLDING REVELATION

Some insights I got from Chuck Missler :

- God's revelation in the Bible is a process
- What is implicit in the beginning of the Bible becomes explicit later
- The latter explains and develops the former
- A seed becomes a full grown plant
- The law (the Torah), the first five books, is followed by the prophets
- Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah shine the light of revelation on the Torah
- The Old Testament is followed and completed by the New Testament

- The gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are followed by the gospels
- The law and the prophets are followed by the Christ!

MINISTRY

I only get a few contacts as a result of my website, but in the last couple of months I have had telephone ministry with people in Memphis, Tennessee; Murfreesboro, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; London, England; and British Columbia, Canada.

I think that is cool!

WAITING FOR DADDY

Several years ago I shared the following story and just ran across it again:

I was watching a television “special report” one evening and they interviewed a father whose personal story touched my heart. He said that his family had for many years owned a rustic cabin on a lake that they used for summer vacation. He and his wife and four children had just returned from their trip where they had a heart-wrenching experience. As soon as they arrived at the cabin, he and his wife started unloading their car, and the kids ran down to the lake and out on the dock. Almost immediately they heard the children screaming: little four-year-old Sarah had fallen off the dock into ten feet of water. The father ran to the dock and dove into the cold water, swam around desperately trying to find Sarah, and finally came up for air. He dove again, this way and that, but could still not find her. As he got ready to dive a third time, he knew inside that the little girl's time was running out. He prayed and dove down deeper, and he found Sarah clinging tightly to one of the piers of the dock. He had to pry her fingers loose to bring her up. He lifted her up to the dock, they shook her and pressed on her stomach. She coughed and threw up water, and amazingly she was okay.

Later, as the family had her wrapped in blankets in the cabin and were loving on her, the father asked, “Sarah, what were you doing down there?” She said, “Just waiting for you, Daddy.”

There are a lot of people who are desperate and hopeless. And they may be clinging to something that is killing them. They may not even know it, but they are waiting for Daddy. And Daddy loves them so much that He sent His Son to look for them, and to die for them. Now He wants to enlist you and me to go and be a part of His search.

God Bless

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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