

and to welcome the sweet and joyous presence of the Holy Spirit (as opposed to being concerned with the temporary works of evil spirits).

STEPS IN PURSUING DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

So brief an article as this cannot include illustrations from experience or elaboration of various circumstances one encounters in opening to the ministry of deliverance. But perhaps the two most essential things to learn are:

- (1) That your willingness to minister according to the Word of God gives the Holy Spirit a new access to your availability. In other words, He'll bring situations and individuals to you, because you have chosen to allow Him to teach, equip, and prepare you—making you “sufficient unto every good work.” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6) Principle: You don't need to stir up business or parade your ministry in this area. Don't talk about it, just do it.
- (2) That each situation is unique. Handbooks on deliverance, if born of wisdom, will not teach techniques or methods: They will help with principles. But most essentially, learn not to depend upon past experiences. It will keep you from imposing presumptions on any case, and increases your dependency on the Holy Spirit. Principle: Fresh anointing and fresh discernment flow from keeping your walk with Jesus fresh and alive. All power and wisdom flows from Him, through that relationship.

DISCERNING THE ARENAS OF DELIVERANCE

As we have earlier noted, all salvations' operations are a “deliverance.” But within the broad spectrum of that fullness of grace, there are four basic arenas of deliverance from sin, from sickness, from Satan and from self.

Chart A, on the right, is a simple arrangement of biblical truth designed to emphasize the basic and different aspects of human bondage and the way the Word describes the “deliverance” available. There is, for example, a vast difference between that ministry which bears witness to the saving gospel through preaching or personal evangelism, (by which a soul is “born again”), and that ministry by which a believer, tormented by the devil, is “restored” or “recovered” from their oppression by the personal ministry of loving, servant-shepherds or fellow-believers.

Please notice that ministries to the unsaved, the sick, the demonically oppressed and/or the self-ruled, or the undisciplined-through-the-Cross believer are distinguished as separate arenas. However, there are any number of combinations of these problems. For example, a person may, as we've seen in the Bible, be both sick and satanically oppressed—the one related to the other.

Thus, the chart itself is not a ministry guide, but simply a means of distinguishing general areas of the human circumstance that ought to be kept in perspective as distinct, even if they overlap at times.

Chart A

CHART A — DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCE					
BOUND IN	CONDITION	CAUSED BY	DESCRIBED AS	ACTION TO TAKE	DELIVERANCE EXPERIENCED BY
Sin	Dead	Penalty	W ages of Sin” <i>Romans 6:23</i>	Preach Gospel	Receiving Christ <i>James 1:12</i>
Satan	Driven	Slavery	“Servants of Sin” <i>Romans 6:17, 20</i>	Counsel/ Admonish	Resisting the Devil <i>James 4:7</i>
Sickness	Diseased	Vulnerability	“Resultant from the impact of the fall” <i>Genesis 2:17</i>	Cure, Make Whole	Prayer of Faith <i>James 5:15</i>
Self	Disobedient	Immaturity	“Body of Sin” <i>Romans 6:6</i>	Teach Discipleship	Obedience <i>Romans 6:11-12</i>

The second chart (B,) shown below, is intended to demonstrate that the grounds for all ministry are always the same. There is not a separate gospel for one order of human need, and a different one for another. ALL LIFE, HEALTH, SALVATION, DELIVERANCE and GRACE flows by the same means: (1) from the Cross (the Blood); (2) from the Savior (in Jesus' Name); (3) from the Promises (the Word of God); and (4) from the River (the stream of the Holy Spirit's power). The texts noted are only introductory and by no means exhaustive. They simply evidence how each area of human suffering has been addressed through the mighty resources of salvation's provision.

Chart B

CHART B — DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCE (Con't.)				
GAINING DELIVERANCE FROM	SIN	SATAN	SICKNESS	SELF
Blood of Christ	Eph. 1:17 Col. 1:14	Rev. 12:11	1 Peter 2:24	Galatians 2:20
Jesus' Name	Acts 4:12	Mark 16:17	James 5:14-15	Romans 7:24-25
God's Word	Romans 10:8-10, 17	Eph. 6:17 1 Peter 1:23	Matthew 8:8	Psalms 119:11 Psalm 107:20
Holy Spirit	John 16:82 1 Cor. 12:3	Cor. 10:4	Romans 8:11	Romans 8:13

PATHWAYS TO DELIVERANCE

Just as there are specific things that are most frequently done in seeing people brought to Christ in mass evangelism, and similarly certain ministry approaches have been developed for personal witness and soul-winning, so there are basic patterns by which deliverance is ministered. Just as with evangelism, those approaches vary from group or public service settings to personal encounter or counselling situations. So in my pastoral ministry, I seek to see both public and private situations bear the fruit of people freed unto new liberty and fulfillment in Christ.

Public Services: At least once each month we will conduct a service dedicated to healing of the sick and freeing of the bound; a gathering usually set in a Sunday evening context when members of the Body gather in

the advance knowledge that this focus will characterize the meeting. In another approach, a recent pre-Easter midweek series dealt with “the power of the Cross in breaking all bondage.” Record midweek attendances were registered, and great blessing filled these occasions, with many delivered and a sizeable number of others being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Personal Ministry: In our pastoral counselling ministry, we move with the conviction that ours is not to be a clinical approach, whereby psychiatric techniques and extended numbers of repeat sessions are utilized and expected. (This is not a criticism of those approaches used by many dedicated professional Christian counselors, of which a number are a part of our congregation. We value the ministry, skill and dedication of these people, and when dealing with cases which would be better served by this approach we are quick to refer these believers to such professional ministries.)

This differentiating between clinical counselling and pastoral ministry as related to deliverance, is based on our conviction that ours is a “crisis-oriented” teaching/freeing mission, rather than an extended “clinical care” approach. Our “counselling” focuses on the wisdom of biblical instruction and advice—the resource we give within our mission as pastor-teachers. When bondage is present, and discernment joined to repentance is manifest, we invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to set the captive free and to open up new vistas of life—now!

However, we are quick to note that deliverance from demonic oppression or torment is not always the result of such a power encounter. Let me note at least two other ways by which we regularly witness people experiencing deliverance from encrusted bondage points inflicted by hell's minions:

1. **Growth in the Truth** — *John 8:32*

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” In contrast to this, Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord when he announced, “Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge...Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure.” (Isaiah 5:13-14)

A great deal of human bondage is simply due to the blindness and ignorance so prevalent regarding God's truth. Accordingly, we have discovered that if people

simply submit themselves to regular attendance in the atmosphere where God's Word is being faithfully taught, a process of ongoing deliverance is set in motion. There is great deliverance simply through the preaching and teaching of the anointed Word of God.

2. Ministry of God's Love — 1 John 4:18

The Bible explains, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear." It is unquestionable that a profound degree of human bondage in our present society is the product of a prevailing spirit of fear: fear of life, fear of death, fear of want, fear of non-acceptance, fear of sickness, fear of people, fear engendered during childhood, fear ingrained through exposure to horrible things from personal events to horror films...and the list goes on. But of an entirely different Kingdom is the Spirit of Love: "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5) Just as ongoing exposure to God's Word may bring release from personal torment, so immersion in the Body of a local assembly, where the love of God is manifest among the membership, has awesome power to break chains of fear and produce newfound freedom, faith, and joy.

In this conjunction we ought also to note that a body of evidence from Early Church history (2nd/3rd Century) strongly argues that the occasion of water baptism was a mighty time of deliverance. Our experience agrees with this concept, and we minister to those who come for baptism (1) that they should expect these waters (as with Israel's passage through the Red Sea) to sever all connections with the slavery of the past, and (2) that they may believe (as with Egypt's hosts being drowned) that the Lord will break the back of any residual bonds administered by any tormenting spirits or circumstances from their past (1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Colossians 2:11-15; Romans 6:1-14).

THE ATMOSPHERE OF DELIVERANCE

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty...yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, NOR ANGELS NOR PRINCIPALITIES NOR POWERS nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, shall be able to separate us

from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:17, Romans 8:37-39)

The atmosphere of deliverance is a climate of faith and power. It is created anywhere that the Holy Spirit is given the privilege of extending the releasing ministry Jesus proclaimed (Luke 4:18-19). Certain elements foster this atmosphere:

- **The Spirit of Praise** — *Psalm 149:6*
This whole Psalm breathes of the authority of believers who confront the enemy with "the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand." Praise based in the promises and provisions of the Word and the Cross are mighty in breaking down strongholds.
- **The Song of the Lord** — *Psalm 32:7*
David understood and sang of a distinct order of music ministry: "You are my hiding place; you shall preserve me from trouble; YOU SHALL SURROUND ME WITH SONGS OF DELIVERANCE. Selah." Many leaders have discovered that when believers focus "spiritual songs" (i.e., singing by means of Holy Spirit enabled language as in 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16) that a sometime unique liberating process unfolds in the midst of that gathering. This is not a formula to be manufactured, but it is a fact to be understood and responded to as the Holy Spirit may prompt a leader.
- **The Power of Repentance** — *Matthew 4:17*
The entry of the Kingdom of God, which systematically will overthrow any entrenchment of the kingdom of darkness, always manifests where a repentant spirit abides. This is not only basic to the individuals being freed, but it is important that such a teachable, correctable, humble spirit abides among the constituency of a congregation. Whenever religious pride or the presumption of achievement dominates a people, an eventual arrogance will hinder the flow of spiritual liberation in that setting. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (and please note the context: 1 Peter 5:5-9).
- **The Heart of Forgiveness** — *Matthew 18:34-35*
Perhaps no more profound responsibility rests upon each one of us who have received God's forgiveness than that we be faithful relayers of that same spirit of forgiveness. The two verses cited are absolutely stunning in their implications: Where small hearts, though forgiven, refuse to be forgiving of any other,

Jesus Himself has declared that Father God will invoke a battery of tormenting spirits who will plague the unforgiving. If that sounds too difficult to accept, study the whole passage of Matthew, chapter 18, until the duty of the forgiven to forgive penetrates your soul.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians almost uniformly suggest that as much as 80-90% of human afflictions are at least indirectly resultant from internalized bitterness, resentment, anger, and hatred—all expressions of unforgiveness. The spiritual leader of an assembly needs to lead the way in assuring his own heart is free in this regard, then he or she must lead his people in rising above the pettiness of human smallness that so tempts us all. The motive: “(Since) I forgave you all that debt... should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?” (Matthew 18:32-33)

TO CONCLUDE...

I have titled this article “The Finger of God.” As I conclude my sharing of these thoughts with you, fellow-shepherd, let me relate a testimony. I was seated on the platform, about to address 1200 Christian leaders who had gathered specifically to inquire into the subject of this paper. As we were worshipping, I prayed, “Lord, please give me a picture of what You’re wanting to do and say today.”

Almost instantly a book appeared to my mind’s vision, and my heart heard the words, “You are all living epistles” (see 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 where this idea occurs). As instantly as the picture was given to me in the next instant the picture revealed a finger reaching down to insert itself within the book...then I understood the meaning.

I knew the finger to be the finger of God. I knew the book to represent the inscriptions that have been written upon human lives and experiences. And I knew there were many books where blank pages were waiting to have inscribed upon them the next stage of the Lord’s purpose in their lives...except; except there was a blockage where pages had been stuck together. We’ve all had the experience of reading a book and have come to pages which had not been trimmed; pages which, until they are cut free will obstruct the progress of the unfolding story. And I knew...

So many of God’s precious people are halted or hindered in the advance of God’s “writing” what He wants to, “unfolding” His will in “the story” of their lives. But at some point, through the enterprise of hell’s workings, there has come a sealing off of sectors of their potential, through events in their past. In some cases, these “sealed off” events are happenings that are unremembered even by the person himself/herself, because the human mind has “sealed off” that “page” as too painful to think about. And then the words of Jesus came to mind:

“IF I BY THE FINGER OF GOD, CAST OUT DEMONS, THEN YOU KNOW THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME UPON YOU!”

There are only four times in the Bible that “the finger of God” is mentioned, twice in the Old Testament and twice in the New. The first is in Egypt, as the Lord displayed His power and high hand of mightiness over and above the demon deities of Egypt (Exodus 8:19). As the sorcerers in Pharaoh’s court were unable to match the power displayed through Moses’ ministry, they said to the King: “This is finger of God.” It was their admission that God was not only working, He was pointing directly to their set of gods and proving Himself mightier. This is almost precisely the way Jesus uses the above statement. He is in conflict with the Pharisees who are arguing about the source of His power in ministry. His assertion did not go beyond their understanding: they recognized the might of His ministry and the barrenness of theirs, and that “the Kingdom” was being verified in their midst whether they would admit it or not.

The other two mentions of “God’s finger” relate to His writing His own Word—at Sinai, on engraved stones (Exodus 31:18), and when Jesus stooped to write in the sand, an occasion when most Bible commentators agree that His probable words were a repeating of the Ten Commandments. (The context seems strongly to suggest this, seeing the question He asks following His writing, John 8:5-9.)

Between the four references we have two relating the POWER OF THE SPIRIT and two which relate the POWER OF GOD’S WORD. And in all references the process in motion is liberation; of a people from slavery; of a nation unto its destiny; of a ministry breaking demonic bondage; of a woman finding freeing forgiveness!!

It's the ministry of the Kingdom of God—the overthrow of hell's efforts at dominating human beings through sin, sickness, selfish or satanic bondage! And as God's finger reaches to touch through us, it will open sealed pages in human souls which have been trapped by their past, unlocking the possibilities of redemption's advancing purposes in them—each one. It's salvation's promise through the Cross:

“(God has) wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:14,15)

Because His Cross has ruined all dark powers in their efforts at sustaining their kingdom's control, the blessings of God's Kingdom are opened to us and the life-book Father God wants to write through each of us can be advanced by The Author. And all of this is true, we know—

because it is written!

“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

“And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing.” (Isaiah 10:27)

STUDY GUIDE

1. List the four major points of teaching for you from this chapter. Tell why each had special significance.
2. Has there been a time in your life/ministry when God had brought about “deliverance?” Recount that time in light of the teaching of this chapter. Has this teaching brought further clarity or definition to that situation?
3. As a result of this teaching how are you changed? In attitude, understanding, convictions, etc? How do you think this may affect your ministry?
4. As you studied this chapter, did the Spirit speak to you regarding any personal bondage? Examine that in light of Charts A and B. Ask the Spirit to guide you in the next steps for receiving freedom in this area. Find a trusted friend to share this with and to pray with you.
5. List any questions you have regarding the teaching in this chapter. Share these with others who may be studying this same teaching.

The Finger of God

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