



POSSESSION • The Phenomenon of Demonic Possession

What Do I Need to Know?

As the leader of this study, you need to be careful with this topic. Demonic possession holds a certain fascination and curiosity, but immersing oneself in the topic is not spiritually beneficial. It causes us to wrongly focus on Satan and evil, and can plant seeds of fear that God does not want us to have toward Satan. So, when you're done leading the study, just leave the topic alone.

The first part of the study deals with a few case studies of demon possession. Read them through with the group. Here are some basic facts to know. Satan is a created being. Scripture tells us that he rebelled against God and led many angels with him in that rebellion (Isaiah 14, Luke 10:18). Evil spirits are fallen angels – not ghosts, dead, or damned people. In most cases of demon possession, the evil spirit laid claim to a person's life because they were involved in some kind of occult or satanic practice (Ouija boards, Spirit Channeling, etc.). In some cases, it was extreme drug abuse, or deviant sexual sin such as incest, that may have opened up a doorway. Demonic possession is not always black and white; there are degrees by which a person may be oppressed demonically. Only in the rarest cases does a person lose complete control of their will and actions. While evil spirits can certainly harass Christians, complete possession is not something they should fear, given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

What points to the reality of a demonic presence would be the complete eclipse or changing of someone's personality, speaking in unknown languages (still a criteria for the Catholic rite of exorcism), supernatural knowledge or abilities, animal behavior, and extreme profanity and blasphemy. The object here is to draw attention to the fact that such activities defy psychological explanations, and point to the reality of evil spirits.

The next section brings Jesus into the picture by looking at His exorcism of the demon-possessed man at Gerasenes. Some of the characteristics of this possession were the man's fascination with death and the dead (living in the tombs), supernatural strength, animalistic behavior, isolation, and self-destructive behavior (cutting himself with stones). The disciples were not unfamiliar with either possession or exorcism. The reason the disciples record this episode is to point out the evil spirit's recognition of Jesus' identity and authority, and the power Jesus had to drive out the evil spirit – He just says, "Go!" and it does. Why the swine? Hard to say – perhaps it was to show that the evil spirits had actually left the man. A second thought is tied to the evil spirit's request that

What's the Big Idea?

In this discussion, you will cover demons and demonic possession, which the Bible says are both real. You'll want to demonstrate that Jesus has power and authority over demons.



Jesus not torment them before “the appointed time.” Jesus may have been communicating that the complete removal of evil and final judgment of Satan would not be accomplished until His Second Coming.

The last section makes a connection that provides a perfect transition to the gospel. If these possessions are real, why do the evil spirits respond and leave at the mention of Jesus? Because He’s God, and has ultimate power over evil and sin. This is also a good transition into the gospel, because demonic possession is a counterfeit. The reality is that we can have our lives inhabited by Christ, if we invite Him in.

What if There’s a Problem?

If you have Christians in your group, they may ask if a Christian can be possessed. In Scripture the phrase that is used is “demonized,” not “possessed.” And, it would seem that there are different degrees of being demonized, where in the most extreme case the person’s identity and will are completely eclipsed. Christians can be demonized, but due to the residing presence of the Holy Spirit, we feel it is doubtful they can be completely possessed. They should be encouraged that the grounds for being demonized is often involvement with the occult, and that if they walk with the Lord, they have absolutely nothing to fear – God is their Protector.

What Are the Answers?

1. Have the group share.
2. Let the group share their thoughts. It could be curiosity, or loneliness, but sometimes there's also an allure of power.
3. Allow group to share their opinion.
4. What points to the reality of a demonic presence would be the complete eclipse or changing of someone's personality, speaking in unknown languages (still a criteria for the catholic rite of exorcism), supernatural knowledge or abilities, animal behavior, and extreme profanity and blasphemy.
5. Evil spirits are angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God. Satan is a created being – a fallen angel who challenged God.
6. Allow the group to make observations. Some of the characteristics of this possession were: the man's fascination with death and the dead (living in the tombs), supernatural strength, animalistic behavior, isolation, and self-destructive behavior (cutting himself with stones). A difference is the effortless authority by which Jesus drives out the evil spirit – He says "Go," and it does.
7. Jesus was communicating that His first coming would not inaugurate the complete removal of evil, and the final judgment of Satan awaits His Second Coming ("the appointed time"). Perhaps He chose the pigs to show they left the man.
8. Because of the unrivaled authority Jesus demonstrated over the evil spirit, He simply says, "Go," and it does. Also, they might have wanted to note that the evil spirits recognized Jesus' identity.
9. Simply encourage the group to share their thoughts.
10. Let the group share, but obviously the answer is because Jesus is God, and has ultimate authority and power over all evil spirits.
11. Allow the group to discuss.

What's Our Response?

Our hope is that having seen the reality of demon possession, and the power and protection that comes through Jesus, the non-Christians in the group will want to invite Jesus into their lives. The last question requires the group to write what they think Jesus means in Revelation 3:23. This is a perfect opportunity for you to explain, perhaps through your own experience, how one invites Christ into their life. You will want to close the group by giving out a copy of *The Four Spiritual Laws*, and encourage everyone to read it over that night. The ending of the study sets this up nicely, as it presents demonic possession as the counterfeit to having God inhabit and take control of our lives.

This is the end of the evangelistic series. You will want to ask how many would be interested in continuing the Study, and suggest a couple of the topics in the Discovery level of *Cru.Comm*.