

A Pastor's Experience with Spiritual Deliverance

by Matt Troyer-Miller, Wood River (Neb.) Mennonite Church

Several years ago, I was spending a quiet evening outside when someone from my community approached me (we'll call him Joey). I was acquainted with Joey, but did not know him well. Joey struck up a conversation with me, and soon he asked if I would consider doing a house blessing for him. As I visited with him, I quickly learned that this would not be a simple home blessing. Joey was concerned that there were demons that visited his home, and they frightened his children. He hoped that a house blessing would chase the demons away from his house. I told him I needed a few days to pray about this, and he agreed.

I immediately began studying Scripture, praying, and reading a book called *Even the Demons Submit*. I called Tim Detweiler to help me process this request. I called several pastoral mentors who had personal experience with deliverance ministries. I also began processing this with the elders of the church, because I decided that this wasn't something I could do alone.

Before the service, I met with Joey several times to get to know his story. He responded positively to the name of Jesus and appreciated when I read Scripture to him, and we were able to determine that this was not an instance of demon possession. After many conversations and prayers, the elders and I decided to do a service for Joey that involved Bible Study, prayer, and worship.

We met at my home before the service, and spent time together in prayer before we went to Joey's house. While at Joey's, we began with a time of Bible Study that focused on Jesus' victory over death and evil. We studied Luke 10.17-18 and 11.14-26, and discussed what kind of power evil has, and what happens if evil spirits are chased out and the house isn't filled with a greater power. We focused specifically on the image of Christ as a light in darkness.

We began the service by making sure that every door was open inside the home (this was something recommended to me). In each room of the home, we lit a candle, I prayed a blessing, and we ended our time in the room by saying together "May the light of Christ shine in this home." After moving through the home, the elders and I held hands with Joey and his family and prayed for them.

Nothing dramatic happened during this service. Yet, I believe we *were able to* witness the power of the Holy Spirit at work during this event. Joey and his kids said a prayer to give their lives to Christ. We gave them each Bibles, and they were excited to begin looking through them. I encouraged them to reconnect with his home church, and if he didn't feel comfortable there, let him know that he was welcome to attend ours. We even met to study the Bible together afterwards, and continued that until his work schedule changed.

While this whole experience was well out of my comfort zone, I'm very thankful that I was a part of it. It opened my eyes to the spiritual battles in the world around me, and made me aware of how differently my neighbors may be experiencing this world. It also gave the elders and I a chance to share the Gospel with someone who needed to hear the good news.

As a result of this experience, Tim Detweiler suggested I compile a list of readings on deliverance ministries that would be compatible with the Mennonite Confession of Faith. I began by reaching out to a number of former Mennonite missionaries and trusted church leaders for recommendations. Through their suggestions, I came up with a "Top Five Suggested Readings" for someone interested in an Anabaptist understanding of deliverance ministries. There are also extra suggested readings, if someone would like to read deeper on the topic.

I would like to thank Lynda Hollinger-Janzen and Joe Sawatsky (former missionaries who work at Mennonite Mission Network) and David B. Miller (former pastor and current professor at AMBS) for their recommendations. I am especially grateful for the help of Willard Swartley, who

shared his updated “Bibliography for Deliverance Ministries.” It is the result of a lifetime of reading by Willard on this topic, and it is full of helpful resources and insight. In particular, his bibliography offers helpful summary comments on many of the resources I have listed below.

Top Five Suggested Readings on Deliverance Ministries.

1. *Even the Demons Submit*. Edited by James Kraybill and Loren Johns
 - a. A multi-disciplinary collection of essays that examines delivery ministries from a variety of angles. It considers psychological, anthropological, biblical, theological, pastoral, and therapeutic concerns within deliverance ministries. It also contains a number of Case Studies from Dean Hochstetler, an ordained Mennonite Deliverance Minister in Indiana-Michigan Conference. Particularly helpful is Paul G. Hiebert’s essay “Worldviews and Why They Matter.”
2. “Challenges to Abou’s Jesus.” Loren Entz. A story of a Mennonite missionary to Burkino Faso that witnesses to Christ’s power over the demonic.
<https://archive.org/stream/mennonite1986101wieb#page/164/mode/2up>
3. *The Bondage Breaker*. Neal T. Anderson
4. *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual*. Francis MacNutt
 - a. Willard Swartley describes this book as “one of the best.”
5. *Eyes Opened to Satan’s Subtlety*. Emile Kremer, a French Mennonite. This has been translated into a Spanish edition.

Other suggestions from Lynda, Dave, Willard, and Joe:

6. *Two Hours to Freedom: A Simple and Effective Model for Healing and Deliverance*. Charles Kraft.
7. *The Evangelical's Guide to Spiritual Warfare: Scriptural Insights and Practical Instruction on Facing the Enemy*. Charles Kraft
8. *Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*. Clinton Arnold.
9. *God at War: the Bible and Spiritual Conflict*. Greg Boyd,
10. *The Authority of the Believer*. John A. MacMillan – free download
 - a. https://www.hopefaithprayer.com/books/The_Authority_of_the_Believer_John_MacMillan.pdf
11. *Claiming All Things for God*. George D. McClain
12. *People of the Lie*. Scott Peck
13. *Healing*. Francis MacNutt