

## Are There Different Kinds of Evil Spirits?

**Matthew 4:24** (KJV): *And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with diverse diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*



The world is such a confused place. For many, discussing evil spirits is fascinating, as looking into dark mysteries beyond our world can be a thrilling and adrenaline-packed ride. For Christians, such conversations are entered into with fear and respect, as we are speaking of dark and evil things beyond our realm and understanding. It is therefore with caution we approach this subject. The Bible clearly teaches us that demons do exist, and they are opposed to God and His righteousness. Further, we know this topic is far too easily glorified and dramatized.

The specific focus of our present conversation will be to better understand how the Bible defines and separates demonic possession and influence from the serious mental health challenges that are so prevalent today.

This is a timely topic considering the positive awareness today about mental health challenges people experience. Throughout history, compassion towards the mentally ill has been lacking, especially in the Dark Ages with people infamously executed for being “demon possessed.”

Rick has helped many friends and family members with mental health challenges. This story regarding one of those he helped will give us a modern-day context for our spiritual lesson. We will break the story into parts throughout this episode.

**Rick**

### Introduction to Rick’s story:

This is a story of ultimate victory. It is about a very dear Christian friend of mine. It is a confidential story. I called and asked permission to tell their story without giving away a name or location, and they readily agreed.

They (we are using “they” to avoid even a gender identification) had a serious mental health breakdown several years ago. It was a difficult thing to see and accept, and then to work through.

Let’s lay some groundwork. Demons are real, and we need to have a spiritually-sound respect for them.

### Demons are spirit beings who rebelled against God and instead followed Satan’s lead into darkness:

**Jude 1:6**: *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.*

Like Jude, Peter uses several examples of sin and disloyalty to God while he warns against false prophets.

**We will only focus on what happens to spirit beings when they become disloyal to God:**

**2 Peter 2:4:** *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;*

The specific word translated *hell* here is the Greek word *tartaroō*. This is the only time it's used in the Bible, and it is a verb. So, this is less a specific address and more of an action, describing the action of throwing them down to their imprisonment. The noun form is *tartarus*, mentioned extensively in Greek and Roman mythology.

In the two scriptural examples above, **2 Peter 2:4** describes sinful angels as being in *pits of darkness, reserved for judgment*. **Jude 1:6** tells us sinful angels *did not keep their own domain* (origin, order, place or rank) and are now *in eternal bonds* (chains, shackles) *under darkness*.

The disloyal and evil actions of these fallen spirit beings led to the action of God, which was to cast them out of His light and His heavenly abode into a condition of darkness and limitation. Expelled from heaven, we think they are now restrained to earth's atmosphere.

They are restrained in chains under darkness, yet they are not completely ineffective. This indicates they are held back and limited in their abilities, yet they still have great power when dealing with the human race. They still seek to control others, just like their leader, Satan, who is still *the ruler of this world* (**John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11**).

**Demons seek to possess and control:**

**Matthew 15:22:** (KJV) *And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil <1139>.*

**Vexed with a devil:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1139 *daimonizomai*; to be exercised by a demon

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: to be under the power of a demon

Demons manipulate for their own dark purposes. This woman was not a Jew but came to Jesus in desperation, obviously hearing of his authority. Jesus granted her request.

This is a little Canaanite child. In prior episodes, we've talked about the absolutely disgusting and dark pagan rituals of the Canaanites and how damaging and often lethal they were to children. Who knows what this child might have been exposed to.

It is interesting how Jesus deals with this Canaanite woman, even though she is not Jewish.

**The Jews were under a special arrangement with God and were the only ones Jesus usually dealt with:**

**Matthew 15:24:** (KJV) *...I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

But because of the woman’s persistence and her faith, without even seeing the child, Jesus healed her. This incident illustrates that Jesus could had great power over demons with just his words. He did not even need to be in the presence of the one suffering.

Perhaps because of their dark restraints, demons have an unquenchable longing for any connection with the light of God’s creation. Possession of a human may be a way to fulfill that longing. There is no way to know for sure.

**Jesus seems to describe this:**

**Matthew 12:43–45:** *43 Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest and does not find it. (Indicating their limited power.) 44 Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.*

We can see here that demons have limits. However, when a person manages to get rid of the unclean spirit but does not fill that newly unoccupied space, the old spirit can reoccupy that person’s mind with seven more of its friends!

When our minds are focused on godly righteousness, we are off limits to the demons. We want to eliminate any and all possibilities of satanic influence over us. We cannot leave an open door. Giving demons “permission to enter” is possible when we do not have righteousness occupying our minds. We can’t just walk away from what is demonic; we must walk towards godly righteousness. If we get rid of an issue, such as a bad habit, we must replace it with something good and positive and powerful—or what was there originally will find its way back, and we will be worse than we were before.



**SATAN AND HIS DEMONS ARE LOOKING FOR PLACES TO PLANT AND FLOURISH THEIR INFLUENCE. THIS INFLUENCE DOES NOT ONLY COME FROM DEMON POSSESSION OR EVEN DWELLING ON THE DARK SIDE OF LIFE. IT CAN BE ATTAINED BY SIMPLY FILLING THE GAPS OF ANY LIFE THAT IS NOT FIRMLY PLANTED IN AND FILLED WITH GODLY RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

This is why it is so important to make sure our minds are constantly fed with righteous input! Movies, for instance, especially around the pagan holiday of Halloween, are filled with darkness. Once we see something on a screen, we can’t unsee it.

“Garbage in, garbage out” is a familiar saying about computers, but the same applies to the human brain.

So far, the little bit which we have seen should be enough to alert us to the magnitude of the battle between good and evil. Be vigilant!

**We've basically established the workings of Satan and his demons in our world. So, what about mental health challenges? Are they of satanic origin?**

This is an important question, and the answer has different levels. On the most basic level, all mental health issues, along with every other malady and challenge humanity faces, stem from the entrance of the sinfulness Satan introduced to the world. On a more specific level, we do not believe mental health issues are satanic.

This episode addresses mental health issues, not just “mental illness.” This includes developmental deficiencies, neurological challenges and physiological issues among other things. We know the sacrifice of Jesus is the ultimate remedy for all illness, physical and mental.

We believe demonic possession and mental health challenges are vastly different in origin, even though some of the outward symptoms can be similar. The New Testament draws this clear line of distinction, though it focuses much more heavily on demon possession.

**Here is an example of this line of distinction. This is an important baseline for us to work from:**

**Matthew 4:23–24:** *23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. 24 The news about him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics (King James Version uses lunatic that we are spelling without the “k”) <4583>, paralytics; and he healed them.*

**Lunatic/Epileptic:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4583  
*seléniazomai*: be moon-struck, i.e. crazy

Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to be moon-struck or lunatic 2) to be epileptic  
2a) epilepsy being supposed to return and increase with the increase of the moon  
This meaning is doubtful as the Greeks knew nothing of epilepsy

The word *lunatic* refers to someone seen as mentally ill, dangerous or foolish. It comes from the Latin word *lunaticus*—lunar—“of the moon” or “moonstruck.”

(Source: Wikipedia) Until at least 1700, it was also a common belief that the moon influenced fevers, rheumatism, episodes of epilepsy and other diseases.

Here in the United States, the word “lunatic” has such a negative connotation that in 2012, it was removed from all federal laws.

We want to be respectful when speaking of any kind of mental health issue. People struggling with these issues need help, compassion, love, guidance and direction.

*Lunatic* only appears twice in the King James Version, here in **Matthew 4:24** and also in **Matthew 17:15**. We believe it encompasses mental health issues—behaviors attributable to dysfunctional brain operation—that can happen for a variety of reasons. We will respectfully relabel “lunatic” as “mental health issues.”

**Key points from Matthew 4:23-24:**

- Jesus healed every kind of disease and sickness—there was nothing he couldn’t handle. This was a preview of what the healing of mankind will look like in God’s future kingdom.
- (*demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics*) Those possessed by demons, those with “mental health issues” and those affected by paralysis were specifically singled out as separate categories for healing.

Why were these singled out? Perhaps they were among the most outwardly noticeable deficiencies in everyday life. People observing others with such issues might have been frightened by unexpected and unpredictable behaviors. Jesus’ reputation for being able to heal *spread throughout all Syria*. We see a subtle recognition of the power of God’s spirit working through Jesus—he even had power over what seemed overwhelming and frightening.



**Rick’s experience with a fellow Christian and their mental health journey—Part 1 “The Breakdown”**

My friend suffered a serious breakdown about six months after a big trauma in their life. It was obvious something was dramatically wrong. They began to see and imagine things that were not there. They believed the end of the world had come, and they literally went in the middle of winter in the snow, barefoot, door-to-door, knocking on people’s doors to warn them about this. They believed in what they were doing.

They tried to call me at my office, but I wasn’t there. Because I didn’t answer the phone, they thought I was dead. At one point, they saw a bird who they thought was me telling them to keep warning the people about the end.

Their life had taken a drastic turn and was out of their control! They believed they were possessed by demons. This true story will unfold with hard work, discipline and prayer.

Let’s examine the only other text we believe specifically focuses on mental health issues. While the specific word (*lunatic*) is only used in **Matthew 17:15**, the actual story is in three of the Gospels. We’ll combine **Matthew 17:14–20**, **Mark 9:14–29**, **Luke 9:37–43** into one reading. Mark will be the foundational account to which details will be added in order to tell one complete narrative.

The Luke account starts by drawing our attention to the fact that the day before this incident, Jesus, Peter, James and John had gone up a mountain and experienced the vision of the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus was given amazing spiritual reassurance of what he was here to accomplish and support for what he was about to go through.

### Here's what happened the following day:

**Mark 9:14-16:** *14 When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw him (Jesus), they were amazed and began running up to greet him. 16 And he asked them, What are you discussing with them?*

### Key details:

- Some scribes were arguing with the disciples and a crowd was gathering.
- When Jesus came near, everything stopped, and the crowd ran to meet him. *Oh, look! It's Jesus!* The scribes were suddenly ignored.
- Jesus noticed the commotion and essentially asked what the problem was.

### The problem is revealed in a father's desperation to find help for his mentally dysfunctional son; feel the anxiety and hopelessness in his voice:

**Matthew 17:14-15:** *14 ...a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before him and saying, 15 Lord, Luke 9:38 ...Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only boy, Matthew 17:15 ...have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic <4583>... Mark 9:17 ...possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; Matthew 17:15 ...and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. Mark 9:18 ...and whenever it seizes him... Luke 9:39 ...he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion... Mark 9:18 it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out... Luke 9:39 ...and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves.*

*The combined account will be shown in boxes throughout this Rewind.*

We can feel the horror and helplessness this father experiences as he sees the desperate situation of his beloved child. It is beyond his capacity to help in this situation.

### Key details:

- The father recognizes his only son is deeply and tragically mentally broken.
- The boy is plagued with a power that keeps him from speaking.
- He screams, convulses and is physically unable to control himself.
- His uncontrollable actions inflict serious pain and suffering on himself and others.
- This unpredictable condition comes and goes.

With the inability to predict his actions comes a lack of security. What was the father supposed to do? How was he supposed to act? We can imagine he has tried everything he could.

The man is discussing this with the scribes and the apostles. He is begging for help; he was in over his head with his only son. He tells Jesus that his son is *lunatic*, mentally unstable.



BEING BORN IN SIN BRINGS CONSEQUENCES IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE. OUR IMPERFECT GENETIC MAKEUP PRODUCES COUNTLESS CHALLENGING CONDITIONS THAT CAN DISTURB AND DESTROY LIVES. MANY OF THESE CONDITIONS ARE CONGENITAL, AND WHILE SOME MAY PRESENT SYMPTOMS THAT MIRROR THOSE OF DEMONIC POSSESSION, THE CAUSES ARE ENTIRELY UNRELATED.

We first looked at demonic possession to see what it looked like and what caused it. This combined account describes an incident that looks similar but has a different cause. We want to understand the differences and how Jesus handles them.

All human deficiencies are a tragic and heartbreaking reminder of the cruel and lasting effects of our fallen human state.

**Are we saying that mental health issues can be likened to a spirit of darkness?**

We need to be careful with this question. The fundamental truth is, serious mental health issues need serious and ongoing treatment, as well as medication. Because we do not live in an age of supernatural healing, these conditions need the same medically-sound approach as is needed with a broken bone or a clogged artery. Mental health issues require treatment. If we broke an arm, we would not simply pray over it. We would go to a doctor and get it set. Mental health challenges need a doctor or counselor as well.

**Let's get back to the combined account of the boy with mental health challenges:**

**Luke 9:40** *I begged your disciples to cast it out...* **Matthew 17:16** *...and they could not cure him* **Mark 9:19** (We think Jesus is looking at the scribes as he continues): *And he answered them and said, O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me!* **Luke 9:41** *...bring your son here.*

**Key details:**

- This kind of illness was different from other illnesses, in that it was a disease of the mind.
- Such depth of healing could only come from a heart and mind fixed in faith.
- We can imagine Jesus felt the stark contrast of the spiritual reassurance he received from the transfiguration the previous day with the arguments over faith before him today. He knows God is above all of this.

Jesus is looking at the wretchedness of the boy and the father and feels great compassion.

He heard the father describe how difficult it was to raise this poor boy, and he is hearing the arguing between the scribes and disciples. He tells them to stop and bring the boy to him.

**Mark 9:20–22:** *20 They brought the boy to him. When he saw him, immediately **the spirit <4151>** threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And he asked his father, How long has this been happening to him? And he said, From childhood. 22 It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us!*

**Key details:**

- Jesus is amazingly calm as he gently gathers up context.
- The boy’s father reflects his personal desperation. *Please help if you can! Take pity on us!*

Jesus is calm while this child is having this convulsive attack, knowing he has the power to get it under control. He knows he can prevent the boy from hurting himself any further. He will fix the situation.

Jesus asks the father how long the boy has been afflicted. As with many mental health challenges, an underlying problem may have existed that became overwhelming. If we see a parent struggling with a child in public, we want to be sympathetic. We wish with all our heart that we could heal them. We hurt for them. We feel an echo of the compassion Jesus felt for this poor man and child.

**Mark 9:20** says, *the spirit threw him into a convulsion*. Let’s take a moment and define what we understand *spirit* to mean here. We are defining this incident as NOT being demon-possessed.

**Spirit:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4151 *pneuma*;  
a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively,  
a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle,  
mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God,  
Christ’s spirit, the holy spirit:—ghost, life, spirit(-ual, -ually), mind

The word *spirit* in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *pneuma*, whose primary significance or root meaning is wind, a current of air, a breeze. Because the wind is both invisible and powerful, *pneuma* and its Old Testament Hebrew equivalent *ruach*, gradually took on much wider meanings, and came to represent any invisible power or influence, good or bad.

*God is a spirit*, that is to say, He is a powerful but invisible being. Likewise the angels are called “spirits,” because they also are invisible to mankind except as revealed by miraculous power. However, we also speak of both humans and animals having a “gentle spirit,” a “good spirit,” an “angry spirit” or mood, a “bitter spirit” and a “fiery spirit.” When used in reference to man’s creation, it doesn’t mean we have another person inside of us; it simply signifies the life-spark or life-power common to all animals.



**Two uses of this word that help us understand “spirit” does NOT necessarily equate to a personal entity:**

**John 3:8:** *The **wind** <4151> blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the **spirit** <4151>.*

The same Greek word is translated *wind* and *spirit* in the same sentence. Both refer to an unseen power. There are quite a few instances of *pneuma* in the Bible.

**Here is one more example:**

**1 Corinthians 2:11:** *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the **spirit** <4151> of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the **spirit** <4151> of God.*

Here the same word is translated as the *spirit of the man* and the *spirit of God*.

In the combined account of the young boy, we do not see that the “spirit” that “possessed” him as an entity; but rather, an “unseen power” that controlled him and hurt him and those around him. This condition caused seizures that harmed the boy and possibly bystanders.

**Rick**

**Rick’s experience with a fellow Christian—Part 2 “The Clarified Conclusion”**

My friend ended up in the hospital for a little while, then got out and tried to go back to life, but it didn’t work well. Soon after, I was with them, and they began losing it again. I suggested we go back to the hospital because they were having all kinds of disturbing thoughts.

While we were driving, I went a different way than they expected, and they completely freaked out. This is somebody I have known for a long time, but they didn’t recognize the route. As I was driving, I had to hold their hand and tell them, *I’ve got you. It’s okay. We’re going to get there. I promise.* I had to lock the doors of the car because they tried to get out. They were getting very paranoid.

We got to the emergency room, and I had the person identify themselves. I let the staff know I was their minister, and they needed help right now.

The medical personnel brought my friend into an exam room, but my friend was so paranoid. I could see the overwhelming fear as their eyes darted around, looking about the room, not trusting anything or anybody. They sat and put their head down.

This was a frightening situation for this person. There were two police officers in the room because this was a possible suicidal, very serious event. And now the doctor wanted to take them into the other room.

My friend was sitting there with their head bowed, and I got down on my knees so I could look them in the eye. I asked if they trusted me—they said yes. I told them the

doctor's name (let's use Susan). I told them I trusted Dr. Susan, so they could trust Dr. Susan. Finally, my friend nodded and went with the doctor.

I was allowed to sit down with my friend and the psychiatrist after the release was signed. When asked what my friend thought was happening to them, my friend said, "The demons have got me, and I don't know how to get rid of them!"

This was difficult. I assured my friend this was not demons; it was a mental health issue. I reaffirmed that they trusted me and go to church with me. I explained this condition was something from within, not something from the outside, and this doctor would help them to understand and work through it.

The doctor was appreciative because by getting the consent and trust of the patient, it opened the opportunity to do the work that needed to be done. My friend began to get help.

How do we know this wasn't demon possession? First of all, this person is a Christian. Fundamentally, if we sincerely believe in Christ, demons cannot touch us. They can attempt to influence us, but they cannot take possession of us.

Also, Rick's friend exhibited signs of confused behavior. This did not have any of the aspects of demon possession. It had every marking of an absolute, complete mental breakdown. However, if we are unsure what we're dealing with, start treating it as a mental health issue. If someone says they are possessed, they likely aren't.

Let's get back to our biblical account. Our conclusion is the "unseen power" at work in the boy was a mental health issue. The father said the boy was mentally unstable; there was a "spirit" that threw the boy to the ground with symptoms that seemed to indicate a seizure. He never said the boy was possessed of a demon.

### Let's take a moment and compare how actual demon possession works:

**Luke 4:33-35 (NRSV):** *33 In the synagogue there was a man who had <2192> the spirit of an unclean demon <1140>.*

**Had:** Thayer's Greek Lexicon #2192 *echó:* verb  
to have (hold) possession of the mind (refers to alarm, agitating emotions, etc.)

### Key details:

- The man was possessed by an unclean spirit—that of a demon, a physical entity; what we might call a "true" demon possession and not a mental issue.

### The demon became vocal and argumentative:

*and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.*

- Demons would often recognize Jesus and proclaim who he was.

The next quote delineates between how the demons spoke in the Bible and how delusional schizophrenics (who might think they are possessed) usually speak:

(Source: <https://mentalillnesspolicy.org/coping/demonic-possession-mental-illness.html>)

Irrational Speech vs. Rational Speech. In New Testament accounts involving demons, the demons spoke in a rational manner. Untreated people with schizophrenia will often speak in nonsense and jump rapidly between unrelated topics.

35 *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent, and come <1831> out of <1537> him! When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came <1831> out of <575> him without having done him any harm.*

**Come:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1831 *exerchomai*;  
to issue (literally or figuratively): come (forth, out), depart (out of), escape, get out, go (abroad, away, forth, out, thence), proceed (forth), spread abroad

**Out of:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1537 *ek*;  
biblical usage: out of, from, by, away from

**Out of:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #575 *apo*; "off," i.e. away (from something near), in various senses (of place, time, or relation; literal or figurative)

- The prepositional phrase “out of” is used twice but this English phrase is translated from two different Greek words. Jesus commanded the demon to *come out*, and it *came out*. “Out from” and then “away from.” Jesus’ command literally sent the demon away so it could no longer influence the man. In other words, the demon didn’t hang around in the shadows waiting for Jesus to leave so it could sneak back in to harm this man again.
- *Have you come to destroy us?* This tells us the demons are aware of their future judgment and potential for destruction.

This is an episode of an actual demon possession. In this example, Jesus communicates with and commands the demon to release control. The difference here is that Jesus is commanding an entity with unseen power versus removing a powerful unseen malady from the boy’s own physiology. The symptoms may seem similar, but it is a completely different process.

**Mark 9:23–25:** 23 *And Jesus said to him, If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.* 24 *Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe; help my unbelief.* 25 *When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit <4151>, saying to it, You deaf and mute spirit <4151>, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.*

#### Key points:

- Jesus boldly puts all unbelief on notice as the father reaches for stronger faith.
- Demons were vocal, but here Jesus called this type of “spirit” a deaf and mute influence. Why? Because that’s exactly what it was. We don’t think this spirit, this

*pneuma*, was a demonic personality; rather, it was a deep and strong power that had developed in this boy's imperfect mind.

**2 Timothy 1:7:** (KJV) *For God hath not given us the spirit (*pneuma*) of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The spirit of fear is not a spirit devil that has literally gotten into our hearts: it is simply a mental influence natural to every fallen human being of humble mind.*

- Jesus commanded that this power leave the boy's brain. Jesus had the power to physically rewire his brain. He was cured!

There is a difference between commanding the influence of a demon to leave someone versus being able to actually fix the wiring in someone's physiology and psyche. What a beautiful picture of the future healing for all!



**THERE ARE STRONG SIMILARITIES AND STRONG DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE HANDLING OF DEMONIC POSSESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. BOTH OVERWHELM AND INCAPACITATE THE AFFLICTED INDIVIDUAL. DEMONS CAN HEAR, REACT AND UNDERSTAND, AND JESUS ALWAYS OVERWHELMED THEM. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES ARE MALADIES JESUS COULD SIMPLY REMOVE.**

Jesus did all this with the command and power of God. God's unseen power and influence worked so mightily through him.

This is all both scary and exciting at the same time. We are beginning to see just how far and wide the power of God's spirit was able to work through Jesus.

**What are the end results of this experience and what should be our takeaways in terms of practical learning and application?**

The end results here are both very clear and also very challenging. We can rejoice in the fact that the divine healing that Jesus showed us was a magnificent picture of what will come to the entire world in God's kingdom. Until then, our challenge is, as best as we are able, to understand and flee from any demonic encounters while embracing and helping with the complexity of the mental health issues of those we may know.

Run away from demons but stand in support of mental health. How can we know the difference?

(Source: <https://mentalillnesspolicy.org/coping/demonic-possession-mental-illness.html>)  
Effects of Therapy. If prayer solves the problem, then it was probably not schizophrenia. If medicine helps alleviate the problem, it was not demon possession.

Medicine with therapy, practice and discipline is necessary to make this work. Mental health issues are widespread. As a reminder, we are not just talking about “mental illness.” We are talking about a wide variety of issues that may be physiological, neurological or psychological—conditions defined by the inability to function normally.

**Let’s get back to our biblical account:**

**Mark 9:26–27:** *26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, He is dead! 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.*

**Key points:**

- Through God’s power and influence, this miracle displayed Jesus’ ability to physically heal a mentally-deficient brain.
- The result was utter exhaustion for the boy, until Jesus helped him up.

This is a stark example of Jesus dealing with mental health issues versus demonic possession.



**Rick’s experience with a fellow Christian—Part 3 “The Long and Winding Road”**

This was not an easy path. My friend was in and out of the hospital two more times after the initial episode. They had to learn to recognize what was happening. They had to learn to take the medication regularly and to stay on it even when they felt better. This required discipline. They had to learn to reach out for help, separate fact from fiction and learn new responses to triggers that caused the problems to begin with.

This learning was a big process. They were finally able to go back to work, but they still had paranoia issues. I remember vividly, sometimes once or twice a week, this person would call me up to tell me “they” were after them. They no longer identified those after them as demons but would interpret circumstances around them at work as people trying to “get them.” Paranoia again. We would walk through the experience and talk it through.

God overruled it so that each time this individual called me, I had the time to talk. It was an amazing thing to me. I could feel God’s guiding hand because I didn’t know what to do! We would talk about what was fact (what we do know) and what was fiction (what are we assuming). We would work on it, repeating certain things, and after 20, 30 or 40 minutes, they would be able to get back to work. Three days later, the same thing would happen.

It was a learning process. They learned and worked at staying on target with therapy, doctors and the medication. Things gradually began to work back into a place of understanding. This was a long, hard process but stamped by God’s grace. Through incredible effort, they worked at this. We’ll pause again here.

### Back to our story with the boy:

**Mark 9:28:** *When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, Why could we not drive it out?*

The disciples were confused: *Why could we not drive it out?* Something was different about this one. Not only did it not speak, but it was stronger than the power of the disciples. They couldn't just command it to go away.

### Key point:

- *Drive it out* is broadly used for casting out demons as well as removing other things that do not have a personality.

### One example of this:

**Matthew 7:4-5** (KJV): *4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

*Pull out/cast out* is the same word for *drive it out*. It is not talking about driving a demon out of someone. For example, someone who has a problem with alcohol might “cast out” any and all alcohol from their home.

### The account concludes with a lesson on the power of faith and prayer:

**Matthew 17:20:** *And he said to them, Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. **Mark 9:29:** This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.*

### Key points:

- True faith does not magically appear. It begins small and has enormous growth potential.
- True and godly faith, when mature, becomes a life-altering influence.
- Prayer is always the basis for facing our greatest of challenges. Even as we seek professional help, or take medication, or receive therapy for our mental challenges, prayer is our continued lifeline.

Prayer does not replace doing what is necessary. We don't pray over a broken bone hoping it will miraculously repair itself. We go to the doctor right away—maybe praying on the way. Mental health issues and challenges need that extra help God has provided for us in this time. We need to go to a professional and stick with it, because unlike the broken arm, mental health issues are generally ongoing. It is not something that heals in a few weeks' time but requires persistence and work to get to a better place.



### Rick's experience with a fellow Christian—Part 4 “The Victory”

These big challenges with my friend happened several years ago. We went to the hospital with them several different times. There were moments of moving forward and moments of falling backwards, over and over.

But now it is awesome because we talk regularly. They will tell me of the issues that come up now, which years ago would have been the triggers starting the spiral downward. I keep quiet while they go on to tell me the steps they took to deal with the issue. They explain their prayerful approach. They talk about the discipline of working through the steps. They explain the necessity of separating fact from fiction. Then they say, “It was a great day!” To look at them now, you would not see them as any different from anyone else.

This particular challenge will always be with them, will always require them to consciously work through the triggers, but IT NO LONGER DOMINATES THEM.

Let's be generous in our support and our willingness to stand with and walk alongside for the journey. There are great blessings involved!

Here are three things to remember when learning to stand in a place of godly righteousness when faced with both demonic possession and mental health challenges.



**Realize demons do know the power and might of God the Creator! They exist:**  
**James 2:19:** *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*

**Realize those with mental health challenges may not know why their lives are so confusing.** Finding out why these things are happening is important.



**Know that Satan's reign of terror with those who follow his evil ways is temporary! Jesus has it under control:**  
**Hebrews 2:14:** *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

*Jesus, through his sacrifice, would render powerless he who has the power of death, that is, the devil. With that powerlessness comes the next stage—the healing of everything!*

**Know that however deep and debilitating any mental health issue may be, it will in God's time be rendered powerless.** It may not be in this age or life, but it is guaranteed in the resurrection. Jesus gave us a picture of this in the healing of the boy.



**Regardless of the issue, remember that prayer brings peace and protection! Pray, pray, pray and pray more:**  
**Philippians 4:6–7:** *6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**Remember that prayerful and patient attention to any and all mental health issues is the foundation for true progress as we seek the right kind of professional help. Prayer brings peace and protection.**

**Rick**

My friend's purpose now every day is to simply glorify God in every thought, word and deed. When they go through a difficult experience, they pray, they go back to glorifying God and they apply the work-throughs they have been taught to deal with the situation rather than allowing it to trigger their past reactions.

Are there different kinds of evil spirits? Yes, in a very real sense there are. We have talked about demon possession, but we also have darkness in our bodies and minds that are broken as a result of being imperfect human beings—descendants of Adam, dealing with the degradation of sin in our bodies.

Those are evil spirits too—not entities—but influences and powers within our frames that take away from the quality of a good and righteous life. We can improve if we decide to get the right kind of help.



**IT IS EASY TO CONFUSE THIS TYPE OF EXPERIENCE WITH DEMON POSSESSION.**

**HOWEVER, THERE ARE THREE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES:**

- 1. THIS EXPERIENCE WAS LABELED AS A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE.**
- 2. JESUS CALLED IT A "DEAF AND MUTE" POWER WHEN HE REMOVED IT FROM THE BOY, AND DEMONS ARE NOT DEAF AND MUTE.**
- 3. JESUS SHOWED HIS DISCIPLES THAT THIS KIND OF EXPERIENCE IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM DEMONIC POSSESSION.**

**LET US HUMBLY ACCEPT WHAT JESUS HAS TAUGHT US!**

Whatever the circumstances, Jesus has it under control. If it cannot be totally fixed in this life, it certainly will be fixed in the next life, in the resurrection when mankind will be called from the grave, hear the voice of Jesus and come forth.

These issues will be gone because Jesus paid the price for all Adamic sin and its resulting pain and suffering.

**So, are there different kinds of evil spirits?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*





## Next episode

Episode 1357:  
Should Christians Be Involved in Exorcisms?



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### Bonus Material and Study Questions

#### Recommended additional study:

**Ep.1305: How Do Satanic Demons Influence Our World?**

*Establishing the origin, power and methods of dark spiritual beings*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1305-demons/>

**Ep.1266: Why Doesn't God Just Destroy Satan?**

*Satan's history and God's righteous reasons for keeping him alive*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1266-destroy-satan/>

**Ep.1097: What is Satanism?**

*Understanding Satanism and its subtle and devious allure*

<https://christianquestions.com/society/1097-satanism/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube):

- How did Jesus show his love for others?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZVLByo9ra0>
- Why is prayer important?  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n\\_nvt43iyzA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_nvt43iyzA)
- Why did Jesus perform miracles?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQZzYA1Qun0>

### The full accounts for each Gospel:

**Matthew 17:14–20:** *14 When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before him and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 And Jesus answered and said, You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to me. 18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not drive it out? 20 And he said to them, Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.*

**Mark 9:14–29:** *14 When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw him, they were amazed and began running up to greet him. 16 And he asked them, What are you discussing with them? 17 And one of the crowd answered him, Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it. 19 And he answered them and said, O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me! 20 They brought the boy to him. When he saw him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And he asked his father, How long has this been happening to him? And he said, From childhood. 22 It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us 23 And Jesus said to him, If you can? All things are possible to him who believes. 24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe; help my unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, you deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again. 26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, He is dead! 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. 28 When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, Why could we not drive it out? 29 And he said to them, This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.*

**Luke 9:37–43:** *37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only boy, 39 and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. 40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, and they could not. 41 And Jesus answered and said, You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here. 42 While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples...*

## Definitions for two of the words used for *demon* in the New Testament:

**Devils:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1140 *daimonion*;  
a demonic being; by extension a deity

The King James Version translates this as devil 59 times, god 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) the divine power, deity, divinity 2) a spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men 3) evil spirits or the messengers and ministers of the devil

**Possessed:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1139 *daimonizomai*; to be exercised by a daemon

The King James Version translates this as possessed with devils 4 times,  
possessed with the devil 3 times, of the devils 2 times, vexed with a devil 1 time,  
possessed with a devil 1 time, have a devil 1 time

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to be under the power of a demon

In the New Testament, these are persons, afflicted with especially severe diseases, either bodily or mentally, (such as paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, melancholy, insanity, etc.) whose bodies in the opinion of the Jews demons had entered, and so held possession of them as not only to afflict them with ills, but also to dethrone the reason and take its place themselves; accordingly the possessed were wont to express the mind and consciousness of the demons dwelling in them; and their cure was thought to require the expulsion of the demon

## All uses in the King James Version:

**Matthew 4:24:** *And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils <1139>, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

**Matthew 8:16:** *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils <1139>: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

**Matthew 8:28:** *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils <1139>, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*

**Matthew 8:33:** *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils <1139>.*

**Matthew 9:32:** *As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil <1139>.*

**Matthew 12:22:** *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil <1139>, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.*

**Matthew 15:22:** *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil <1139>.*

**Mark 1:32:** *And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils <1139>.*

**Mark 5:15:** *And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the **devil <1139>**, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

**Mark 5:16:** *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the **devil <1139>**, and also concerning the swine.*

**Mark 5:18:** *And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the **devil <1139>** prayed him that he might be with him.*

**Luke 8:36:** *They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the **devils <1139>** was healed.*

**John 10:21:** *Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a **devil <1139>**. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

**Lunatic:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4583 *seleniazomai*,  
to be moon-struck, i.e. crazy

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to be moon-struck or lunatic 2) to be epileptic  
2a) epilepsy being supposed to return and increase with the increase of the moon.  
(This meaning is doubtful as the Greeks knew nothing of epilepsy)

**Both uses in the King James Version:**

**Matthew 4:24:** *And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were **lunatic <4583>**, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

**Matthew 17:15:** *Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is **lunatic <4583>**, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1356: Are There Different Kinds of Evil Spirits?

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1356-evil-spirits/>

1. Who are the demons in the Bible? Where are they now? Are they totally ineffectual at this time? Who is the “ruler of this world”? (Jude 1:6, 2 Peter 2:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)
2. Describe the episode of the woman with the daughter “vexed with a devil.” Why was it odd Jesus healed the daughter?
3. Explain why it is important to feed our minds with righteous input. (Matthew 12:43-45, 15:22-24)

***Jesus heals the boy with an unclean spirit:*** Matthew 17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43

4. Describe the life of the father and his son. What does the father tell the scribes, disciples and Jesus?
5. What do the words translated *spirit* in the Bible mean? Give examples of the usage of the word where it represents a personal entity and where it doesn't. (John 3:8, 1 Corinthians 2:11)
6. Compare the behavior of the demon in Luke 4:33-35 with the unclean spirit in the boy. (Mark 9:25-27)
7. What are some clues that the spirit in Mark 9:25 was not a demon? (2 Timothy 1:7)
8. Discuss the lessons on the power of faith and prayer from Matthew 17:20, Mark 9:28-29.

***Things to remember when faced with demonic possession and mental health challenges:***

9. *Comment and expand on each point:* **Demon possession** / **Mental Health issue**
  - a. **Demons exist, James 2:19**  
Recognizing mental health issues exist and their cause is important.
  - b. **Satan's reign of terror is temporary, Hebrews 2:14**  
All mental health issues are temporary too!
  - c. **Prayer, peace and protection! Philippians 4:6-7**  
Prayer, peace, protection—and professional help!
10. Distinguish between the different kinds of evil spirits. What are the three fundamental differences between demon possession and the experience of the boy with the unclean spirit? (see graphic)
11. Do you suffer from mental health challenges? Have you sought God's help through consulting a professional? Is there someone else who might be helped through your prayer and support as they struggle through this kind of a problem? Please encourage them to seek help and support.