

Missionary to West Africa

One day when I went to pick up my children at their private African school, one of the administrators of the school, an African man, came out to speak with me. He asked me, "Pastor, we have a case of demon possession with one of the students. Would you come and help us?" One of my worst fears was being realized! Though I was brought up in a pastor's home, had attended an excellent Bible college and one of the best seminaries in the world, had had four years plus of pastoral experience in the United States as well as more than a year of missionary experience in West Africa, I had no idea how to deal with this very real spiritual problem. With my heart in my throat, I accompanied this man; we found a young junior high boy being held by two large men and thrashing uncontrollably. A Pentecostal lady was screaming at the demons and doing many bizarre things. I eventually spoke to the boy, and the demon looked at me with much hatred and spoke back. Though I had never dealt with the demonic, I knew that I was not speaking to the boy. I muddled my way through a prayer and told the administrator to take the boy back to his family and to encourage him to see his pastor. Not long after this, people in our church began to ask me questions about demonic activity in their life and how to deal with it. I encouraged them to read some Psalms and to pray, but that was all I knew. I was afraid of demons. I was told that we don't study the demonic because if we do, we come under the influence of the devil. I was told and taught that Satan is too strong for me so I should avoid getting involved.

I began to realize that, if I was going to live and minister in an African context, I would have to know how to deal with demonic activity and have to stand against the works of Satan in my life and in the lives of those to whom I was ministering. So I committed myself to studying spiritual warfare during my year of home assignment in 1990 and 1991. I praise God for the excellent materials that have been written and prepared by solid evangelical scholars from major theological institutions in our country. I also praise the Lord for the International Center for Biblical Counseling where I spent one week in February with Jim Logan and was able to observe firsthand how to enable believers to become free from demonic activity in their lives. I not only feel very well equipped to return to Africa, I have a renewed and deeper appreciation for the grace and the truth and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

P.S. In a recent phone conversation with this missionary, I learned the Lord has used him to set others free, using the materials and steps he learned here at the Center. This has greatly encouraged him for his trip back to Africa, for he has not only observed a man coming to freedom but has been used here in the U.S. to lead others to freedom in Christ. Here at the Center, we desire to train others for this dimension of ministry.