

UEM Asia Region

Think Tank on Magic, Witchcraft, Demon Beliefs and Deliverance

Theological Basis for a Deliverance Ministry in UEM Member Churches



1. What is the meaning of “deliverance”?

Setting free in the name and power of Christ those who are either possessed, controlled, used or influenced by demonic/evil powers.

2. Why should UEM member churches engage in deliverance ministries?

Jesus himself engaged in deliverance ministry as he delivered those who were possessed by the demons, as attested by the scriptures. Moreover, Jesus gave authority to the believers to cast out demons (Mark 16:17). (Mat 28: 18-20; Mat 12: 22; Mark 3: 15; Mark 6: 7-13; Mark 9:14-29; Mark 16:7-13, Acts 16:16-32; Ephesians 1:16-23; Eph 6:10-20; Job 1:6-12;2:1-10) Deliverance ministry has been practiced throughout church history.

UEM churches in Asia are living in the midst of indigenous cultures which are influenced by occultism, such as witchcraft, white and black magic practices etc. In fact, some church members are actively or passively involved in certain occult practices.

Some church members actually believe in and experience the presence of demonic powers in their life. An additional problem is that in some contexts, there is an increasing number of accusations of occult practices (e.g. having a *Begu Ganjang*, having a *Bekhu Soma*, practicing *santet*, practicing *barang*, or being *suanggi*) which can lead to serious problems in a community and even to killing.

3. What is the understanding of demonic/evil powers in our cultural and theological background? What is our contextual theological understanding of these powers?

In our different contexts, we have different understandings of what constitutes evil powers. In our traditional cultures, there are different spirits which can be good or evil.

As Christians, we have different approaches:

For some, there are demons, spirits and evil powers which affect all people and even Christians physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually in a negative way (Ex. 20:1-6; Deut. 18:9-15 and 28:1-46). Others believe that such spirits cannot harm believers.

For some, evil powers are manifested in oppressive and exploitative social structures that victimize the poor and powerless in society.

For some of us, any kind of spirit that is not the Spirit of God is seen as evil and dangerous, while others believe that there are also other beneficial spirits.

Some of us hold that there are ancestor spirits/spirits of the dead which can be evil or good.

Others hold a theological view that there is no relation between the living and the dead, and that therefore any seemingly ancestral spirit is actually a demonic/satanic power (2 Cor 11:14) which was defeated by Christ (Mark 9:14-29; etc).

In a context where there is great fear of evil spirits, the neglect of deliverance ministry will not answer the needs of the believers in a holistic way.

4. What occult practices still exist in our context? What impact do they have on church life?

In our Asian contexts, there is still black and white magic. Most of us consider that both come from the same source and in fact harm those who practice it as well as others. But not all traditional healing practices are considered occult.

All of our churches consider occult practices as unacceptable. Following Christ does not only include turning and submitting to Jesus, but also leaving and rejecting occult practices which are clearly contrary to Christian teaching. This can be a process due to the gradual growth of understanding of biblical teaching. (1 John 4: 1; Acts 19:18-19 and 26:18)

But church members act in different ways. In some churches, members do not engage in occult practices. In other churches, some members engage in occult practices such as seeking help from a shaman/witchdoctor when they are in need of healing, success, or when they want to harm other people. In their day-to-day life, they may also offer food on graves, at trees or lakes; they may wear or use amulets, and relate to ancestor spirits before or during marriage or burial ceremonies etc., because they are afraid of curses if they do not follow such practices. Some church members may even become a witchdoctor themselves.

The impact of such practices on the Christians' spiritual life is severe: Individual Christians will not grow in faith but rather become afraid, go away from Jesus and from the church, and finally experience spiritual death. For congregations, there may be conflicts, and the spiritual life of the congregation as a whole will not develop. Even the economic and social life of the practitioner and the community can be affected, particularly when there are witchcraft accusations.

5. If there is a deliverance ministry: What is the theological basis for this ministry?

Pastors and churches who are engaged in deliverance ministry base this on the following theological tenets:

- Jesus himself casted out demons. (E.g. Mark 9:14-29; ; Luke 8: 26-39 and many others)
- Jesus came to this world and died for us and was resurrected on the third day and defeated his enemies (Col. 2:15). Nevertheless, the devil still has a certain power over this world (Mat 4: 8-9; 16:21-23; Eph 6: 11-12). He is deceiving (1Pet 5:8; John 8: 44; 2Tim 2:25-26; 2Cor 11:14), oppressing (Mat 12: 22), condemning (Rev 12:9-10). But every power and authority in this world and in heaven will be brought under Jesus' feet.
- The believers are called to cast out demons. (Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1 and 10:1-2; Mk 16:17; Matthew 10:1) So we have to open our eyes to the truth and deliver them from the bondages of the darkness (Act 26:18).
- Believers are spiritually equipped to do so. (Eph. 6:10-18)
- Demons can be defeated by faith in Christ. (1. Pet. 5:8-9; James 4:7)

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