
3RD EDITION

SPIRITUAL HOUSECLEANING



Protect
Your Home
and Family
from Spiritual
Pollution

EDDIE & ALICE SMITH



Chosen

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Preface

Fasten Your Seat Belt

In the 1980s, I (Eddie) took a church pastoral staff job, and we bought a house and settled down. Alice became an award-winning real estate agent. During the next eleven years, we served a local congregation in Houston, Texas. It wasn't long before we encountered experiences with the demonic among our membership, and then other churches began to send us people who needed counseling involving the supernatural, demons and the rest.

One night, we facilitated the deliverance of a dear lady in northwest Houston. To make an extremely long story short, we and another pastor from our church were challenging the demons that were tormenting the lady when we asked, "What gives you the right to stay in her?"

With that, the lady's arm involuntarily moved above her head and pointed to a bookshelf with a sliding door. We

opened the door and discovered a “Christian” book about demons. “This?” we asked.

The lady’s face twisted into a sarcastic sneer, and the demon (speaking through her) said devilishly, “Yes.”

Without a thought, I ripped the book into shreds. As I did, the demons shrieked and left her. She was freed.

Our pastoral team learned to minister to people using ministry teams of three to five people. Soon, we developed a system we called Ministry Team Training to teach our church members how to minister in teams. Before long, hundreds of people from churches across the South came to our church to be trained at our quarterly training events. The course further developed as the experience of our team grew, and we established multiple levels of training.

Shortly after leaving the church to do the work we now do—writing and teaching at conferences around the world—we wrote the original edition of *Spiritual Housecleaning*. To our amazement (and perhaps our publisher’s!), our book became an overnight bestseller. People from various nations, cultures and languages sent us praise reports. They’d read our book, had applied the biblical principles we presented and had found victory!

In this revised and updated edition of *Spiritual Housecleaning*, we share some of their stories with you. Why? To help you see even more clearly why living a life of purity and victory depends upon our forsaking things that dishonor Christ and His Kingdom and to help you understand that evil has the same mode of operation wherever it exists around the world. Evil is neither creative nor complex. In fact, it’s quite predictable.

So fasten your seat belt. Some of the stories you will read will amaze you. But we aren’t the least bit interested in your

entertainment. Rather, we pray that you'll receive new revelation of the tactics of the enemy so that you can live free and set others free. Scripture clearly teaches that evil will become darker and righteousness brighter until our Lord comes for His Church (Isaiah 60:1–3; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:24–43; 2 Timothy 3:13).

Let's prepare. The worst and the best are yet to come!

Eddie and Alice
Houston, Texas

Introduction

Why We Wrote This Book

Imagine there was a plague of snakes of biblical proportion in your city. The house in which you live became completely overrun with deadly, poisonous snakes. How important would it be for you to make sure *some* of the snakes were removed? You would not even consider that an option, would you? Absolutely not! You would insist that *all* of the snakes be removed if you and your family were to continue to live there. Could you sleep peacefully if you thought there might be *even one* poisonous snake left in your home? Hardly.

Would you believe there could be possessions inside your home right now that pose a spiritual threat to you and your family, just like poisonous snakes pose a physical threat? The average Christian family may not even be aware of the necessity to *spiritually clean* their house in order to experience the peaceful presence of God.

That's why we wrote this book.

Many of us are suffering today because we have sometimes willfully, and sometimes ignorantly, invited possessions and behaviors into our homes that defile the atmosphere and give the devil the right to affect our lives and the lives of our children. This defilement can come in many forms: statues of foreign gods, “magic” charms, occult books or perverse “souvenirs” of past sins. But whatever the form, God doesn’t want us to possess defiled objects, for they invite the devil to wreak havoc with our hearts and homes. That is clearly not how Christ wants us to live. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:20, “I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”

To the uninitiated reader, some of what’s contained in this book may sound a bit like superstition. We understand where you are coming from. Some might even conclude that our belief in a spirit world and faith in an unseen God is a superstition. But to us, superstition is placing faith in any person, place or thing other than the almighty God and His infallible Word. We reveal not legalism nor superstition but biblical principles and proven practices that can indeed free us, and our households, from any spiritual bondage.

That being said, Christ’s cross and resurrection have established our authority over the devil. Since Jesus gives us His authority, we are to live on the offensive (Matthew 10:1; Luke 19:10; Ephesians 6:10). For that reason, we should never fear the devil or demons. Jesus set the example for us when He taught us to pray, “Deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13 KJV). The Lord’s deliverance is available to those who walk in the way of righteousness. With this knowledge, as children of the King, we exchange our fear for freedom. Yet to fully live in our inheritance, we must be sure there is nothing in our lives or in our homes that would hinder our fellowship with God.

What does purity of heart involve for us as Christians? What does it mean to love God with all our hearts, our souls and our minds? It means to not allow Satan access to any aspect of our lives, thereby keeping ourselves undefiled. It means that we don't give Satan any place or allow him any opportunity (Ephesians 4:27).

Today is a new day for the Church! It's time for the Church of Jesus Christ to awaken from her slumber. We can no longer afford to wallow in the carnality of the world and expect the Lord to overlook it. Today, God is calling us to a new level of holiness. We need to cleanse the atmosphere of our homes as well as our hearts. This cleansing often involves the removal of certain physical possessions. But which ones?

We have written this book to teach you *how* to walk circumspectly and to exercise spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:15; Ephesians 5:15). This may very well prove to be one of the most important books you will ever read, because its principles can provide the key to spiritual peace and security for you and your entire family.

We have a world to reach with the Gospel! But before we can reach a fallen world, God must reach us. Our lives and our possessions should reflect God's Kingdom rule. We're not to live under the tyranny of legalism or performance. We are to be godly and grateful because we know we owe everything to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!



Part One

Spiritual Housecleaning Principles

Spiritual Discernment

The Indian sun blazed, raising temperatures to 118 degrees Fahrenheit by midday. People were dying due to the excessive heat. To protect themselves, most would work until about 10:00 a.m., retreat inside until sundown and then resume their business and shopping.

Robert (our eldest son) and I (Eddie) were in Karapur, India, to teach at a Christian conference (and, by the grace of God, we managed to survive the heat!). More than three hundred Indian Christians joined us there, bearing the intense heat as they rode bicycles, buses and trains—some for days—to attend the conference. Once there, they slept on concrete floors, bathed out of buckets and ate food cooked over outdoor fires.

We taught various subjects, but my teaching on spiritual housecleaning had the most far-reaching impact on this

idol-worshipping culture. As I spoke about unbiblical heathen practices and cultural traditions, I could see my listeners removing from their bodies, their pockets and their purses the Hindu fetishes (i.e., string bracelets, necklaces and charms) they wore or carried in hopes that a particular god would protect or provide for them.

I gave the altar call. With zeal they brought those forbidden, spiritually defiled items to the altar and discarded them (Acts 19:18–19). Freedom rang out like church bells in the hearts of those precious people that day! Curses were broken, generational sin was severed and spiritual liberty was released. Some people were healed and others were saved. The next day we baptized 67 in a public city pond!

Robert and I left the hotel the day after our conference to catch our plane for the United States. We'd been gone from the hotel for about thirty minutes when we received a phone call telling us that the police had come to the hotel to arrest us—just minutes after we left. God spared us the trouble.

Why did they want to arrest us? Was it because 67 people had trusted Christ? Was it because 67 people had renounced their Hindu faith and been baptized? No. It was because we had taught them that their Hindu worship artifacts were evil, defiled and forbidden by God. The newspapers reported that we had offended and belittled their Hindu gods and that we'd converted three hundred of their people. They didn't understand a thing about the true conversion of the 67 who'd received eternal life but instead focused on the three hundred who disposed of their fetishes.

Wouldn't you agree that if asking people to divest themselves of these things offended the Hindu priests so much that

they sent police to arrest us, it's safe to assume that those things (or, rather, the Hindu "gods" behind them) held some sort of power over them? And for us to possess such things glorifies devils and grieves the one true God (Acts 24–29; 1 Corinthians 10:18–22).

Genesis 35:1–5 gives us a biblical example of this truth:

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, *Put away the strange gods that are among you*, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed; *and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

KJV, emphasis added

After Jacob and his family got rid of their objects of idolatry, God honored them. His presence went with them and put terror in the hearts of the people around them—people who might otherwise have attacked them. Today, the same power and favor of God is available to us, whether we are in India, America, Antarctica or anywhere else in the world! Time and again, for over forty years, our experiences with spiritual housecleaning have shown this to be true.

Encounters with Demons

In our early days of itinerant evangelism, we traveled hundreds of thousands of miles, living in a motor home that we lovingly called our piece of “wheel estate.” In fact, during that time we owned seven such vehicles before we stopped traveling! We conducted hundreds of evangelistic crusades in churches and football stadiums across America. We were blessed to see thousands of people come to Christ.

During those early years of our ministry, we did a great deal of personal counseling. Traveling as we did from town to town, we began to recognize spiritual patterns. Regardless of whether we were in a city, in suburbs or in small rural towns, we noticed similar things happening in the spiritual realm.

In the late sixties and early seventies, few books had been written about spiritual warfare or deliverance. *Pigs in the Parlor*, written by our friend the late Frank Hammond, was one of the first. Hollywood’s burgeoning fascination with the demonic expressed itself in films like *Rosemary’s Baby*, *Poltergeist* and *The Exorcist*, to name a few. Added to that was the massive influx of immigrants to the United States, who arrived with their family gods and religious cultural practices (many ready to build their temples and mosques right in our neighborhoods). Our land quickly became defiled. Don’t misunderstand—America has her own demons. But our *Leave It to Beaver* days were over, and demonic manifestations began to explode in this nation through the media, and through the collapse of moral integrity in our courts.

We encountered our first case of a demonized person in a large Baptist church in South Texas. Frankly, we were stunned

to witness a “respected churchgoing woman” lying on the floor of her pastor’s office, hissing and writhing like a snake, speaking with an unearthly male-sounding voice. From that moment, we were completely convinced that Satan is more than an evil idea or philosophy. He and his minions are real spiritual beings—like people without bodies—who have an intense desire to inhabit human bodies to fulfill their lusts and desires and advance Satan’s kingdom (Matthew 12:25–26, 43–45).

Soon we were routinely counseling demonized people, leading them through deliverance from the demons that plagued them, many from birth. At the same time, we encountered people—godly people, believable people—who were experiencing poltergeists (mischievous demons who move objects), ghosts (demons masquerading as the deceased) and other troubling manifestations. Children were the most easily harassed by them. They suffered from insomnia, nightmares and more.¹

As our experience grew, so did our understanding. We discovered that the demons that plagued people were in some cases strengthened by unholy possessions—defiled, forbidden objects that dishonored Christ (Deuteronomy 7:25–26; Hosea 4:10–13; 1 Corinthians 10:18–22). Almost weekly we saw people who, as they discarded those possessions, experienced freedom from demonic manifestations.

In Acts 19, we see how Ephesian believers destroyed their occult material when they saw the power of God at work through Paul. In that day, Ephesus was known as a witchcraft capital of the Roman world. It was a city famed for its written

1. To learn more about deliverance, see Alice Smith, *Delivering the Captives* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2006). Available at www.PrayerBookstore.com.

collections of occult spells, statues and images of the goddess Diana, and for the practitioners who used them. Paul shook up the city when he came preaching the name of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through signs, wonders and deliverances, many believed. But it took a demonic attack on the seven sons of Sceva to show the Ephesian Christians that they needed to shut every door to evil activity in their lives (Acts 19:11–16). When this happened, those believers got the message: Jesus is the highest power in the universe! They then burned their books of the occult, rid themselves of idolatry and confessed their sins publicly. What happened next? “The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed!” (Acts 19:20).

Ministering Deliverance

During a conference in a Southern state, there was a gathering at the pastor’s home. One of the ladies in the group caught our attention. We both discerned a spiritual defilement about her. Jane (not her real name) was the music minister’s wife, and her husband was out of town that week. Before the week was over, we found ourselves counseling with her concerning her sexual involvement with one of the teenage boys in the church. (Yes, she was sexually active with one of the church’s own teens!)

We asked Jane about her salvation. This pretty young woman said she had been saved one night while driving her truck. A voice had whispered in her left ear, “Give me your life,” and she had said, “Lord, I *do* give You my life.”

“And to whom were you speaking?” we probed.

“What do you mean, ‘to whom’?” she said. “I was speaking to God.”

“How did you know it was God?”

“You mean it might have been a demonic spirit?”

She realized that from the moment she’d made that commitment, her life had begun a downhill slide. (If you ask God for a fish, He won’t give you a serpent, but a devil certainly may.) In Matthew 7:17–20, Jesus said that the “fruits”—people’s actions and character—show whether the source of that fruit is good and from God or bad and not from God. This woman’s decision produced the bad fruit of growing oppression and uncontrollable sin in her life, which showed that she had unwittingly given her life to demons.

The bottom line? She was born again and delivered that week. All the issues came out for the necessary parties to bring correction.

Two weeks later, her husband called to tell us she was suffering from an overwhelming temptation to rekindle her sinful relationship with the boy. Through phone counseling, we discovered that she had a blouse and a necklace the young man had given her. Those gifts, we explained, were physical representations of their sin. Covenants are sealed with gifts. They strengthen the “soul tie” (a spiritual attachment between people brought about through evil actions or unholy covenants between them). It wasn’t until she destroyed the items that she was set free. People can develop godly soul ties, like Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 18:1), or ungodly soul ties, like Samson and Delilah (Judges 16:4–19).

Because we were traveling evangelists, we had far more experiences and encounters than we would have had were we pastors in one locale. One night in a tiny Tennessee church,

we were in a pastor's study, trying to help Kim, a delinquent teenage girl. When Kim's unwed teenage mother conceived her, her mother and father (Kim's grandparents) out of shame tried to cover their daughter's sin. They sent her away until she gave birth to Kim. During that time, the family moved to another city and didn't tell extended family members about the pregnancy or the birth.

When Kim was born, her grandparents adopted her and never disclosed to her that she was actually their granddaughter, not their daughter. Kim was taught and believed that her birth mother was her older sister. One day, one of Kim's cousins discovered the deception and told her about it. Her parents (actually her grandparents) lied again and told her it was only a cruel prank. But she believed her cousin, and became depressed, suspicious and severely troubled. She didn't know who or what to believe.

Kim's mother and father (again, actually her grandparents) brought her to us for counseling. When they told us how they had lied to her, we insisted that they tell Kim the awful truth no matter how painful it would be. Kim could never build a healthy life on a foundation of lies and deceit. That night they disclosed to Kim that she was their granddaughter and that her "sister" was actually her mother. She was devastated, but in her heart she had known all along that something wasn't right. Kim had lived with a lie her entire life, and it affected her core identity.

For an hour we ministered deliverance to Kim without seeing the breakthrough we'd hoped for. We were stymied. It seemed we'd hit the proverbial brick wall. We prayed for God to reveal why we were so impotent against the spirits that bound her.

Then we noticed something in a lower bookshelf. The pastor's bottom bookshelf contained a copy of Anton Levy's *Satanic Bible* along with several other occult handbooks. We asked the pastor why he had them. He said he had bought them for research.

We explained to him that they were compromising the young lady's deliverance. We stopped our session, took the books outside to a trash-burning bin and set fire to them. It was almost impossible to get them lit, but after we did, the most amazing thing happened (since then we've seen this many times and hear about it often): No matter which side of the bin we chose to stand on, regardless of the direction of the slight breeze that night, the flames licked out at us. When we moved away from the bin, they licked farther, trying to reach us. It was almost as if the flames had minds of their own.

Once the books were destroyed, Kim was completely liberated by the Lord.

Spiritual Defilement in the Home

The woman's voice on the other end of the line sounded eerie and mystical. She had sought help from a Christian psychiatric hospital that had referred her to us. This divorced woman and her eight-year-old daughter lived alone, trapped in a world of darkness. The girl's father was a Unitarian pastor, but prior to that he had been an African witch doctor in a tribe known as the Leopard People. The now-abandoned single mom had extensive knowledge of the occult. And though she testified to having been recently born again, within the walls of her home, torment ruled.

At her request, we visited her home. Cats fearfully scurried from under our feet as our small prayer team approached the apartment door. When the woman opened the door, we were introduced to an atmosphere that almost took our breath away—it felt electric with evil.

Once inside, two large cats cowering near the refrigerator hissed at us, then disappeared within seconds. The electrical power flashed off and on until we commanded it to stop. To the right of the front door was a ten-foot bookcase filled with religious, heathen and occult books. She invited us to be seated and we began to discuss her problems.

She explained that her daughter was being harassed in the night by nightmares and apparitions. The child would awake to see ghosts in her room. (The ghosts were actually demons appearing in the forms of an old African-aboriginal man and woman.) The concerned mother stated that at times the child would leap on top of the dressers and move about like a leopard. This precious little girl would sometimes awake in the morning with humanlike bite marks and claw scratches in the middle of her back.

One night, the frightened girl awakened her mother several times, complaining that flies were biting her. Each time her mother turned on the lights and searched the room but found nothing. The next morning when she opened the window shades, she found a mound of dead flies piled on her daughter's windowsill. This didn't surprise us—we know that Satan is referred to as Beelzebub, the lord of the flies (Matthew 12:24–32; Mark 3:22).

The enemy had clearly been given authority to operate in their home. As we prayed and asked God for wisdom and discernment, we waited for the Holy Spirit's direction. The

demonic reality was almost palpable. Spiritual impressions from the Lord (i.e., “the word of knowledge” [1 Corinthians 12:8]) came to our team members as we cleansed the atmosphere with prayer.

All at once, as though the team had received the same revelation, we turned and stared at the wall of books—her huge occult library. We explained to the young mother that the books and the artwork acted as “bait” for the demons. (As flies are attracted to dung, demons are attracted to darkness.) Her library was an open invitation to demonic spirits and gave them legal right to defile her home and harass her and her child. These books, like a welcome mat, communicated to the unseen demonic world that they had the woman’s permission to stay. Such items and artifacts may seem harmless, yet they hold significance to satanic spirits.

We urged the mother to discard the occult books. We even offered to dispose of them for her. She refused. She lamented over the money she’d invested in the books. We lovingly explained that the books symbolized contracts she’d made with the enemy, and unless she forsook them, we’d have no authority over the demons that victimized them.

We begged for the sake of her daughter that she spiritually clean the house, but she turned a deaf ear to us. This woman’s attachment to her occult library compromised her and her daughter’s spiritual security and allowed the enemy to terrorize her child. Sadly, we were unable to go any further.

C. Peter Wagner shares an account of the power of idols in the ancient city of Athens.

The only place in the Bible where we find the phrase “given over to idols” (from the Greek *kateidolos*) is where Luke

describes Athens in Acts 17:16. Athens was the idol capital of the ancient world, possibly comparable to Kyoto, Japan, today. The literature of that day describes Athens as a forest of idols in which it is easier to find a god than a human being. Certain streets had so many idols that pedestrian traffic was difficult. One observer estimated that Athens contained more idols than the rest of Greece combined!

Because idols themselves are only made of wood or stone or metal, some are not concerned about their presence. These idols, however, were not just any piece of wood or stone or metal. They had been carefully and intentionally crafted by human beings as forms in the visible world through which the forces of the invisible world of darkness were invited to control the lives of people, families and the city as a whole, locking the people in spiritual darkness. That's why we read that Paul's "spirit was provoked within him" (v. 16).²

Yet this is not the only illustration of defilement. Let's look at what happened to Joshua in the Old Testament.

A Piece of Cake?

"Now, sir, let's not overreact," suggested Eliasaph,³ General Joshua's senior military adviser. "We can relax now and give the men a break. Trust me—this one is going to be a piece of cake. According to our reconnaissance, there's no reason at all for you to send the entire Israeli army to attack such a small place as Ai. ["Ai" literally means "a heap of ruin."] I

2. C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1996), 204–205.

3. The following is a loose adaptation of Joshua 7; General Eliasaph is a character created for the sake of readability.

suggest that a reduced force of two or three thousand troops will be sufficient to utterly destroy the city.”

So the next morning Joshua sent three thousand troops to annihilate little Ai. To their surprise, the feisty troops of Ai, ready for battle, killed 36 Israeli soldiers and chased the others from the gate of the city down the slope to the stone quarries. Israel’s dispirited army was forced to retreat like a dog with its tail tucked between its legs.

Joshua was stunned when he heard the news. After all, the much larger city of Jericho, which they’d soundly defeated, still lay in smoldering ruins. *How could Eliasaph have so grossly underestimated the military capability of a small town like Ai?* Joshua wondered. *More important—where was God? And what about the promises He had made to them?* God had clearly said:

Joshua, I am giving to you the land I promised Moses. I will always be with you and I will help you as I helped him. No one will ever be able to defeat you. So be strong and courageous! Do everything Moses taught you. Never stop reading the Book of the Law he gave you. Think about what it says day and night. Obey it completely, and you will be able to take this land.

see Joshua 1:1–9

Joshua called together an emergency council meeting of Israel’s leaders. “Gentlemen,” he said, “you will recall that Jehovah God promised us that He would never leave us and that we would never be defeated. Where do you suppose we went wrong when that handful of untrained, ragtag men disgraced our troops today? May I suggest, sirs, that we have

a national emergency on our hands? And we must get to the bottom of this—*now!*”

So Joshua and the leaders tore their clothes and put dirt on their heads as a symbol of sorrow and repentance. They lay facedown on the ground in front of the Ark of the Covenant and cried out to God until sunset.

Then Joshua prayed:

Lord, did You bring us across the Jordan just so the Amorites could annihilate us? If we had stayed on the other side of the Jordan, none of this would have happened. Frankly, I’m speechless. It’s shocking to realize that our army actually ran from our enemy today. Our people will soon think that You can no longer protect us. When our enemies hear of our humiliation, they are likely to become emboldened. They may even try to surround us and wipe us out.

The Lord answered Joshua:

General, get up off your face! I’m not taking prayer requests at this time. I told you that everything in Jericho belonged to Me. What’s more, I told you to destroy the city and everything in it. Instead, you and your people have stolen and hidden some of the booty for yourselves; and you’ve lied about it.

Because you’ve stolen stuff that was to be destroyed, Israel itself has been set aside for destruction. I can’t help you anymore until you do exactly what I’ve told you to do. And that’s precisely why your army could not stand before the little band of men at Ai.

Tell the people that they’ll never be able to stand against another enemy until they rid themselves of the abominable things that they’ve hidden. Tell them to prepare for worship. Tomorrow morning, when they gather for worship, I will

identify for you the guilty tribe and point out the guilty clan and the guilty family. And I will show you the man who stole the forbidden things that have defiled Israel and have broken the sacred covenant I made with you. That man, along with his wife, his sons and his daughters, must be executed by stoning. Their bodies and all of their possessions must be burned.

Early the next morning Joshua brought each tribe to the place of worship. There the Lord identified Judah as the guilty tribe and the clan of Zerah and Zabdi's family as the guilty clan and family. He showed them that Achan was the man responsible for violating Israel's contract with God.

General Joshua said, "Achan, is it true? Don't try to hide anything from me. Tell me what you've done."

"Yes, sir, it's true," Achan answered reluctantly. "I'm the one who sinned against the Lord God of Israel. While we were mopping up at Jericho, I found a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred pieces of silver and a gold bar that weighed as much as fifty pieces of gold. *I wanted them for myself*, so I took and hid them in a hole beneath my tent."

So Joshua immediately sent men running to Achan's tent to retrieve the silver, the gold and the robe. They brought the defiled items back and laid them before the Lord so that Joshua and the rest of the Israelites could see them.

Then everyone took Achan, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys, and sheep, his tent and everything that belonged to him, as well as the things he had stolen, to a nearby valley.

Once there, Joshua said, "Achan, you've caused us a lot of trouble. Now you are in trouble."

The people of Israel stoned Achan, his family and his animals to death. They built a fire and burned the bodies, along with all the possessions and the cursed things that Achan had stolen. They covered the ashes with a big pile of rocks. And that place is still known as Achor—Trouble Valley.

Then God stopped being angry with Israel and gave them the city of Ai (Joshua 8:1).

Ten Lessons We Learn from This Story

1. God's Promises to Us Are Awesome!

Our great God is a promise-keeper. He has given us thousands of promises in His Word. Salvation is only the beginning of God's promises. Beyond our salvation experience there are countless treasures waiting for us to experience in Christ, because God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Furthermore:

We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness. God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. Then we could escape our evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.

2 Peter 1:3–4 CEV

Have you realized that once you are born again, His nature becomes part of you?

2. God's Promises Are Often Contingent on Our Obedience.

In order for us to enjoy the benefits God has promised, we must trust Him and believe that He keeps His Word. Our faith activates His promises in our lives. However, many of God's promises are conditional. They are contingent upon our obedience. We call them God's if/then promises.

With regard to our salvation, He's promised that "if" we believe in our hearts and "if" we confess with our mouths, we shall be saved (Romans 10:9).

With regard to His forgiveness of our sins, God has promised that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God had made covenant with Joshua and had given him promises too. He promised to give him the land He had promised Moses (Joshua 1:1–4, 15); to be with him and to help him, as He had helped Moses (Joshua 1:9); that he would never be defeated (Joshua 1:5).

But with those three promises, there were three commands, or conditions: be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:6); do everything Moses taught (Joshua 1:7); read, meditate on and obey the Book of the Law (Joshua 1:8).

Achan had failed to do everything God had asked of him. He had taken that which God had forbidden the Israelites to take—things that God had designated for destruction—and had hidden them in a hole in the ground beneath his tent. Although the Lord doesn't suggest that a demonic power was attached to the Babylonian garment, the two hundred pieces of silver or the fifty gold shekels, He had said that those things

were accursed and should be avoided. Why would God want the Israelites to avoid them? They were cursed, and evil was attached to them. Certainly Achan's act of disobedience had opened the door to darkness.

Consequently, the main idea of this story is that to disobey God brings a curse, for disobedience is inherent in idolatry, which is the worship of demons (Deuteronomy 32:16–18).

3. Physical Things Sometimes Carry Spiritual Significance.

Throughout Scripture we see evidence that physical things can carry spiritual significance: the lamb's blood that God had the children of Israel apply to their doorposts (Exodus 12:7–13); the Tabernacle, its furnishings and utensils (Exodus 26–27); water baptism (Luke 3:21–22); the Last Supper (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25); miraculous handkerchiefs and aprons (Acts 19:11–12); healing oil (James 5:14). But perhaps the clearest example is found in the Old Testament and is one most are familiar with—Moses' brass serpent:

And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.” So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole;

and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it upon a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Numbers 21:5–9

The brass serpent that God instructed Moses to elevate on a pole for the children of Israel to see offered a solution for their sin. True, it was only a brass serpent on a pole—an inanimate object; yet it provided healing power to those who were bitten by the poisonous snakes. If they looked upon the brass serpent, they were healed. Today we understand even more about the significance of that brass snake. The serpent that Moses lifted up was actually a symbol of Christ who, when lifted upon the cross, became sin for us. Our sin was judged in Him and He died in our place. In dying, as they looked upon the brass serpent and were saved from their sin and received physical life, so we look to Jesus’ atoning sacrifice upon the cross to be saved from our sin and receive eternal life (John 3:14).

Nine hundred years later, when King Hezekiah was cleansing the Temple, “He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image [Asherah] and *broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it*” (2 Kings 18:4, emphasis added).

Amazingly, after all those years, an object that God had originally designed for Israel’s healing had become a god they worshiped! So He called it defiled.

Physical things can have a divine or even a demonic significance. We experienced this firsthand at the 1996 International

Conference on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare in Charlotte, North Carolina. After teaching at the conference, we were looking for a room where we could do individual counseling. As we opened the door to a small room backstage, we saw pieces of dog feces laid out in the shape of a cross on the floor in the center of the room, pointed toward the pulpit in the adjoining room. We felt a witch had placed them there to curse the meetings. Witches believe that physical items provide points of contact for demonic spirits. So their use of fetishes is a common ploy for deception and control.⁴

This is no time for us to be flaky or superstitious, but it is time to learn how to walk circumspectly with spiritual discernment. Some of the things in this book may appear to you as mere superstition. According to our culture's definition of "superstition," some might conclude that even our belief in a spirit realm and our faith in an unseen God is a superstition. As we've said, to us, superstition is placing faith in any person, place or thing other than the almighty God and His infallible Word. The spiritual dimension is real. It preceded the physical dimension. The apostle Paul said, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NIV).

4. God Forbids Us to Possess Certain Things.

It's inappropriate for God's children to possess certain things. When He saved us, He didn't patch up our old lives; God made us new creations! Paul wrote, "Therefore, if any-

4. A fetish is an object witches use to vex the environment with magic powers; an amulet is a charm to ward off disease or evil spells.

one is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because of our new life in Christ, God expects new living from us as well. We are to put off the old and put on the new. Ephesians 5:8–11 says:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the [light] is in all *goodness, righteousness, and truth*), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

emphasis added

In Exodus 20:3, God forbade the children of Israel to have any other gods. He is a jealous God—jealous of our trust (Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9). In Deuteronomy 18:9–13, God warned them not to engage in witchcraft and astrology. He explained that such activities are abominable to Him:

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

KJV

In the Old Testament we see lists of things that dishonor God and should not be found among His people. These things suggest that there are other gods, which violates the first four commandments.

Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 4:15–19, 23–24

This list is still valid. The Father is grieved if we possess statues of other gods—or any objects that connect us to a spiritual source other than the one true God. Such items as graven images of other gods (Exodus 20) are strictly forbidden, because they open the door to supernatural deception, turn people away from God and hinder people's spiritual and physical health.

5. The Use of an Item Can Establish Its Spiritual Significance.

Most objects are neither good nor evil in and of themselves. However, the way that we use them can establish their spiritual significance.

One day we wandered into a shop in Madras, India. We were souvenir shopping before leaving to go to the airport. There on an elevated platform sat an artisan holding a log with his bare feet as he skillfully carved it with hammer and chisel.

“What are you making?” Eddie asked the man.

“I’m carving a god,” he replied.

“And which god are you carving?”

“I’m carving Ganesh, our god of prosperity,” he answered.

To his amazement, Eddie aggressively lurched toward him and shouted, “Hurry! Finish it! Quickly . . . quickly!”

“Why? What’s the rush?” the man asked.

Still animated, Eddie said, “Sir, look out the windows of your shop. Your streets and sidewalks are littered with lepers and beggars. Your people are malnourished. Many are starving. Finish your ‘god of prosperity’ and get him into the streets so he can do what he’s supposed to do!”

We’ll never forget the expression on the man’s face. It seemed to say, “You know, what you just said makes a lot of sense.” (And perhaps he had an additional awareness that none of his other idols had ever worked either.)

There certainly was nothing intrinsically wrong with the log the man was carving. Yet when carved into an object of heathen worship, though it provided no solution to poverty, its spiritual significance was contrary to the Kingdom of God

(Deuteronomy 4:15–19, 23–24). Indeed, decades of experience with deliverance ministry has convinced us that demons sometimes attach themselves to certain persons, places and things.

Referring to man-made idols, Paul said, “We know that *an idol is nothing* in the world, and that there is no other God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4, emphasis added). So in and of themselves idols are simply powerless objects, and the meat sacrificed to them is nothing more than meat.

However, Paul went on to explain, “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (Deuteronomy 32:17; 1 Corinthians 10:19–20).

Since the beginning, people have used inanimate hand-crafted objects to commune with demons. The spiritual strength behind the idol is demonic. The demons use the idol to receive worship from people who are deceived and desperate enough to worship them. When they worship, pray to, or honor idols, people are worshiping demons. As a result, the idols they worship can become tools of the devil; even their own lives are then open to demonic influence. Demons lead deceived people astray directly or indirectly through the mediation of these objects.

You might ask why Paul had no problem eating meat that had been offered to idols. His only reluctance to do so was that he would not offend a weaker brother (1 Corinthians 8:3–13). Wouldn’t the meat, which is a physical object, be subject to a demonic attachment as well?

Of course we cannot know for certain. But perhaps food is a special case, since it is created by God to satisfy a universal

need. To the contrary, objects that have only one purpose—to operate outside of the governance of God and to actively and independently work against Him—call for either deliverance or destruction.

A good example of such an instance relates to the day a cable movie channel mysteriously appeared on our television. I (Eddie) called the cable company and said, “Ma’am, we are receiving HBO on our television and we didn’t order it.”

“That’s okay,” the lady answered politely.

“No, it’s not okay,” I insisted. “Let me speak to your general manager.”

The general manager came to the phone and said, “Friends, I was told about your call. Don’t you worry; we’re not going to charge you for the HBO.”

“You’re not going to charge us?!” I responded hotly. “Sir, you had better hope that we don’t charge you! We don’t let the city of Houston dump their garbage in our front yard, and we’re not about to allow you to dump your ‘garbage’ in our living room!”

It’s amazing how fast that movie channel disappeared!

6. Illicit Possessions Can Separate Us from God’s Purposes, Protection and Power.

God’s protection of us and His power released through us are directly related to His purposes for us. When we willfully—or ignorantly for that matter—step away from God’s purposes for our lives, we step out from under His protective care.

You can clearly see this in the life of Samson. He forsook God’s call on his life to live the life of a fool. Then one day

Delilah awoke him: “And she said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson!’ So he awoke from his sleep, and said, ‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’ But he did not know that *the LORD had departed from him*” (Judges 16:20, emphasis added).

It’s not that God refused to protect Samson. Samson, in his recklessness, forsook God’s purpose; and when he did, Samson ceded God’s protection and power. Do you agree? Do you see how deception in our lives keeps us from God’s wonderful plan for our future?

7. One Person’s Crime Can Result in Corporate Consequences.

We learn an amazing lesson in this case of Joshua and the nation of Israel (Joshua 7). Only one person—Achan—had sinned; yet God held the entire nation accountable! Look at these plural references in what God said to Joshua:

- *Israel* (the whole nation) committed a trespass (Joshua 7:1).
- The anger of the Lord was kindled against *the children of Israel* (all of them) (v. 1).
- *Israel* sinned (Joshua 7:11).
- *Israel* transgressed God’s covenant (v. 11).
- *Israel* took the accursed things (v. 11).
- *Israel* stole (v. 11).
- *Israel* put the stolen items among their own things (v. 11).
- Therefore *the children of Israel* could not stand before their enemies (Joshua 7:12).

- *They turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed* (v. 12).
- Neither would God be with *them* anymore, unless they destroyed the accursed from among *them* (v. 12).

Incredibly, one man's sin brought repercussions upon the entire nation. Achan's sin produced corporate consequences. As a result, 36 soldiers (husbands, sons and fathers) needlessly died in the first futile battle against Ai. As a consequence of Achan's sin, an entire nation was left defenseless and fearful. And, in some ways, this is the saddest of all: Achan's family—his wife, his sons and daughters, who as far as we know were innocent—were executed along with him.

This corporate nature of the Christian life is somewhat foreign to us as Americans—we typically pride ourselves on our independence. We have yet to learn that as members of Christ's Body we weren't designed by God to be independent, but rather to be interdependent upon each other. And as Paul wrote, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Corinthians 12:26 ESV).

So, if you are a Christian man with pornography hidden in your home or a Christian lady who's addicted to sexually explicit romance novels, you're very likely contributing to the spiritual impotence of Christ's Church.

8. When We Seek God, He Will Reveal the Defiled Things.

How can we know which of our possessions dishonor the Lord? Thankfully, we don't have to guess about these things. God has given us His Spirit. Jesus promised, "However, when

He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). When we pursue purity and ask the Father, He will show us if any of our possessions are displeasing to Him. The truth is, God reveals to heal!

We experienced such a healing after God revealed the unseen demonic intruder who at times invaded our peaceful home. We loved our home nestled in the woods far from the busy traffic and hurried lifestyles of Houston, our nation’s fourth largest city; but an evil presence (and sometimes odor) would appear in a particular corner of our large family room. We could sense it, and our children often complained when sitting in that part of the room.

One evening, as I (Alice) was pacing the room in prayer for special church services that were to begin later that night, I sensed that evil presence again. Enough was enough! I sought the Lord as to why. Unwilling to wait any longer, I closely checked all the trinkets and magazines near the corner of the room. When I examined the fireplace mantel, my gaze settled on a beautifully bound, six-volume set of books. I’d inherited the elegant collection from a deceased aunt. Neither Eddie nor I had ever opened them—they simply were ornaments to grace our mantel. Inside the books were pages filled with lithographs of ghosts, gargoyles and graveyards with spirits ascending from the tomb. The author wrote of depression, death and fear. I was appalled! After I repented to the Lord for allowing these books into our home, I spoke aloud and broke all contracts with demons that used the books as an access point into our home. I trashed the books and the problem never recurred.

Thankfully, because Christ died in our place, unlike Achan and his family, who died for having the accursed things, you

and I will not be executed. Hallelujah! But as the believers in Acts 19 did, we need to rid ourselves of anything that defiles our lives and our homes. We'll talk more (in chapter 4) about what those things might be.

9. We Should Ruthlessly Rid Ourselves of Wicked Things.

Self-indulgent Achan had abused God's grace and presumed upon God's promises. The result was a welcomed victory to the Canaanites. But as a consequence of their unexpected loss, Israel was awakened, reformed and reconciled to God.

Scripture tells us, "Now these things [Old Testament accounts] became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6). Having read this experience of Joshua and the children of Israel, we shouldn't have to be forced to allow God to inspect our hearts and our possessions.

In the New Testament we read about a revival in the city of Ephesus:

Many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Acts 19:18–20

Our friend C. Peter Wagner states that the value of the occult items the Ephesians destroyed that day was approximately six million U.S. dollars!

God is about the work of His Kingdom. And “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17 KJV). Our possessions should express the righteousness, peace and joy of God’s Kingdom. If they don’t, the moment the Lord reveals spiritual contamination to us, we should repent and unrelentingly rid ourselves of it for Christ’s sake.

Such a vigilant course of action may seem unnecessary—but perhaps you can learn something from Jim, a new believer who had left behind a life of sin and now was passionate about Jesus, his new Lord! When Jim heard the teaching of spiritual housecleaning, he remembered that his Rolex watch had been a gift from a woman with whom he had lived in adultery. Jim desired to please the Lord, so early the next morning he drove to the city lake, stepped out of his Cadillac, removed the gold and diamond-encrusted watch and threw it as far as he could into the murky water. Later that day he told us about his experience.

“Why did you throw the watch away?” we asked him.

“Because it was symbolic of the unholy relationship I experienced with that woman,” he replied.

The watch was more than a watch. To Jim it represented an evil contract that sealed the covenant of sin he had with the woman. However, the watch wasn’t inherently evil. It wasn’t a golden dragon or designed as a snarling serpent. It was only a very expensive gold watch. Although Jim could have prayed over it, repented for the sin it represented, broken the contracts that it symbolized and sanctified it to the Lord, he opted to destroy it. Had he asked for our counsel, in that case we would have encouraged him to sell the watch and invest the money in the Kingdom of God as a gift to his church or to the poor. Let wisdom prevail!

But the point is this: Never underestimate the wiles of the devil—he will explore every option and examine every possible entryway to your life!

10. Obedience Restores Our Fellowship with God and Reinstates His Purposes.

Unauthorized possessions hinder, and in some cases prevent us from being blessed and used of God. As it was with Joshua and the children of Israel, personal cleansing will restore God's presence, reinstate His protection and reignite His power in our lives. (Read in Joshua 8 how the Lord delivered the city of Ai into the hands of the children of Israel.)

Prayer Assignment

Father, in the precious name of Jesus, I am so blessed that You love me enough to show me the truth about my life, my home, my children and my possessions. Lord, I don't want to be like Achan, who kept things that You called defiled. Would You right now, holy God, reveal to me anything I possess that displeases You? I desire holiness, and You are holy; so show me the unholy actions in my life or the unholy possessions in my care or the unholy covenants I have made. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.