

It seems as though “reality television shows” are sweeping the nation. Often times they call upon people to attempt almost impossible tasks. There is such a wide variety of this programming that it is overwhelming. However, there is one thing that all these types of shows have in common. At the beginning, they air a disclaimer. It usually ends with the announcer saying; “**Don’t try this on your own.**” In other words, the people performing these unusual deeds may be experts at it and you should never attempt doing the same thing on your own.

In relation to our spiritual life, I believe the Lord can do anything He wants. He can use us to perform marvelous deeds for His glory. **God can take substandard equipment and perform supernatural feats.** There is a caution to anyone who thinks they can do it without the Lord and that is what this text deals with.

It is apparent in the passage the seven sons of one Sceva thought they could imitate what they had seen the Apostle do. These men saw no difficulty in getting involved in exorcism. The mistake they made is clear to all who read this account in the Bible. The Lord can help us do all things but ***there are some things you should not try on your own.*** Without the power of the Holy Ghost, then we are sure to fail at our futile attempts to overcome the forces of evil. What a valuable lesson to us all!

Just because we see someone do something for the Lord does not mean we are equipped to do the same thing. I remember an experience that I had one day while driving down the road. I was singing along with the Christian song on the radio. I thought to myself, “I sound as good as the people singing the song.” Just about the time I was really into it good ~ the station was knocked off the air. Suddenly, I was singing the same song all by myself. There was no music, no other singers to back me up with harmony. It was just me and it sounded terrible! The same thing is true in my Christian life. I can’t look at the way the Lord is using somebody else and try to be just like they are. I can learn from a lot of people but I must always remember that without the Lord then I can do nothing. So let’s notice some practical points to this account that may save us from making the same mistakes these men did when confronted by evil.

First, **everything is not as simple as it looks.** They saw Paul cast out evil spirits and thought it was no problem for them to copy his acts. The anointing of the Holy Spirit makes things seem easier than they look. The difference is He has the power and the world can’t see Him with their natural eye. The only thing visible to them is the results. However, we know certain things were not done by our strength. It was really the power of God that worketh in us!

Secondly, **seven of them could not do what one man was able to.** Why? The Holy Ghost made all the difference. They went by their own selfish desire. They had not realized the power of evil they were dealing with. This always results in failure.

Thirdly, **remember that sooner or later evil will always talk back to you.** I have watched people fail in this area for years. I recall being in a service one time with a young preacher. I know



he loved the Lord but he had more zeal than knowledge. At one point in his sermon, he rolled up his shirt sleeves, raised his fists and said, “Come on old devil, you are no match for me!” Really, the devil is no match for the Lord and He lives in us. So I could not help but think, that preacher just gave an invitation to the devil and he always accepts the challenge. Please do not misunderstand what I am writing. I know the devil is a defeated foe. I also know it is the Lord who has defeated him. Humanity does not possess enough strength to have victory over Satan. That is why we need the power of the Holy Ghost to confront the enemy of our soul. If you challenge the devil, he will talk back. He is not afraid of you or me. It is the Lord that makes the difference.

Fourthly, **the kingdom of Satan knows who you are.** In verse 15 the Bible says, “*And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?*” The evil spirits know the One we serve. They can also tell if we are operating in the flesh or in His Spirit. Make sure you go in the name and the power of the Lord!

Fifthly, **do not misuse the name of Jesus.** These men were trying to command the evil spirit by “...*Jesus whom Paul preacheth*” (vs. 13). ***The name of Jesus is only effective if you know His power.*** It is not uncommon for people to almost have an accident and the first thing they do is cry out the name of Jesus. That is habitual speech. However, when a Christian cries out His name they know the power of that name. After all, it was the name of Jesus that saved them from their sins. In fact, there is no other name under heaven that we can be saved by.

Sixth, **the Lord teaches us that imitation only proves what is authentic.** This attempt failed and proved to the critics that what Paul had was real. There is no denying it after the men left naked and wounded. The news spread after this event and in verse 17 we discover that “...*the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.*”

Finally, it is interesting to note that **you never hear or read of these men again.** The sad part about this incident is resulted in no mention of these sons ever attempting anything else for the Lord. We could speculate on what happened to them following their unsuccessful exorcism of this evil spirit. There is no way of proving what they did after this. However, I have personally seen many people in my ministry try to imitate something that someone else did. The result was the same. They failed miserably and they have never been the same since. They never stop to think the only reason they were wounded was due to them trying something on their own. If they had depended totally on the work of the Lord and the power of His Spirit, then they would not have suffered such an embarrassment. It is not pleasant to go through an experience like this but it teaches us so much.

I have no way of knowing who will read this sermon. I do know this much. There are many that can relate to everything I have just written about. At some point in your past, you tried something on your own but it failed. Now you are faced with two choices. ***You can continue to run from your past mistakes and remain spiritually isolated.*** You will never do anything of eternal consequence with this choice. In fact, you will probably be destined to repeat your past by taking this recourse. The other thing you can do is simple. ***Face the facts!*** You tried it on your own and it did not work. It was not as easy as someone else made it look. They were anointed for the same task that you failed at. So seek the Lord. Ask His forgiveness. Trust His power to help you and then make yourself available for Him to use you. Only the next time, **DON'T TRY IT ON YOUR OWN!**