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How Much Influence Can Demons Have on Our Lives?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about the biblical approach to deciding if eating meat is ethical and how much influence demons can have on our lives.

- * What's the biblical approach to deciding if eating meat is ethical?
- * How much influence can demons have on our lives?

Transcript

#STRask How Much Influence Can Demons Have on Our Lives? #STRask How Much Influence Can Demons Have on Our Lives? [DING] This is the hashtag #STRask podcast with Amy Hall and Greg Koukl. Welcome. Hey.

Welcome, Greg. Welcome, Greg. All right.

Maybe. We're going to try and get more than one question answered on the subject. All right.

Here's an unusual one. This one comes from Ethan. What is the biblical approach to deciding if eating meat is ethical? Yeah, this is an easy one.

And anything that is not unethical is ethical. Okay. I mean, that's just general principle.

We have freedom to do all kinds of things that are not proscribed either explicitly or implicitly by some moral principle in Scripture. Eating meat is not one of those things. So there is no immorality associated with eating meat.

I mean, Jesus had all we could tell a standard diet. He ate fish. We know that.

And, or at least he made fish. But I think the only thing we know he ate is a fig because after the temptation, he was eating figs. Hate bread.

The last several. No, he said he broke the bread and gave it. It doesn't say he ate it.

He cooked the fish for the disciples, but it doesn't say. I mean, the presumption is obviously he ate the bread, he ate the fish and he ate just about everything else. Everybody was eating any drink wine.

Okay. That's no question about that in a fair-minded reading of Scripture. So none of the, so if it is not proscribed, it is allowed.

Some people have, I don't know where they get this idea that unless the Bible says to do it, then we shouldn't be doing it. And you have people approach church services like this. You don't have, well, in the New Testament, it seems like there's no instruments in worship and so they're non-instrumentalist, everything, all the music is a cappella.

I have no problem with a cappella music. It's okay for people to sing without musical instruments, but without accompaniment. But their conviction is that it's actually inappropriate because we don't see it in the Bible in the New Testament, at least, certainly in the Old Testament, praising the Lord with harp and lyre, et cetera, saying symbols and all that.

I personally don't want symbols in this service, but in any event. But of course they got the, you know, they got the, in the drums, they got the little simple things that's all worked in, in any event. The principle is if it's not proscribed, either explicitly or implicitly morally, then you have freedom.

And this is that the concept of freedom is expressed lots of times in the New Testament, especially regarding food. You know, it's not what goes inside a man, Jesus says, that defiles him. It's what comes outside of him.

The reason for kashrut, for the kosher laws in the Old Testament, were not because you were defiled by what you eat. There were other reasons for this, and part of it was to create a boundary and a distinction from the other cultures that were pagan cultures. So Jesus just made it clear, food is food.

Even Paul talks about eating meat sacrificed to idols. The only time it would be questionable is not because it's meat, but because of other, some other cultural circumstances around it. So that's the simplest way to answer, I think this issue.

Yeah, I think there are two aspects to this. The first one is, is it in principle wrong to eat meat? And I think to answer that, we just have to go to Genesis 9, where God says, "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you. I give all to you as I gave the garden plant or the green plant." So, right there, we know in principle, animals have been given to us to eat, so there's nothing wrong with principle.

And we're omnivorous as creatures. We're not carnivorous. We're not herbivorous.

We're omnivorous. We don't eat just meat. We don't eat just plants.

We can eat both or either. Now, the second aspect to this question, you touched on briefly, Greg, because there have been times in the Bible when people have not eaten meat. And the two that come to mind are first Daniel and his friends didn't eat meat in Babylon when they were there during the exile.

And Paul talks about not eating meat if, first of all, not eating meat in a temple like you would have the Lord's Supper with Christians. You're not allowed to be part of those kinds of festivals that are where the meal is part of the religious ceremony. And you're also not supposed to eat meat if it's going to cause people to think you are eating meat in service of some other God.

So, we see from that that there can be other reasons involved why you might not want to eat meat and why in that particular situation, not in itself is wrong, but might be wrong for other reasons. And so, if there's, I can think of a few that people might say, if you know that the animal has been tortured or hurt or harmed, you might not want to. If you think there's any sort of religious connection with that meat, and believe it or not, this has actually come up.

I remember one time years ago, a couple of decades ago, at the church where I was attending, there was somebody there who had gone to the Hare Krishna temple, because there's actually a Hare Krishna temple not far from us, and they had eaten at one of their love feasts. So, this actually came up, literally came up, which you wouldn't believe, but I guess an LAC all sorts of things. So, there would be an example where you would not want any of the food.

So, I guess the biblical approach would be, look at it in principle, which we've already talked about, and then look at whatever the other issues involved that you think have to do with ethics and could have to do with a particular situation of eating meat. All right, Greg, let's go to a second question. Wow, it's like six minutes and 31 seconds.

Wow. Okay, this one comes from Kelsey. Hello, as Christians, how much influence can demons have in our lives? For example, I've seen teaching where preachers will say demons can indwell us, and we have to ask God for deliverance.

Can someone bring a demonic influence into your home like a friend or family member? This is a very hard question to answer, and the reason is, the New Testament language about demons is equivocal. In other words, it's demonetzamai, I think, is the word that is translated, well, that means demonized, and it's translated usually demon-possessed. And then Jesus says, "Come out of him," and you can go into the pigs, Mark 5, for example.

And the problem is that demons are immaterial, and so they have no physical location. They can have what's called an ill local presence, that is, they can be present or manifest in certain ways, but their stuff is not in a three-dimensional space. So you don't

have a demon sitting on your shoulder or something like that, or an angel for that matter.

Now, there can be physical manifestations of angelic beings, and we see that in different circumstances in Scripture, and even God Himself. He manifests a Theophany or Christophany. You see God showing up at the Oaximamory with Abraham, for example, in other cases.

Burning Bush, there's a Theophany, there's a physical manifestation of God, but it isn't God himself. So you have this problem, and secondly, what's the concept of indwelling is that the demon isn't in you, like a pea is in a pot, and nor is your soul. The soul isn't in your body.

It's somehow in a unique, mysterious fashion identified with your body. It's yours, your soul, and your body, and they're unified in some profound way, but they're different substances. And so this is why it's difficult to talk about this.

Can you be possessed as a Christian? Well, I have theological concerns with that, but then I also hear testimonies of people who I trust that are missionaries overseas and have had very profound experiences with a deeply demonized person who seemed to be a Christian, and they had to deal with the demons and nullify the impact of their life. I mean, you might call it casting it out, but again, this is physicalistic language that we use of a non-physical thing, and there's how else do you talk about it? You know, you've got to talk about it analogically with things that we experience. So can demons have an influence? Sure they can.

Peter talks in 1 Peter, chapter 5 that the devil prowls around, and I take it here as an inclusive and his minions prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, but resist him from in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being had by your brethren who are in the world. So the suffering in that context is connected with demonic influence, oppression of some sort, activity that even believers experience and suffer from and must resist certain manifestations in order to be able to please God, you resist. And just as Jesus resisted in the temptation in the wilderness, and then this is the devil left for a more opportune time.

The next time we hear about the devil is towards the end of Jesus' ministry where Peter says, "No, you're not going across," and Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan." So you know, the devil is a widely kind of character, and we have to be alert for his schemes as Paul says in Ephesians chapter 6. So this, in the Lord's prayer, it says, "We should pray, lead us not into temptation," and that's kind of a figure of speech. It's not that God is going, it's a way of appealing for God to keep us from temptation, basically, and deliver us from the evil, literally. Now, sometimes translated, deliver us from evil, sometimes it's translated, deliver us from the evil one.

So when I pray the prayer, I just pray, deliver us from the evil, delivery from evil and the evil one. I'm praying all that. And so that, what Jesus said is we are to be prayed that Father protect us somehow from the devil and from his machinations.

And so that prayer is, they're given because we are vulnerable, and we talk about spiritual warfare, and there does seem to be circumstances in which all of a sudden all kinds of difficulty and trouble beset us. And where is this coming from? And this happens with people especially who are in positions of leadership. And so, since Paul says he warns about the devil's schemes, Ephesians 6, and that we resist and stand firm having put on the full armor of God.

And these are all the armor of God has to do with their theological realities, so we are to understand thoroughly enough for them to protect us. We don't just say, I'm shouting my feet with the preparation of the gospel page. I'm putting on the helmet of salvation.

That isn't the point. The point is that salvation, our confidence in salvation is really important in understanding those things because we're going to be attacked by the accuser. So these have to do with theological verities that apply to our lives that we need to be well-schooled in to protect us as armor against the devil.

All this to say that even though I can't give a greater as he who is in you than he was in the world, okay, first John. So there seems to be like Jesus in you and the devil's in the world, but the one who's in the world that doesn't mean he can't have a powerful impact on you and influence you. We're going to take that seriously, to be on our guard regarding that.

So it's not just, I don't think a simple matter can the devil be inside or only outside because even if he's only outside, he can still make a mess of things if you're not careful. But we are still protected from him too. So there are these, this package of verses that tell us of our ability to prevail in the presence of the demonic attack, but responsibilities that we have to protect us from those influences as well.

Ephesians 6 is the classic passage, but the first, second to many, I'm sorry, second Corinthians 10 says that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful. Then it says we are casting out speculations and lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God. So they were talking about understanding truth as a weapon against the devil's schemes in our lives.

So we've talked about that before too. So I don't think there's just one simple easy way to answer this. I think the best way to understand it is we are in a spiritual environment where the forces of darkness have a powerful influence on people.

They blind the unbeliever and they control the unbeliever. They can't do that to Christians, but we can still be vulnerable to that if we're not on the lookout and we are

not properly protected. Does that make sense? Yeah, I have a few things to say about how we should think about that in a second, but I want to start by saying I don't, I think you'd have to really convince me through something biblical to think that the idea that you could be possessed in the sense that you are indwelt by demonic spirit if you have the Holy Spirit.

And I think about the, when Jesus talks about, you know, when the spirit leaves, he comes back and finds it empty. Yeah. And put an order and they bring seven more with him, right? And he also talks about how in order for him to cast out a demon, you know, he has to bind the strong man before he can, you know.

So it seems to me that a demonic spirit would have to be stronger than the Holy Spirit in order to quote indwell a Christian believer. And I think it's more likely that that is true. Or poor, poor zest even, you know, as, as in a kind of ownership.

Yes. And if it seems that somebody who's a Christian is demonically possessed, I think it's more likely that perhaps they are not truly a Christian than it is that a demon can indwell a believer. That just, just thinking about that theologically.

Now, the question about, can someone bring a demonic influence into your home like a friend or family member? I think certainly if somebody is doing occult practices in your home, then certainly they could bring some sort of demonic influence. I don't do you see any problem with that? Oh, right. That seems to make sense to me.

And you know, when Christians in Ephesus, when all these Christians became Christian, they took all of their magical paraphernalia and they burned them, the books and everything in a big pile. So there was a distancing from all of that stuff, you know. So I, yeah, this is part of what is hard to understand how it all works, but it's better safe than sorry.

It's probably a good principle. I mean, and certainly you could pray against that. I don't think, I'm trying to imagine a situation where I don't think I would say there's, I have a friend who is, say, a wickin.

I wouldn't say you aren't allowed in my home. That's not the direction I would go with this. But your demons can't come with you.

I might pray against that. I mean, I have been in these kinds of situations. Again, being in LA, you know a lot of different people with a lot of different beliefs.

And I have prayed many times against, you know, I worked with somebody who would actually contact her angels, quote. The Holy Spirit, right. And would teach people how to contact angels.

And somebody she had taught, I think we talked about this in the show a while back, but

actually experienced some demonic activity because of her inviting in these, quote, angels. So I have experienced this and I didn't avoid being around them. Again, you mentioned greater see who's in you than who is in the world.

Ultimately, there's nothing the devil can do to harm you ultimately. So don't let that stop you from interacting with people who need him and who are blinded by the devil. So I wouldn't let that scare you.

And I do think definitely the devil can cause a lot of trouble in your life. You know, we've seen this so many times before we have our youth conference about three weeks before everybody's life on staff falls apart. And then I realized, oh, okay, we're about to go into this.

It doesn't seem like a coincidence. Remember, by the way, that Jesus said at the last supper that Satan has requested regarding Peter to sift him like wheat. So there is, you know, a role.

I mean, something happened to be, of course, but I prayed for you that you will return and your faith will be strong kind of thing, right? And notice Jesus didn't stop it. Okay. This is my next comment.

Jesus didn't say he was going to stop it. He said he was going to pray for Peter to persevere through it or yeah, be restored afterwards. Okay.

So, and this is, this is the point I want to make because in case anybody, this makes them afraid to know that the devil wants to cause trouble in your life. I just want you to remember one thing. If that ever happens and you start to worry about that, the devil was very happy about Jesus being put to death.

You know, Acts 4 talks about all these people thought they were going against God and fighting against God and they were putting Jesus to death and the devil, devil's winning and he's doing what he wants to do. But guess what? God was sovereignly over that and he had a purpose for it. Just had, just as God had a purpose for Peter going through being sifted by like wheat, which by the way, part of that purpose was so he could write first Peter for us and talk about how we can stand strong because he failed in that and he has a lot of, he had understanding, he understood that in a way that enabled him to write this book for us that now strengthens so many people.

Yeah. So, whatever the devil's doing, God is sovereign over that and he has purpose. So, you don't have to be afraid of that because ultimately our job, and you mentioned first Peter, you know, the devil prowls around, roaring like a lion, trying to devour.

All of first Peter is talking about how we don't turn to sin, we don't walk away from God and we don't turn to sin regardless of what's happening. We're not supposed to be tempted by our suffering because so much of that is about suffering to walk away from

God because the devil's waiting to snatch us up right away. So the idea is here, you go in with the knowledge that God is sovereign over it, he has a purpose and our job is simply to remain faithful through it.

Through the suffering, we remain faithful. We continue to do what is right and we've been talking about this in the last few episodes, Greg, entrusting ourselves to God who judges righteously. Faithful God.

We don't turn to sin just because things are going wrong for us. So these are all things you can think about as you're dealing with the idea of the demonic. And ultimately, I don't, most of the time I don't think we have to figure out where our trouble is coming from.

We just need to know what our job is and that is to remain faithful. Yeah, that's a great point. Entrusting ourselves to a faithful creator and doing what is right.

That's the last verse of 1 Peter 4. Well, thank you Kelsey and Drew. We appreciate hearing from you. We've got two.

We'll do better people. I will do better. We'll get more of your questions answered.

Anyway, you have to stop writing such great questions if you want us to talk for a short amount of time. No, I won't do that. All right.

Thanks so much. We hope to hear from you soon. This is Amy Hall and Greg Kolkle for a stand to reason.

[MUSIC]