

## “Did You Shut the Gates?”

Did you shut the gates? I cannot tell you how many times as children we were asked this question. Our parents were vigilant about making sure that the animals did not get out. To be honest I hated opening and shutting gates. Some of these gates were heavy and a real pain to maneuver. We had to open and shut a gate every time we left the farm.

Although I hated shutting gates, there is something I hated even more—chasing cows. Anytime the gate was left open the cows were given an invitation to go where they pleased. All they needed was a little negligence on any of our parts or on the part of a visitor. The cattle loved to get into yards and gardens and destroy any flower or vegetable in their paths. They always marked their visits with a few green nasty cow pies. Sometimes they would make their exit when a tree fell on the fence after a storm. At other times they could just push through a weak fence. Regardless of how they got out we all were responsible for getting them back in the pasture. Sundays were their favorite day of escape.

Closing gates and checking fences is a regular part of farm life. It must be done or else. . . . Actually closing gates and checking fences should be a part of every Christian’s life too. Our lives have “spiritual gates.” Satan is always looking for a way to get through the gate. Scripture tells us in II Peter 5:8(KJV) Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Fortunately scripture is packed with all sorts of directives to help keep us safe. We must obey these directives to keep the gates shut so that the devil’s access to our lives and the lives of our children is blocked.

I wish the concept of the devil and his demons was merely pretend. I wish they were really just something made up and laughed about during this fall season. Unfortunately our scripture tells us a very different truth. Ephesians 6:12 (NLT) says “For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesians 6:11 (NLT) tells us to “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against the strategies and tricks of the Devil. Ephesians 6:13 (NLT) says “Use every piece of God’s armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will be standing firm. Scripture tells us that we will be in battles with the enemy, but we certainly don’t need to make it easy for him and give him the advantage of open gates.

Every open gate gives the devil a legal right into our lives and the lives of future generations. Just as any garbage in our homes invites bugs and mice, unconfessed sin in our lives invites the enemy. He thrives on sexual sin of all sorts. He feasts on our unforgiveness of others. He is especially fond of evil words since they have the power to become “word curses.” The devil loves for us to deny Christ in any way. Occult practices are dessert to the enemy. He loves evil vows and ungodly soul ties. All sorts of things can be open gates to the enemy, even some things which aren’t our fault. Open gates can allow the devil and his demons an opportunity to cause all sorts of havoc in our lives including oppression and demonization.

Spiritually demons are similar to cancer or parasites. They are alive. They can surround or attach themselves to any unsuspecting individual and live within their body. Demons can invade thoughts too.

Scripture has lots to say about guarding our thoughts from evil so that they are not a gateway. No wonder scripture tells in II Corinthians 10:4-5 (KJV) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Our thoughts are also mentioned in Philippians 4:7 (NIV) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Unfortunately demonization is more common than any of us would like to think. Fortunately as believers we are given power over the enemy through Christ, but we must use our weapons! I encourage you to do a study of the gospels and Jesus' ministry to those bothered by the devil and his demons. You may also find the writings of Christian authors: Derrick Prince, Francis MacNutt, Frank & Ida Mae Hammond, Charles Kraft, and Bob Larson helpful.

Remember just like any farmer, we must close our gates and check our spiritual fences or else.....