

"What is spiritual bondage"

Answer: The exact phrase *spiritual bondage* does not appear in the Bible, but Scripture does speak of unbelievers' being in bondage to sin ([Acts 8:23](#); [Romans 6:6, 16, 19](#); [7:14](#); [2 Peter 2:19](#)).

Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" ([John 8:34](#)) and that He came to set us free (verse 32). Evil has a way of taking hold in a person's life, and [bad habits](#) are hard to break. For an unsaved person, sin forms a chain that only the Savior can break.

So, there is some biblical truth in the idea of spiritual bondage. It is possible to "give the devil a foothold" ([Ephesians 4:27](#)) by harboring sins like anger in our hearts. However, we should not think of spiritual bondage as Christians being bound by [demons](#).

Ministries that focus wholly on breaking demonic bondage often misapply biblical texts to support their teachings. For example, there is a difference between a person who lives according to the flesh (an unbeliever) and one who lives according to the Spirit (a believer), according to [Romans 8:5-13](#).

The one is in bondage; the other is not. A believer can be guilty of disobeying God, but he cannot practice disobedience ([1 John 3:4-10](#)). That is, a believer is not in bondage to sin.

A believer may have a compulsion to steal, and he may even carry out a theft, but he will repent. What a believer cannot do is self-identify as a thief, enjoy being a thief, and feel no remorse. [Romans 8](#) does not support the idea of spiritual bondage for a believer; it simply delineates the difference between a believer and an unbeliever.

There is no doubt that demons oppress and tempt believers, and there are some states of mind that are fertile ground for temptation ([Matthew 6:13](#); [1 Corinthians 7:5](#); [Galatians 6:1](#)). But there is no evidence to suggest that we are in any way bound by demons or rendered helpless in spiritual warfare.

A word search for *oppression* in the Bible reveals that man's oppression of his fellow man is a far more common problem. Here is the real danger: that we become obsessed with spiritual bondage and with our own inner workings to the point that sin becomes our focus rather than Christ.

The word *religion* comes from a Latin word meaning "to bind fast." The idea behind

the term *religion* is that the devotee is bound under an obligation of some sort. [Religion](#) can easily turn into a type of spiritual bondage when we allow our fears of hell, judgment, or demonic activity to control us or when we adopt a religious mindset that says, “If I don’t perform such and such a ritual, there will be bad consequences.” That is not biblical truth. “Perfect love drives out fear” ([1 John 4:18](#)).

We are not saved by rituals we perform; in fact, Jesus said that ritualistic religion does nothing but “load people down with burdens they can hardly carry” ([Luke 11:46](#)). Those who believe in Christ are given rest and spiritually protected ([Matthew 11:28](#); [Romans 8:37-39](#); [Jude 1:24](#)).

We know that sin is harmful, and some sins are quite habit-forming. But there is nothing in the Bible to suggest that when we sin we are bound by demons or cinched up in spiritual straps.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom ([Job 28:28](#); [Psalm 111:10](#); [Proverbs 1:7](#)), and trusting God is the way to safety ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#)). This may seem counterintuitive. How can we trust the One we fear? What it means is that God—not demons, not other men—has omnipotent power in the universe.

He is the King. If we set ourselves against Him, we are putting ourselves in the only real danger that exists.

But if we trust Him, we are safe. God’s children are free: “You didn’t receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” ([Romans 8:15](#), World English Bible).