



Distinguishing Between Demonic Spirits and Internal Parts

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I. Introduction

Demonic spirits and internal parts are both common¹, and can easily be mistaken for each other. It is important to distinguish between demonic spirits and internal parts, because demonic spirits must be removed and internal parts must be treated like “persons” who need healing.

We have seen wounded, scared, angry, and deceived internal parts manifest with just about every “demonic” presentation you can think of. Some internal parts have demonic spirits attached to them, and these internal parts can especially look and act like demonic spirits. Whenever we encounter an entity/voice/source of thoughts that we think might be demonic, we always ask the question “Could this be an internal part?” We have also seen demonic spirits try to present as internal parts. They pretend to be internal parts with legitimate concerns that need to be addressed, but they always have “just one more” concern, and never get around to actually allowing the process to continue. Whenever we encounter an “internal part” that persistently hinders the healing work in any way, we ask the question “Could this be a demonic spirit?”

The need to differentiate demonic spirits from internal parts was one of the most intimidating challenges we faced as we were discovering that both demonic spirits and internal parts are commonly encountered in routine prayer for emotional healing. We have been pleasantly surprised to discover that this distinction is much easier to make than we had initially thought, especially with the help of two simple techniques/tools that we learned from Dr. Smith.

II. Similarities between demonic spirits and internal parts

As mentioned in the introduction, we have seen wounded, scared, angry, deceived, and even demonized internal parts manifest with just about every “demonic” presentation you can think of. It is important to know all the ways in which demonic spirits and internal parts can be similar so that we don’t prematurely conclude “We need to remove this demonic spirit” when we should be stopping to ask “Could this be an internal part?”, or “We need to keep patiently working with this part,” when we should be stopping to ask “Could this be a demonic spirit?” The first step in correct discernment is stopping to ask the question: “Is this an internal part or a demonic spirit?”

¹We once believed that demonic infection of emotional trauma, and especially internal parts, were uncommon – that one would encounter the problem of needing to differentiate the two only when dealing with Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD, now Dissociative Identity Disorder, DID). We have since come to the conclusion that both demonic infection and internal parts are much more common than we had previously believed – our experience is that most people with significant childhood trauma have some degree of dissociation and also demonic infection. Our perception at this time is that discerning between demonic spirits and internal parts is a necessary part of “normal,” “average” prayer for emotional healing.

Similarities:

- Both demonic spirits and internal parts can cause a wide variety of physical manifestations, including muscle spasms, facial contortions, laughter, sudden sleepiness, and pain.²
- Both can present with intense negative emotions, like anger, hatred, discouragement, shame, (essentially any negative emotion).
- Both can interfere with/oppose the emotional healing process in many different ways, such as causing distraction, withholding memories, threatening harm, disconnecting emotions, and causing confusion.
- Both can present as “internal parts” that always have “just one more” concern, but never get around to actually allowing the process to continue. This is an example in which the 1 John technique and “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands can be especially helpful. If these confirm that you really do have an internal part, then you need to persist with patience – dealing with the pile of concerns and also considering the possibility that the part in question has some underlying reason for “giving you the run-around.”
- Both can cause a sudden “personality change” by “taking over” the person receiving ministry and presenting directly to the therapist/minister.
- Both can present as internal voices and/or internal images.
- Both can present as either human or non-human internal images (Friesen and Smith differ with us regarding this point). Internal parts usually present in human form, but can take on non-human form. For example, “protector” parts usually present as large, intimidating people, but a protector part might present as a Doberman pinscher (dogs are more trustworthy than people in this person’s experience?). We have also seen internal parts present initially with some kind of “costume” in which they feel more safe and/or powerful. One person described internal imagery of a lion, which we initially thought to be demonic. As we tried to apply our authority in Christ to this “lion” demonic spirit, various clues caused us to question our original assessment. We used the 1 John technique, and once the “lion” passed the test, a little girl took off her lion “suit” and acknowledged that looking like a lion helped her avoid unpleasant feelings of fear and powerlessness. Demonic spirits routinely present as human internal images when they are trying to impersonate an internal part.

III. Differences/patterns that can help distinguish demonic spirits from internal parts³

Differences:

- Unless I (Karl) am being triggered, I always have compassion and/or empathy for internal parts. I have experienced at least some hint of compassion and/or empathy even for the most toxic, difficult, adversarial, angry internal parts. In contrast, I never find myself experiencing compassion or empathy for demonic spirits.
- We feel like relationships grow as we work with different internal parts. We come to know, like, and trust different internal parts, just as we come to know, like, and trust different people with whom we spend time. Likewise, internal parts grow to know, like, and trust us. We have never felt a sense of relationship with any of the demonic spirits we have encountered. We

²Use the search function (search for “demonic”) to find a number of other essays that provide additional discussion of demonic spirits, internal parts, and physical manifestations.

³The material in this section is our attempt to integrate the material from Dr. Friesen, Dr. Kraft, and Dr. Smith referenced in section VI, below, with insights and observations from our own experience.

might come to recognize certain demonic spirits that we encounter repeatedly, but we don't like them or trust them. Demons may learn to recognize us, but there is no evidence that they come to like us or trust us (actually, they often seem to grow in their hatred with each encounter).

- The *personality* of internal parts will change with appropriate healing, just as the personality of the person receiving ministry will change with healing. The different negative emotions they carry will *resolve* when the underlying lies are resolved. Demonic spirits will become less powerful as the person receives healing, but their personality/character will not change. The negative emotions they produce will become less intense, but will not be resolved (they will play exactly the same song, just not as loud).
- Internal parts may initially feel “out of sync” with the core person – like they have totally different agenda, like they are a totally different person – but they will come to be more in harmony with the core person over time. Demonic spirits truly do have totally different agenda from the core person, and will remain ego alien and “out of sync.”
- *All* internal parts have the same “bottom line” job description: “Help the core person survive.” Underneath all the mess and confusion, even the most toxic, angry, difficult internal parts are always trying to help and/or protect the person receiving ministry in some way.⁴ For example, a very toxic, punishing part eventually stated, “It is much better that I punish him first – so that he won't mess up. He'll *really* get hurt if he messes up and Dad gets a-hold of him.” *All* demonic spirits have essentially the opposite “bottom line” job description: “Oppose the Lord's will and destroy the person.”
- Demonic “internal parts” that always have “just one more concern” have no intention of ever allowing the healing work to continue. Their ultimate purpose is to hinder the process for as long as possible, and they believe that they can cause more trouble by pretending to be internal parts (and drawing the therapist into a swamp of never ending concerns) than by directly opposing the process as demonic spirits. Internal parts that always have “just one more concern” are truly trying to protect the person receiving ministry in some way, and have some underlying reason for “giving you the run-around.” The infinite supply of concerns will suddenly evaporate when this underlying reason is identified and resolved.
- Really foul/hideous/frightening internal imagery is much more likely to be demonic (internal parts will sometimes use this kind of imagery for various reasons, but this is uncommon).
- Demonic spirits are under the authority of Jesus, and must obey our commands as His representatives. Internal parts share the free will of the core person they serve, and can therefore obey or disobey as they choose.
- Demonic spirits cannot say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” internal parts can (see 1 John technique, below).

IV. 1 John Technique

Dr. Smith taught us a simple technique based on 1 John 4:2-3 “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God....”⁵ In our experience, this simple technique, in combination with the “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands, have been the most helpful tools for distinguishing between internal parts and demonic spirits. These simple tools are especially helpful as one is learning, in that they make it easy to confirm that you are dealing with an internal part – being able to “check the answer at the back of the book” helps to develop

⁴Internal parts that are being influenced by demonic spirits will be unusually destructive, but this will change when the demonic spirits are removed.

⁵The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

confidence with all the other principles for differentiating demonic spirits from internal parts.

The principle is simple: demonic spirits cannot say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh.” Internal parts can. The summary of the actual technique is: ask any demonic spirit/internal part that you encounter to say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh.”

We have never seen a demonic spirit that could say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh” – if the source of a certain thought/voice/presentation could say this, it has always⁶ been an internal part and not a demonic spirit. Unfortunately, it has not been as simple in the reverse. We have found internal parts that have a demonic spirit attached so deeply that they cannot say this until the demonic spirit is removed (see “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands, below).

People have asked: “What if an internal part doesn’t *want* to say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’?” We asked the same question, and so far have been pleasantly surprised by the answer: in our experience, every internal part that has been *able*⁷ to say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh” has eventually also been *willing* to do so. Even the most angry and uncooperative parts have said “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh” after only a few rounds of request. To provide perspective, the most difficult interaction I have had with an internal part went something like this:

I had already explained the 1 John technique to the adult client, and had asked if we could try this. He agreed, and I had just explained exactly what I was going to do. I was making eye contact and talking directly to the person, who was responding directly from the internal part in first person.

Dr. Lehman: “Can you say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’?”

Client: “I don’t want to say it”

Dr. Lehman: “Yes, I realize you don’t want to say it, but could you if you wanted to?”

Client: “F___ you!”

Dr. Lehman: “I realize you are very angry at me, but could you say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’ if you wanted to? Are you *able* to say it?”

Client: “Of course I can say it!”

Dr. Lehman: “Show me.”

Client: “But I don’t believe it!”

⁶We seldom say “always” or “never,” but so far our experience has been 100% for using the test in this direction.

⁷Again, internal parts with demonic spirits deeply attached cannot say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh” until the demonic spirits are removed.

Dr. Lehman: “It’s okay if you don’t believe it, but I just want to know if you are able to say it – I just want to know whether you are a demonic spirit or a part of _____ (person’s name).”

Client: “I’m not a demon.”

Dr. Lehman: “I don’t think you are a demon either” (*which was true by this point in the interaction*), “so why don’t you go ahead and say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’ just to make sure.”

Client: “Okay, you stupid son-of-a-b____, ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh.’”

Most interactions with internal parts regarding the 1 John technique have been much easier. Even when they continue to block the overall process and are not yet ready to let you go to painful memories, they seem to want you to know that they aren’t demonic spirits, and will usually quickly cooperate with this diagnostic tool.

I have encountered internal parts that feel so profoundly bad, shameful, and “beyond redemption” that *they* have come to the conclusion that they are demons, and these parts identify themselves as demons when they present during the session. Also, occult ritual abuse victims often have internal parts that have been programmed to act like demons and to believe that they are demons. The internal parts in these two situations will often present during the session stating that they are demonic spirits. I have been sobered to discover that these parts can initially present so much like demons, *including making statements identifying themselves as demonic*. But I have also been encouraged to discover how easy it has been to tell the difference as I continued working with them (especially after I learned that internal parts might even claim to be demonic spirits). In spite of all their initial anger and oppositional behavior, these parts still don’t *feel* like demons as one continues to work with them; and they are always profoundly relieved to discover that they can pass the 1 John test, and are therefore not demonic.

An example interaction with one of these internal parts will hopefully provide some reference points regarding what it feels like to work with an internal part that has been told she was a demon and that has been programmed to act like a demon. This entity presented in response to a command addressed to demonic spirits, and was initially very angry and uncooperative, but within a couple of minutes *felt* more like a four year old trying to act like a demon than like a real demon. I was making eye contact and talking directly to the person, who was responding directly from the internal part in first person. I had not explained the 1 John technique. At this point, the dialogue went something like the following:

Dr. Lehman: “I have a question – do you think you can say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’?”

Client: “Of course I can! ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh!’”

Dr. Lehman: “You know something? You’re not a demon at all.”

Client: “I am too a demon! I am a mean, scary demon.” (*At this point, the client makes a scary face and roars at me.*) “See!”

Dr. Lehman: “Well, it says in the Bible that demons can’t say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,’ so you can’t be a demon. I think maybe you’re a little girl and that somebody told you that you’re a demon.”

Client: “I am too a demon!” *(makes a scary face and roars again)* “See how mean and scary I am!”

Dr. Lehman: “You’re doing a very good job of being a mean, scary demon.” *(pause)* “Do you want to be a demon?”

Client: “No” *(crying)*, “They told me I can’t be forgiven because I’m a demon, and that I’m going to burn in hell.”

Dr. Lehman: “I would like to ask Jesus to take you to the memory where they told you that you’re a demon. This is going to be really hard, but if you can, I would like you to go with Jesus.”

Several interactions addressing guardian lies and fear of going to the memory.

Client: “Okay, I’m ready to go” *(At this point she went to a horrible occult programming memory, where she remembered being traumatized until she agreed to be a demon.)*

Client: *(Smiling and appearing tremendously relieved)* “Jesus says that I’m not a demon, that I’m not going to burn in hell, and that I don’t have to do this job any more.” *(At this point, this internal part stopped acting like a demon and was instead a very endearing and cooperative 3-4 year old girl.)*

In Summary

1. The 1 John technique is very useful for verifying that you have a part – if a certain source of thoughts/voice/presentation *can* say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” it is almost certainly (100%?) a part and not a demon.
2. If a certain source of thoughts/voice/entity *cannot* say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” it is either a demonic spirit or an internal part with a demonic spirit deeply attached.

Practical comments

- Direct eye contact is usually helpful, both with demonic spirits/internal parts that are speaking to you directly through the person receiving ministry, and with sources of thoughts/voices/entities that are speaking/thinking to the person internally. Direct eye contact seems to maximize the application of authority when dealing with demonic spirits, and usually increases positive contact when dealing with internal parts.⁸ Occasionally internal parts will have marked difficulty making direct eye contact (parts carrying a lot of shame will especially have difficulty making direct eye contact). If the source of thoughts/voice/entity you are trying

⁸See “Direct Eye Contact” on the Ministry Aids page of our web site for additional comments about using direct eye contact when working with internal parts.

to work with “leaves” every time you ask to make direct eye contact, suspect an internal part that is not yet ready to do this, and just go ahead with the 1 John technique without using direct eye contact.

- Make sure the source of thoughts/voice/entity actually says “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” rather than just “Yes, I can say it” (demonic spirits *can* lie, but they *can’t* say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh”).
- If you get an angry response, like “F___ you!” or “I hate you!”, or if you get comments like “I don’t want to” or “I don’t believe it,” continue with firm, but calm and non-judgmental interactions as described in the example above. Within several minutes of firm, calm, and non-judgmental interactions, you will almost always get one of three results: 1. An internal part says “Jesus Christ is the Son of God...” 2. The source of thoughts/voice/entity can’t say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God...,” and presents clearly as a demonic spirit (for example, the person might report “I hear this voice saying ‘I am a spirit of hatred and I have the right to stay because he has not forgiven his father,’” or “I saw these hideous things, they were screaming ‘We hate Jesus,’ and then they left – the voices are gone now”). 3. The source of thoughts/voice/entity can’t say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God...,” does *not* present as definitively demonic, and spiritual discernment and/or clues from section I. above lead you to think that you may have a deeply demonized internal part.
- Use the “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands whenever you encounter #3.

Note: Since learning the 1 John tool from Dr. Smith, we found that others have also used 1 John to help expose demonic spirits.⁹

V. Sword of the Spirit

Dr. Smith also taught us to use prayers and commands based on the scripture regarding the sword of the Spirit: “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”¹⁰ (Hebrews 4:12)

The simple prayers and commands below have been very helpful in providing additional clarification whenever a source of thoughts/voice/entity could not say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” did not manifest clearly as a demonic spirit, and/or we suspected it was a deeply demonized internal part for some other reason. What we usually experience with these prayers and commands is that the person receiving ministry quickly perceives that there has been a separation – they perceive an internal part that quickly says “Jesus is the Son of God and came in the flesh,” and they perceive a demonic spirit that is now clearly separated from the part in question. When nothing has happened in response to this prayer, further discernment has indicated that the thought/voice/presentation in question was purely demonic (close to 100%).

VI. If you are still unsure

If you get a certain thought/voice/presentation that cannot say the 1 John quote, you have used the “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands, and you are not confident regarding whether or not there is still some part of the person involved, an easy thing to do is pray something to the

⁹See, for example, Neil Anderson [The Bondage Breaker](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), p. 97.

¹⁰The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

effect “I command any demonic spirits contributing to this thought/behavior (whatever it is) to be bound in the name of Jesus.” This will bind any demonic contributors (that are not being shielded), but seems not to bother any internal parts that are contributing.

VII. Other helpful resources

James Friesen, PhD. Dr. Friesen has written an entire book discussing internal parts and demonic spirits in the context of Christian therapy/ministry for severe trauma. This is a helpful resource, but it is important to note that he is discussing Multiple Personality Disorder/Dissociative Identity Disorder (MPD/DID), especially in the context of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). As mentioned above, our experience is that milder forms of dissociation, non-dissociative internal parts phenomena, and demonic infection are much more common than MPD/DID and SRA. Our experience with the common, milder forms of dissociation, non-dissociative internal parts phenomena, and demonic infection are that they are much simpler to work with than the MPD and demonic phenomena discussed in Dr. Friesen’s book. I have never taken the time to diagram a person’s internal parts system. Jesus leads the way to each wound and lie (as opposed to us having to figure out how to sort out the internal parts system), and the system gets easier and easier to deal with as the Lord heals the wounds and removes the lies.

Charles Kraft, PhD Chapter 11 (pp 221-253) in Deep Wounds, Deep Healing (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1993) discusses the phenomena of internal parts, and specifically discusses how to work with them as a part of prayer for emotional healing. This chapter includes comments about distinguishing internal parts from demonic spirits. Dr. Kraft also has a brief but helpful section on distinguishing demonic spirits from internal parts in Defeating Dark Angels (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1992), pp. 51-54.

Ed Smith, D.Min. In Beyond Tolerable Recovery (Campbellsville, KY:Family Care Publishing, 2000), Dr. Smith provides a short but excellent section on dissociation (pp 98-103), including comments specifically addressing the interaction of demonic spirits and internal parts, and how to distinguish them. He mentions the 1 John technique very briefly on pg. 102. Dr. Smith provides an excellent chapter on dealing with demonic interference (pp 286-339), and this chapter also includes comments about the interaction of demonic spirits and internal parts.

Note that Dr. Friesen and Dr. Kraft wrote their material without knowledge or experience of the Immanuel Approach. The reader must keep this in mind, since there are many points where Immanuel Approach theory and principles need to be integrated into their material.

Distinguishing Between Internal Dissociated Parts and Demonic Spirits: Sample Prayers and Commands

1 John tool:

If the source of thoughts/entity/voice is speaking directly to you through the person receiving ministry, ask directly:

“Can you please say: ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh?’”

If the source of thoughts/entity/voice is speaking/thinking to the person internally, I say something like:

“See if the voice/place where the thoughts are coming from can say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh’ – Ask the voice/place where the thoughts are coming from to say ‘Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh.’” *You can include descriptors to identify the voice/source of thoughts that you are targeting, for example, “the voice that is saying ‘You don’t deserve to be healed because you’re a whore’ or “the place where the thought ‘I won’t let you go to that memory’ is coming from.”*

If you get an angry response, like “F___ you!” or “I hate you!”, or if you get comments like “I don’t want to” or “I don’t believe it,” continue with firm, but calm and non-judgmental interactions as described above. If a certain source of thoughts/voice/entity cannot say “Jesus...,” but does not then manifest clearly as a demonic spirit (or if you suspect that you have a deeply demonized internal part for some other reason), use the “sword of the spirit” prayers and commands.

Sword of the Spirit:

“With the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, sharper than any two edged sword and able to divide between spirit and soul – able to divide between demonic spirits and parts of ____’s mind, we cut every demonic spirit out of and away from this internal part of ____’s mind. We command that you be cut out of and away from this part of ____’s mind, and that you must now stand to the side, bound away from this part of ____’s mind. You may not touch or speak to this or any other part of ____’s mind except as the true Lord Jesus Christ allows and requires to provide information He wants us to have to facilitate His ongoing healing work in ____’s life.”

If you are still unsure:

Use the command below if you get a certain thought/voice/presentation that cannot say the 1 John quote, but you are still not confident regarding whether or not there is still some part of the person involved. This will bind any demonic contributors (that are not being shielded), but seems not to bother any internal parts that are contributing.

“I command any demonic spirits contributing to ____ (examples: these thoughts/this voice/this behavior) to be bound in the name of Jesus. You must stand to the side, bound, and may not hinder this healing work in any way.”

Distinguishing Between Demonic Spirits and Internal Parts

Summary of Similarities and Differences

This summary page may be helpful as an easy reference on the opposing page from the sample 1 John technique and “Sword of the Spirit” prayers and commands.

Similarities:

1. Both demonic spirits and internal parts can cause a wide variety of physical manifestations.
2. Both can present with intense negative emotions (essentially any negative emotion).
3. Both can interfere with/oppose the Theophostic[®] process in many different ways.
4. Both can present as “internal parts” that always have “just one more” concern, but never get around to actually allowing the process to continue.
5. Both can cause a sudden “personality change.”
6. Both can present as internal voices and/or internal images.
7. Both can present as either human or non-human internal images.

Differences:

1. Unless you are being triggered, you will always have (at least a hint of) compassion and/or empathy for internal parts. Unless you are being triggered, you will not experience compassion or empathy for demonic spirits.
2. You will feel growing relationship with internal parts. You will not feel any sense of relationship with demonic spirits.
3. The *personality* of internal parts will change with appropriate healing. Demonic spirits will become less powerful as the person receives healing, but their personality/character will not change. The negative emotions they produce will become less intense, but will not resolve.
4. Internal parts may initially feel like they have totally different agenda from the core person, but they will come to be more in harmony with the core person over time. Demonic spirits do have totally different agenda from the core person, and will remain ego alien and “out of sync.”
5. *All* internal parts are ultimately trying to help the core person in some way. *All* demonic spirits are trying oppose the Lord’s will and destroy the person.
6. Demonic spirits that always have “just one more concern” have no intention of ever allowing the healing work to continue. Internal parts always have some underlying reason for “giving you the run-around,” and will cooperate as soon as this reason is addressed.
7. Really foul/hideous/frightening internal imagery is much more likely to be demonic (internal parts will sometimes use this kind of imagery for various reasons, but this is uncommon).
8. Demonic spirits must obey your commands in the name of Jesus. Internal parts can choose to obey or to disobey.
9. Demonic spirits cannot say “Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came in the flesh;” internal parts can.