

Animism

I have been blessed to have visited many countries where animism is practised, and I have had a passion for reading dozens of biographies where people have lived in animistic societies or at least have ministered cross culturally in that way. Pam my wife and I have lived in three countries where many first nations people have a strong belief system in animism.

Definition

How would you define 'animism'? Simply 'animism is the belief that everything in nature has a spirit or soul.'

The Bible does not explicitly teach animism. However, the Bible does teach:

'The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.'
Psalm 24:1

The Bible emphasizes the worship of one God and does not portray nature or objects as having their own independent spirits or souls as a good thing. The Bible recognises spiritual beings such as humans, angels, and demons, but again it does not support the belief that worshipping spiritual entities within objects is beneficial. People with an animistic worldview appear to have more of a problem with fear and superstition in seeking to appease the spirit world. Not all people living in an animist society however are necessarily animists.

House cleansing

Let me give you an example of my first experience of confronting a spirit within an object. We had just signed up to purchase a house but before we moved in, I had heard rumours that a medium (someone in touch with evil spirits) lived in that house and others sharing that accommodation talked about at night hearing footsteps going up and down the passage way, even though there was no one there! I followed this with interest, so before we moved in, I gathered a few leadership friends to pray with me throughout the house to cleanse it from any evil spirit hanging around. All appeared to be good.

However, after living in the house for a short time, one Saturday morning I felt a very strong sulphur smell coming from a large cupboard which stored our clothes in our bedroom. As this was most unusual, I discerned it was a demon, so I jumped into the large closet, prayed hard (even in tongues) and in no time the smell left, much to my relief. Again, all appeared to be good.

But unfortunately, several weeks after that incident while working at home alone, again this sulphur smell returned. That left me a little discouraged. Certainly, I prayed hard and decided I needed to explore further as to what was causing this. I managed to climb to the top of the closet and noticed that there was a small metal box like an old oven thermostat sitting on top. I immediately discerned through the Holy Spirit that a spirit was living in it. And so, I picked it

up and dumped it at our local rubbish dump. For the next 7 years while living there the smell never returned as I had removed that container with a living spirit within it. Praise the Lord!

When dealing with strongholds over land which the bible describes as principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15), this calls for much wisdom and teamwork.

'In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.'

There are books written on this subject and I suggest you use much caution and only work with people knowledgeable and experienced in this area. Daniel chapter 9 touches on this.

Farm experience

In one of my pastorates, I was approached by a married couple who were farming. They hadn't been in our church for long, until they contacted me about being plagued by trouble on the farm. For a long time they seemed to be confronted with one problem after another. Animals were sick, they were experiencing constant sickness as a family and obviously financially things were a struggle. Even between the two of them there was constant tension. They had had Christian friends and leadership pray over the farm, but things remained the same. I had paid them pastoral visits but had no idea what was causing the trouble. Constantly I prayed to the lord out of deep concern for them. Was the problem due to living in a broken world, or were there other factors involved?

On one of my visits, I explored the background with them on how they took over the farm and was told they had purchased it from his family. I then explored the matter as to what surrounded the farm's neighbouring properties. One comment was worth exploring when they mentioned there was an indigenous cemetery (who were possibly animists in their background) on one of their sides. Furthermore, they mentioned that the custodians of the cemetery graciously granted the farmer's request allowing them to take part of the cemetery land to widen the raceway to allow the cows to walk more easily to the milking shed. In my country we would call this a gentleman's agreement.

Immediately, I recognised through the Holy Spirit that this was the issue, using cemetery land for another purpose and I strongly advised them to restore the farm fencing to the legal boundary. They were happy to comply with that request and soon afterwards invited a group of their friends including myself, for a worship night and during that time several of us guys went to the old fence boundary and prayed over it. The situation was immediately changed for the better and these main obstacles were overcome. I don't completely understand why this happened apart from discerning the problem and God bringing the deliverance.

Don't treat the spirit world as if it doesn't exist and be wise in your discernment.

'But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.' 2 Corinthians 2:14 ESV