

*Paranormal
Casper is Not A Friendly Ghost
Troy Knight*

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

1 John 4:1 (NLT)

1 Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.

Ephesians 6:10–12 (NLT)

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Genesis 4:6–7 (NLT)

6 "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? 7 You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

Isaiah 46:9–10 (NLT)

9 Remember the things I have done in the past.

For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

10 Only I can tell you the future before it even happens.

Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Do you believe it's possible for people to communicate with the dead?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- Have you ever felt or seen the presence of evil or demonic forces? For example, you've experimented with a ouija board or been in a seance or used a medium?
- Why is interest in the occult and the "spiritual" world growing in America?
- Pastor Troy said there are only 2 forces in the world and there's no such thing as a neutral spiritual force. What are the 2 forces and what are their agendas?
- **Read 1 John 4:1.** How do we test the spirits?
- **Read Ephesians 6:10-12.** We argue with people all the time. What does the passage mean that our battle is not against flesh and blood? How do we fight with spiritual weapons?
- **Read Genesis 4:6-7.** What does satan want from you? Has he been successful?
- "Reading your horoscope everyday is just innocent fun." What does God think of that statement? Read Isaiah 47:13-14 if you need the answer. What's the danger of seeking wisdom from stars?
- Sometimes tarot cards and psychic hotlines seem to work. Why is that?
- **Read Isaiah 46:9-10.** Discuss the statement "only God knows the future."
- Pastor Troy mentioned 2 dangers of dabbling in the demonic world. Discuss those 2 dangers. Can you think of others?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one area of your life where you're being influenced by the paranormal or occult. Share it with the group and eliminate it from your life.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Ask God to give you discernment in seeking only His voice and guidance. Confess where you've missed in this area, and pray that He protects you from the lies of the enemy as you seek to serve His will.

Question: "What is the occult?"

Answer: The dictionary defines *occult* as “hidden, secret and mysterious, particularly pertaining to the supernatural.” Examples of occult practices are astrology, witchcraft (Wicca), the black arts, fortune telling, magic (both black and white), Ouija boards, Tarot cards, spiritism, parapsychology, and Satanism. Human beings have always been interested the occult, from ancient times until today. Occult practices and psychic phenomena have captivated millions of people worldwide, and this is not limited to the ignorant or uneducated. There are several factors that make the occult fascinating to everyone, even in our age of technological and scientific advances.

For one thing, occult practices appeal to our natural curiosity. Many people who get involved in the occult begin with “harmless” practices such as playing with a Ouija board out of simple curiosity. Many who have experimented this way have found themselves going deeper and deeper into the occult. Unfortunately, this type of involvement is akin to quicksand—easy to get into and difficult to get out of. Another fascination of the occult is that it appears to offer quick and easy answers to life’s questions. The astrologer gladly charts your future, the Ouija board and Tarot cards give you direction, and the psychic gets you in touch with your Aunt Esther who tells you all is fine in the afterlife. Occult practices are controlled by demons, who offer just enough information to keep their victims intrigued, while exerting more and more control over gullible hearts and minds.

The danger of occult practices cannot be overstated. God strictly warned the Israelites against being involved with the occult (Leviticus 20:6). The pagan nations that surrounded Israel were steeped in divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and spiritism, and this is one reason why God gave His people the authority to drive them out of the land (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). The New Testament says that the rise of interest in the occult is a sign of the end of the age: “The [Holy] Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

How are we to recognize the occult and those who promote it? An incident involving Paul and Barnabas in the early days of the church is a good place to start. They “traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?’” (Acts 13:6–10).

In this account, we see several characteristics of those involved in the occult. They are false prophets (verse 6) who deny the basic doctrines of Christianity: the deity of Christ, the fall of man into sin, heaven, hell, salvation and the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Second, they seek to influence other people, particularly those in positions of power, to turn them from the faith (verses 6-7). Third, they do everything in their power to keep the true gospel of Christ from being spread, opposing His ministers at every turn (verse 8). When the truth of the gospel is curtailed, watered down, or flatly rejected, Satan and his demons rejoice.

There is no mistaking the fact that the occult in all its forms should be avoided. We are to “be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Part of being self-controlled and alert is being wise to Satan’s schemes, but not to delve into the details of every occult practice and phenomenon. We are to understand the devil’s ultimate goal—the destruction of our souls—and take the offense by putting on the “full armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10–18). Only then can we stand firm and extinguish the “flaming arrows” of the evil one.