

Can a Christian be a Medium and Talk to the Dead?

A spiritual question...

A medium is someone who talks to the dead and relays messages back and forth between them and the living. What does the Bible say about mediums? Can a believer who loves and believes in Jesus be a medium? Is it okay to talk to the dead, especially a family member or loved one? Could a Christian use the power of talking to the dead for good? These are all important questions. God gives us answers in the Bible. While there are a lot of ways to explain what the Bible says, here are **seven truths**:

1) This is not just about an issue but about people.

Sometimes with issues like this one, it's easy to become scared and react in fear. I mean, we're talking about talking to the dead, right? Or demons masquerading as good spirits? The safest and clearest route is to condemn the people who do it and to move on. I don't think so. While I do believe talking to the dead is not of God, as much of this post is about, this issue is first about people. This gets right down to someone's very identity, who they are, and how we all live in a broken world.

So please, if you're someone who identifies as a Christian but also as a medium, I want you to know several things. First, Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that all human beings are made in the image of God. That means you are incredibly valuable and should always be treated with dignity and respect. Second, when Jesus encountered people caught by sin, he spoke to them truthfully yet compassionately. I want to do the same.

If you've been involved in the practice of being a medium or seeing one who is, chances are you have personally felt condemned or seen those who are. When a ruckus crowd dragged a woman before Jesus who was caught in the act of adultery, Jesus said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7b) It says they got up and left one by one after that. Let's not throw stones today.

But, let's look at Jesus' mercy and his grace. He wants to protect us, but hear what he still says to the woman caught in sin. He asks if anyone condemns her, and when she says no, he says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." (John 8:11b) The hope you have is that Jesus, right now, does not condemn you. Rather, he calls you out of this practice and to follow him. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (ESV)

My exhortation to you is to leave this practice and get into Christ Jesus, where there is absolutely no condemnation, only grace. But perhaps, you're wondering, is it really a sin

to talk to the dead? Can't I be one of the good ones, a Christian medium? That brings us to truth #2.

2) The Old Testament law warned the Israelites not to contact the dead.

People have always tried to contact the dead. That makes sense. We love those who die and don't want death to be the end. As a Christian, I don't believe death is the end. However, I do believe God, starting all the way back in the Old Testament, set boundaries in place that warn us not to contact the beyond. When God brought the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt and to the promised land, he warned them not to practice the same religious activities as the cultures around them:

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 (NIV)

9 When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. 13 You must be blameless before the Lord your God.

Part of what it means to be a member of God's people is to be distinct and different from other people that operate apart from God. One of the things the other cultures were doing, and are still doing today, is using occult practices to take control of their lives, discern the future, and contact the dead. God doesn't want us to trust in those things but in him alone. In the book of Leviticus, God warned the people against mediums:

Leviticus 19:31 (NIV)

“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.

There is something “defiling” about contacting the dead. It's not just bad for the person doing it, but for the whole community. It is spiritually unhealthy not just for the individual but for their church, neighborhood, and town. Likewise, using magic is prohibited. God forbids it because he wants his people to reflect his goodness, character, and holiness.

Leviticus 20:6-8 (NIV)

6 “I will set my face against anyone who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute themselves by following them, and I will cut them off from their people.

7 “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. 8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.

Using mediums or magic is a form of idolatry, of turning away from God. It’s not seeking him but seeking other powers. God doesn’t want his people to seek these things because he wants them to be holy and depend directly on him. To seek a medium incurs some horrible penalties in the Old Testament:

Leviticus 20:27 (NIV)

27 “A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.”

Why would God take something like talking to the dead so seriously? Because he knows the spiritual consequences are even worse than any physical consequences in this life (c.f., Matthew 5:29). These sorts of supernatural activities lead people away from Jesus, not to him. They muddy the waters and confuse people about what is right and good. They can and do lead to eternal consequences separated from God’s love.

Now, if you’ve gone to a medium or are one, does that mean you should be put to death? Absolutely not. We don’t live under this old covenant law anymore. But this law still tells us about the character and desires of God. Those things haven’t changed. To risk contacting the dead is to risk God’s wrath and eternal death, neither of which are worth it. The Bible warns us to stay away from all things occult, which includes things like turning tables, ouija boards, tarot cards, crystals, dream catchers, and other objects or devices.

We can’t excuse away this passage and say it’s only for a specific time and place. The consequences are severe because it’s permanent. But it is not the only passage we have addressing this topic. Other parts of the Bible affirm what the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus say.

3) King Saul is a case study of why not to talk to the dead, even with the best of intentions.

The first King of Israel, a man named Saul, struggled to love, obey, and trust God. In fact, his disobedience led to God removing his kingdom from him (1 Samuel 13:1-15; 15:22-23). As Saul prepared to fight some of his enemies, he took his eyes off God and placed them on his circumstances. He tried asking God what to do, but when the Lord did not answer by Saul’s deadline, Saul took matters into his own hands. He went to a medium and contacted the prophet Samuel to tell him what to do. As king, Saul had decreed it illegal to talk to the dead. So ironically, in this story, he disobeys both God’s law and his own law.

1 Samuel 28:3-19 (NIV)

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.

4 The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. 6 He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. 7 Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her."

"There is one in Endor," they said.

8 So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name."

9 But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?"

10 Saul swore to her by the Lord, "As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this."

11 Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?"

"Bring up Samuel," he said.

12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"

13 The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?"

The woman said, "I see a ghostly figure coming up out of the earth."

14 "What does he look like?" he asked.

"An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said.

Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

15 Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"

“I am in great distress,” Saul said. “The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has departed from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do.”

16 Samuel said, “Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy? 17 The Lord has done what he predicted through me. The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David. 18 Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today. 19 The Lord will deliver both Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.”

When King Saul calls up Samuel, Samuel is not pleased. In fact, he tells Saul that the very next day, he and his sons will die. We are meant to see how Saul has reached the lowest point of his reign and walk with God, and his using these powers ultimately leads to his death. The Bible is clear about this why Saul dies:

1 Chronicles 10:13-14 (NIV)

13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, 14 and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

To read this story, and the ones in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, and still come up with reasons why it's okay to be a Christian and talk to the dead requires a lot of “hermeneutical gymnastics.” That's a way of saying that you have to come up with a lot of reasons apart from the Bible that explains why we shouldn't take these texts at face value. While social and cultural context does matter, these texts are clear enough in themselves and tell us to stay away from contacting the dead.

If you have more questions about this story, try reading the brief but helpful articles “[What's up with the Witch of Endor](#)” by Stephen Dempster (TGC) and “[Did Israel King Consult with a Witch](#)” by John Piper (Desiring God).

4) Why talk to the dead when we can talk to someone far better through prayer? God!

God does not permit his people to talk to the dead throughout the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah writes:

Isaiah 8:19-20 (NIV)

19 When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and

mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Isaiah asks, "Should not a people inquire of their God?" John Piper explains why consulting the dead is idolatry. [He writes](#), "If we go to mediums to find out something about our life that God has withheld from us, we put them in the position that only God should have." Anytime we seek something besides God for those ultimate answers to life, we are committing idolatry. By talking to the dead, we are, in one sense, wresting control of life out of God's hands and into our own, or that of the dead.

We are also placing a spiritual force or person between God and us. But that is the role of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, not just any spirit. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (NIV). We don't want anyone to mediate our relationship between God and ourselves but God alone, through Christ and the Spirit. The scriptures identify those who know and love Christ Jesus [as God's temple](#).

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

These "you" personal pronouns are not singular but plural (aka. you all). The Spirit of God dwells in us, his church. We need to be careful what we do as a community:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NIV)

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

We are sacred. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, there's no room for dead saints or evil spirits. But when we talk to the dead, we risk inviting evil spirits to come and direct our lives. While it might be easier and even feel more direct to talk to the dead, through the Holy Spirit, we can speak directly to God. While we won't be able to see God like we might a dead spirit, God's Holy Spirit is available to us if we will take the time to [quiet ourselves, pray, and listen](#).

5) Jesus frees a demon-possessed man living among the dead.

In the New Testament, Jesus exorcises demons from broken and hurting people. Perhaps his most well-known exorcism is the [demon-possessed Gentile man](#) who lived among the tombs.

Mark 5:1-5 (NIV)

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

This man lived among tombs. There is a natural linkage between demons and death that we should not ignore. Sin and death are a result of Satan's temptation of Eve, the disobedience of humankind, and the spiritual and physical brokenness of our world. When we contact the dead, we are engaging in the realm of the dead. Christ has conquered the grave through his death and resurrection, but one day God will cast death and hades into hell forever (Revelation 20:14-15). Let's not spend time in the realm of the dead but in the land of the living.

6) Paul warns us of the deceptive powers of evil spirits.

While Paul does not directly forbid talking to the dead, he speaks of the dangers of evil spirits and their ability to deceive.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (NIV)

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Likewise, Paul warns us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Couldn't it be possible that he, or his demons, disguise themselves as dead relatives or saints?

2 Corinthians 11:14 (NIV)

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

Paul warns us our true battle is not with people but with Satan and his demons and that we resist through faith and the Word of God, not church tradition or talking to spirits.

Ephesians 6:10-17 (NIV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Paul even personally cast unclean spirits out of a slave girl who had the ability to tell the future (Acts 16:16-19). When the demons left, so did her ability to foretell the future. Demonic power is enticing, intoxicating, and powerful. Please don't be deceived.

7) We carefully test the spirits with the Word of God.

John warns believers to test the spirits. He writes:

1 John 4:1-3 (NIV)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

One way to test false teachers or the evil spirits who drive them is to ask if Jesus is God, come in the flesh. Do they believe in the incarnation? Or deny Jesus is God? Is Jesus Savior, Lord, and God incarnate? Or is Jesus just another good teacher? Is Jesus the ruler of their life or just a moral example?

However, just because a spirit or teacher acknowledges Jesus is from God does not mean that spirit is definitely from God. For example, throughout Jesus' ministry, demons tried to reveal Jesus' true identity, but he silences them (c.f., Luke 4:31-37, 41).

Mark 1:23-26 (NIV)

23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

Jesus did not want the testimony of demons. Technically, the demon knew he was and professed it publicly, but [Jesus did not want their witness](#). If he had allowed it, others might have accused him of [being in league with Satan](#) (Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-26). All this to point out that if you try and get whatever spirit you or your friends/family member is communicating with to admit they are a demon and not an undead saint, their profession is unreliable. They are not a reliable witness against themselves. In fact, Satan cannot drive out Satan (Matthew 12:22-28). It should be unsurprising that they act innocent or like they are on the side of the angels.

Matthew 7:15 (NIV)

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

So how do we test the Spirits? By being Berean, going to scripture, praying, fasting, seeking counsel, and bringing another along (Acts 17:11; Mark 6:7; 9:29). We test what they say against scripture. And as seen in this paper, no matter how much truth a dead spirit or saint speaks, the act of talking to them does not line up with God’s word.

Conclusions

The Bible clearly forbids talking with the dead. To be a medium, even if you identify as a Christian, is not in line with scripture. Honestly, you risk talking not with the dead but with evil spirits. [GotQuestions writes](#):

It should be noted that the spirit a medium conjures is not the spirit of a deceased person (the case of Samuel speaking to Saul was a rare exception). Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:18–31 gives strong evidence that, once a person is dead, his soul remains in either heaven or hell. Thus, the spirits who communicate with mediums are lying spirits (see 1 Kings 22:23) who deceive people into believing their lost loved ones are communicating to them. When grieving parents seek out a medium to put them in touch with their dead child, they don’t realize the spirit who speaks to them is actually a demon pretending to be their child. Any involvement with such practices, including asking mediums for guidance, is strongly warned against in the Bible.¹

This is all rather terrifying. If you personally have been caught up with communicating with the dead, and you feel the Holy Spirit’s conviction in your heart, now is a good time to stop, repent, and receive complete forgiveness. Jesus is stronger than your evil

¹ What is a medium? Accessed May 9, 2022 <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-a-medium.html>.

spirits. The Holy Spirit can come into your heart and do rehab work to renew you and set you free. It begins by believing in Jesus Christ, trusting in God's word, and by rejecting the use of occult practices to know and relate to God. But the repentance must be real and grounded in God's gracious mercy. Jesus warns about partial repentance.

Matthew 12:43-45a (NIV)

43 "When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there.

To stop the practice of talking with unclean spirits requires repentance, genuine faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit filling you, and a community of believers who can support you. To repent means to turn in a different direction, to no longer continue as a medium. This is hard because this issue is deeply personal, even to the level of identity. But Jesus can forgive, heal, and fully restore. If you need somewhere to begin, start by praying:

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been talking to what I thought were my loved ones, saints, or angels, but were actually impure spirits, demons. This is very scary to me, and I don't know what to do about it besides come to you. They have had such a big control over my life, but you have complete control over them. It's not a contest. You are the God who created everything and sent your Son to live a perfect life and die in my place at the cross. Jesus rose again on the third day so that any who trusts him can experience eternal life with you. I believe in Jesus and ask him to cleanse my demons and forgive my sins. He is strong enough to cast out evil spirits and renew my heart. Would the Holy Spirit come and dwell inside of me and protect me, and may I never pursue talking to the dead or spirits again. I commit my whole life to you, God. In Jesus' name, amen.

How should I share this article with the people I love?

If you are considering sharing this article with someone caught up in this practice, please take the time to pray for their hearts to be receptive. This is a really tough issue, and nothing but a work of the Holy Spirit can free them. It might be helpful to broach the topic personally first and then use this resource as a follow-up tool as needed. Reading it through might also help prepare you for that personal conversation. But in the end, only the Holy Spirit knows your situation and the best way to proceed. Thus, the need for prayer and complete dependence on God. May the Holy Spirit fill you up and lead you out as you step forward in faith. God bless you.

Resources

[Did Israel King Consult with a Witch](#) by John Piper (Desiring God)

[Is it okay for Christians to visit Psychics, Mediums or Spirit Guides?](#) (video)

[MY TESTIMONY | From New Age Psychic Medium to Jesus](#) (video)

[Part 1: Bethel and the New Age](#) podcast episode

[Should I Talk to My Dead Relative?](#) - Josh Buice

[Should the Living Attempt to Contact the Dead? \(Spiritism\)](#) - Don Stewart

[What does the Bible say about praying to the dead?](#) - GotQuestions.org

[What is a Medium?](#) - GotQuestions

[What's up with the Witch of Endor?](#) - Stephen Dempster (TGC)

[Would it be right to try to talk with the spirits of dead loved ones?](#) - Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

[Why Can't We Communicate With Our Dead Loved Ones?](#) - St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church