

# LIZ CURTIS HIGGS

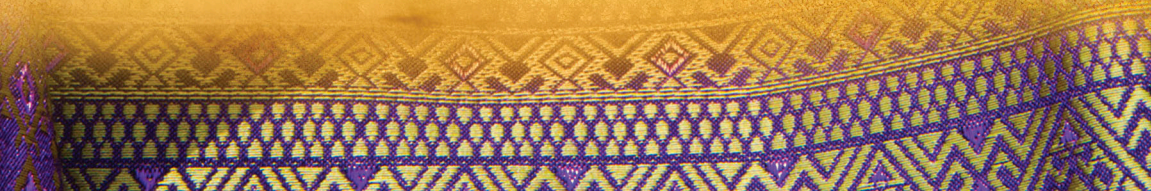


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# Really BAD GIRLS *of the* BIBLE



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Really  
BAD  
GIRLS  
*of the*  
BIBLE

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BIBLE

MORE LESSONS *from*  
LESS-THAN-PERFECT WOMEN



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REALLY BAD GIRLS OF THE BIBLE

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For every woman whose note to me began,

“Dear Liz:

You don’t know who I am, but you wrote  
*Bad Girls of the Bible* for me...”

I do know who you are, dear sister,  
and I did write that book for you.

This one, even more so.

My heart beats with yours as we turn toward the  
only One who can save us from ourselves.

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# Nightfall

*Everyone is a moon,  
and has a dark side  
which he never shows to anybody.*

MARK TWAIN

Beth awoke with the twittering birds in the predawn darkness. It took her a few seconds to figure out where she was. Sitting in her car—that much was certain. Parked sideways in the gravel lot behind her apartment building. She'd driven there apparently. But when? And how? From where?

The driver's door was hanging wide open. One blue-jeaned leg was draped out the car door, toes pointed north. Her blouse was half-undone and covered with a horrid-smelling, sticky substance. Remnants of red lipstick were smeared all over her face.

Or was that shame?

*Nah.* She didn't have any shame left.

She ran a hand through her hair out of habit, then swore at her disheveled image in the rearview mirror. *Disgusting, Beth.*

What day was it anyway? Her throbbing head fell back against the headrest. *Saturday.* The day after Friday, the day after she'd acted like a complete idiot in front of the sales team at work. Lost it, big time. Absolutely *blasted* their ears off. If word got back to her boss, she could kiss this gig good-bye.

Beth groaned and squinted at her watch. *Five something.* The early morning chill seeped through her jeans, making her shiver. Her bladder was screaming for attention, but she ignored it, trying to get her bearings, sort things out, fill in the blank spaces.

Twelve hours ago she'd come stomping into her living room after work, spitting mad, embarrassed over her anger and angry over her embarrassment. Without even shrugging off her jacket, she'd rolled a thimbleful of grass into a tight little joint and dragged hard on it as if it were a cigarette, nearly choking.

Suddenly the blare of a car horn cut through the silent morning darkness and interrupted her thoughts, making her jump with a hungover shudder. Beth sank back in her seat, feeling her heartbeat slowly return to normal. *Easy does it, kid.*

After she'd gotten high last night, then what?

In disjointed pieces more memories shifted into place. She'd fallen asleep on the couch, only to wake up bleary-eyed and stupid around eight. After a hot shower and a cold beer, she'd headed for the club and run into Tee.

*Tee.* Even now, still semiwasted in her car, she mustered a smile at the memory of Tee looking *fine* in his painted-on jeans. Not the man she'd been looking for, but she'd decided on the spot that he'd do nicely. They'd downed a couple of pitchers of Miller, danced a little, gotten high in the parking lot.

And then...nothing. Did they go to his place? To another bar? Why couldn't she remember? Where did those hours go?

Beth banged the palm of her hand on the steering wheel in frustration, avoiding a second glance in the rearview mirror. Whatever had happened last night, she'd made a spectacle of herself—that was pretty obvious.

*C'mon, Beth. Time to go inside.* Grabbing her purse, she swung her other leg out of the car and stumbled toward her apartment, fumbling for the keys. Her hands were shaking so badly it was all she could do to get inside before her heaving stomach sent her in search of a trash can, pronto.

Sprawled on the kitchen floor minutes later, every inch of her body in pain, Beth fought against the sobs that pressed against her chest. She'd had bad nights before, but not this bad. Not whole hours lost in the blackness, not driving a car blind drunk, risking her life and the lives of others. How could Tee have let her drive home? Had they argued?

What had happened? *What had happened?*

Beth forced herself to stand up, clutching the edge of the faded Formica counter to keep from falling to her knees. *Enough.* Twenty-seven years was enough, wasn't it? If a chick couldn't get her act together after all that time, she oughta hang it up, right?

*Right.*

She made her way down the hall, toward a shower and a bed, hoping to wash away her pain and sleep away the shadowy, shameful memories, yet knowing it wouldn't help.

What did she have to live for anyway? No real friends, probably no job come Monday morning, no decent man in her life, no future whatsoever.

Nothing but to get out of bed, get to work, get home, get drunk, get lucky.

*Bag it, girl.*

Depositing her clothes in an untidy heap on the linoleum floor, Beth fell into the shower. Scalding hot water slapped her across the face. Numb with pain, she simply stood there and took it.

Pills would be the easiest way. No pain, no hassle, just sleep.

Endless sleep.

She turned her back on the water as a flood of unwelcome tears streamed down her cheeks. The pulsating water lashed against her shoulders like a leather strap, a much-deserved punishment.

Death couldn't come soon enough for Beth...



## What's So Bad About Being a Bad Girl?

Beth has a problem, but it's not the one you might think of first.

Her problem isn't drinking, drugs, or promiscuity. That's the outside stuff, the part most folks agree makes her a Bad Girl.

But here's the deal: You can straighten up your external act and still be dying inside. People applaud 'cause you're "clean," but inside you feel dirtier than ever.

Beth's problem also isn't low self-esteem, unresolved anger, or feelings of abandonment. Those things may fuel her *Badder-Than-She-Wants-to-Be* lifestyle, but they aren't at the heart of it. When you get such psychological issues worked out, people mistakenly think you're "cured," an emotionally healthy woman ready to face the world.

Our girl Beth knows better. She knows that identifying—even discussing at length—those prickly core issues doesn't make them go away, no matter how many books you read or sermons you hear.

Her problem is simply this: Beth is in a pit, and she can't climb out.

Those who've never been in that particular pit have little patience with Beth. They lean over her abyss and shake their finger at her. "Don't you know that's a pit? What kind of fool gets herself in that much trouble? You've shamed your whole family. Don't you know that?"

Listen to me: This will not help Beth. She is already covered with shame and self-loathing; she doesn't need more added on top. Judgment isn't a lifeline; it's a death sentence.

Good people—parents, spouses, friends, well-meaning folks, Christians—may venture near the edge of Beth's pit, not to judge, but to encourage. They call down to her, "Just climb out, Beth. You can do it! We're all waiting up here for you, sweetie. Come on, take that first step."

Oh dear. This won't help Beth either. It's too dark down there even to see a toehold or feel a rope bouncing off your shoulder or hear a ladder being lowered rung by rung. It's especially tough when you've been crying for a good while.

Besides, Beth already *knows* she can't do it. She's tried again and again to climb out of her pit of despair, each time slipping deeper into the muck. It may be pitch-black in that hole, but she's been down there so long the darkness feels like home.

Some kind believers may gather in a circle around the top of her pit. They pray that Beth will wake up and climb out—"Dear Lord, let Beth see her sins clearly. Tell her we love her"—before heading to Denny's for brunch, convinced they've done all they could for poor, misguided Beth.

Is this woman beyond reach, beyond hope?

Here's the rest of her story...



Beth fell into bed, sinking into the mattress, a damp towel still wrapped around her body, her arms limp and outstretched, her cheeks ruddy with shame. She would buy those pills when she woke up, but for the moment she was in no shape to drive.

Instead she would sleep.

A little sleep now. A forever sleep soon.

The sleep of the dead.

Little did Beth know that while she planned her own unhappy ending, far above her someone was circling her pit, waiting for the opportune moment. Waiting until she hit bottom. Waiting until she looked up. That time finally came when Beth realized where she was—buried deep in a pit—and how much she hated being there.

On that sacred day, when nothing could be heard but Beth's weeping in that grim and desolate place, a man lowered himself over the side. He eased down the walls of the pit—not in a hurry but not stalling either—giving Beth time to see him coming, to watch his descent and reflect on who he was.

Finally he stood before her and breathed one syllable into the darkness. "Beth."

*He knows my name.* Stunned, she merely nodded, squinting to see him better.

His eyes were kind. "I came for you."

She stared at the familiar stranger but said nothing.

He brushed a smudge of dirt off her sleeve. "You think I came only for those people up there, don't you?"

"Yes," she managed to croak, hating the sound of her voice.

"I did come for them. But I also came for you."

"No." She shook her head, certain on this one. "I'm not good enough."

"That's true, you're not. Neither are they. But I am." He held his arms out, as if to cradle something. "Are you ready?"

She shrank back. "Ready for what?"

"For me." He regarded her without judgment or disgust. "I'm here to carry you out of your pit."

Her eyes narrowed. "Who says I want out?"

He gazed at the cramped, bleak space that surrounded them. "Nobody really wants to live in a place like this. People convince themselves they do, but they don't."

"I dunno..." She peered upward, aware for the first time that light was seeping in from above. "What if I don't like it...up there?"

"You will," he assured her with a gentle smile. "I promise."

A spark of defiance crept into her voice. "What's so good about it?"

"That's where I live." He touched her hand. "Come with me, Beth. I love you."

He *loved* her? Boy, that was a new one. Not guilt or shame or shoulda-woulda-coulda stuff. *Love*. Hard to say no to that one.

Beth exhaled, preparing for a long haul. "Tell me what I have to do."

He gathered her into his arms like a babe. "What you have to do is simply this: Believe in me. Trust that I can carry you without letting go."

She swallowed hard. "Are you strong enough?"

"I am." He started moving upward without so much as a grunt.

“Are you brave enough?”

“I am.” They were halfway to the top.

Her quivering voice was barely above a whisper. “Do you love me enough?”

“I do.” He looked straight at her when he said it, and despite the knot in her stomach, she believed him.

The truth was undeniable. *He loves me. He loves me!*

All at once they were out of the pit and on solid ground. She blinked at the brightness of the sun. Or was it his face, shining like that?

The man slid her gracefully to her feet. “Welcome home, Beth.”

“Th-thank you,” she stammered.

And then she cried with her whole heart...



Praise the LORD...

who forgives all your sins

and heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the pit

and crowns you with love and compassion. *Psalm 103:2–4*

Sometimes I still cry. I’m crying now. Weeping, in fact, with joy and gratitude. You’ve guessed by this point, I imagine, that Beth’s story is my own. Though I’m *Elizabeth*, everybody calls me Liz.

I know what you’re thinking.

How did you end up in that pit, Liz? Were you tossed in against your will? Did you crawl in on purpose? Or did you wake up there one morning, dazed and confused?

Yes, yes, and yes. Don’t waste any energy on questions like these.

It doesn’t matter how we get down in a pit. *It only matters that we get out of it.*

Not all pits are dark either. Some are neon bright, filled with the spoils of materialism or the trophies of worldly success.

The ten years I spent in the pit are my hardest-earned credentials for writing *Really Bad Girls of the Bible*, the stories of eight biblical women who lived in pits of one design or another. They had some all-too-obvious sins going on in their lives as well. Public sins. Nasty sins. Murder. Sorcery. Adultery. Deceit.

One writer observed, “Life hasn’t changed a great deal in over two thousand years. The images of the good girl and the bad girl are still very much with us.”<sup>1</sup> They sure are. We’ll save the Good Girls for another time. I always learn more from women who are less than perfect, simply because we have much more in common.

Try as I might (and I did!), I couldn’t change their lives to have happy endings. The Lord himself did so in several cases. In others, although the women made poor choices, God worked through their situations anyway. They were Bad Girls—but he is a good and sovereign God.

When I wrote *Bad Girls of the Bible*, I never dreamed there were so many other Former Bad Girls like me out there who needed to know they are not alone. These precious sisters sent letters and e-mails, which I read in private, then prayed over and tucked in a safe place. I treasure their confessions, knowing the courage it took to write them.

Carefully keeping their identities close to my heart, I’ll share only a few words so you’ll know that *you* are not alone as well. Three women wrote:

- It’s nice to know I’m not as hopeless as I once thought and God does have a special plan for each of us.
- Though most people have not forgiven me, God certainly has.
- When you are on the bottom, God can still reach down and bring you up.

Yes, he can! What words of comfort for us pit dwellers. Now it’s time to meet our historical counterparts.

Athaliah and Herodias were *Bad and Proud of It*. “Make no apologies” and “take no prisoners” were the mottoes of these two vengeful females.

The Medium of En Dor and Bathsheba both experienced a *Bad Moon*

*Rising.* A royal pain came knocking on their doors one moonlit night—different nights, different kings, but double trouble just the same.

Our two *Bad for a Good Reason* Girls, Jael and Tamar the widow, were used by God despite their highly unusual means of putting men in their place.

Finally, two New Testament women—known by their no-nos but not by their names—give us hope with their stories of being *Bad, but Not Condemned*.

All eight chapters begin with a contemporary, fictional take on our biblical Bad Girls, just to remind us that when it comes to badness, there's nothing new under the sun.

If the first *Bad Girls of the Bible* book was about grace, this second one is all about the sovereignty of God, the unstoppable power of God to accomplish his perfect will, no matter how much we mess up.

Get this: God doesn't work *around* our sin; he works *through* it.

Honey, I can hear you now: "You mean God is waiting for us to sin so he can show his mighty power despite our foolish interference?"

Uh...no. God doesn't have to wait for us to sin in order to act. We're already sinning. No waiting involved. God is also not sitting around wringing his holy hands and saying, "Now look what they've done. How am I gonna manage with *that* mess?"

God is God. He is all-powerful, all-wise. He is omni-everything. My controlling nature, however, chafes at the thought of not being in charge. I suspect our eight Really Bad Girls weren't eager to relinquish control either.

And yet, if we would choose the life of a Future Good Girl over remaining a Forever Bad Girl, there are two truths we need to grasp:

1. God will be sovereign in our lives only if we accept the truth that we are not—and never were—in charge.
2. God will extend his grace to us the minute we admit that we are utterly lost without it.

Dear one, if you've never been in a dark pit, we all rejoice with you. I will, however, offer this gentle reminder: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"<sup>2</sup>

If you've been saved from the bottom of the pit as I have, let's celebrate our freedom without forgetting those dear souls we left behind who are waiting desperately to hear the Good News.

And if you're still down in that pit of shame, beloved, remember that Jesus came to earth for *you*. His arms are open, ready, and waiting to carry you home.

# Dead Man Talking

*'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Dora smiled out the window at the fading twilight and watched the world surrender itself to the night.

*Almost time.*

Pouring boiling water over the loose tea with great care, she breathed in the warm, pungent scent, feeling her head clear and her senses sharpen. The teapot lid dropped into place with a musical *clink*.

Dora stole another glance out the window, then settled onto the couch to wait. In the distance a whistle moaned as a freight train passed unseen through the outskirts of town. *Nearly seven.* When the starless sky turned black as ink, the doorbell would ring and business would commence. Her supper dishes were already stacked in the cupboard, her apron folded neatly across the drainer, her kitchen table bare except for a cluster of scented candles and the steaming pot of Ceylon tea.

Dora was ready.

No need to post a sign in her window or run a boldface line in the yellow pages. *Certainly not.* Her customers always found her, however illegal her work might be.

Bending down to stroke the ginger-and-white cat that rubbed along her legs, Dora laughed softly. “Thank the stars we’ve never been found out, eh, Chelsea?” Purring along with her feline friend, she added in a stage whisper, “Someone rather powerful must be watching out for us.”

Years earlier the good citizens of Peoria had voted to abolish all “irregular” businesses like hers. The pastors of the town were behind the ban one hundred percent, Rev. Samuel Clay especially. He kept confusing the hidden arts, calling palm readers “psychics” and astrologers “spiritualists” and the whole lot of them “witches.”

*Witches!* The man was pitifully uninformed.

Since that fateful day, Dora was pleased to point out, not one police car had pulled up to the curb outside her tidy clapboard cottage. Nor had an unwelcome summons appeared in her mailbox. The neighborhood didn’t seem to notice the middle-age matrons stumbling through her door after sunset or the curious college students who gathered around the sturdy oak table in her blue-and-white kitchen.

So much the better. Dora didn’t need an audience. Those who knocked on her front door were lost souls. Nothing more than friends not met yet, stopping by for tea. If they accidentally left a twenty-dollar bill under their saucer, well, they knew she was a widow who could use the small blessing.

In Peoria, heart of the heartland, mediums were few and far between. No wonder business was brisk. She was needed. A helper, that’s what she was. A servant to the forgotten. Hadn’t she buried a husband? And a sister? And a child? Dora knew all there was to know about missing loved ones, about longing to hear their voices once more.

She heard something now. The sound of a car drawing near, then the engine abruptly shutting off. *Ah*. Dora’s smile broadened. Her first customer of the evening.

It was George Nicholson standing on her dimly lit porch, his soiled herringbone hat crushed between arthritic fingers, his eyes downcast.

She opened the door with a generous sweep. “Welcome, George.”

He could barely meet her gaze. “H-hello, Dora.”

George usually came on Thursdays—payday. His late wife, Nancy, had been gone for two years, most of which he’d spent trying to contact her, hoping to bring their last conversation to a better conclusion.

That’s what most of Dora’s work entailed: unfinished business with the dead.

The hour with George went well. He was quite convinced the spirit of Nancy had joined them. Not every word was clear, not every phrase made sense—that was part of what made it appear so authentic—yet George seemed more than satisfied. The additional dollars he slipped into Dora’s palm confirmed it. George backed down her porch steps, eyes brimming with grateful tears, and disappeared into the night.

Dora closed the door behind her, exhaled with a deliberate, cleansing breath, then eyed the enormous cat that filled the slipcovered chair like pudding in a cup. “An honest hour’s work for us, wouldn’t you say, Chelsea girl?”

The cat answered with a slow, silent blink that Dora understood completely, blinking back at her. Chelsea was the only one she could talk to, the only one truly familiar with her work. How could she risk explaining her nocturnal activities to friends and neighbors? The aromatic candles, the soft, tuneless music, the careful, circular arrangement of objects belonging to the dead, the smoky fire on the grate, the groans and murmurs and tortured sighs from here and there, from then and now.

It was exhausting, really. Three visitors a night was her limit. The mental preparation—that was the most demanding part. Total concentration, absolute focus. Then, if all was properly aligned, she would sense words flowing through her and would relax, feeling her customer’s clenched hands loosen their grip on hers.

When the spirits were uncooperative or surly, as if she’d rudely disturbed their sound sleep, Dora included a few words of counsel of her own—words of comfort and assurance, to give the living one closure, to

give the person hope. Most of the time it felt utterly natural, this talking in a voice that was not wholly hers. Other times it was unnerving, a bit out-of-body, as if perhaps someone else's voice altogether were speaking, though she knew very well how the whole process worked.

Those who might accuse her of “trafficking with the devil”—*honestly, the very idea!*—didn't have the faintest notion of the good she accomplished. She was dealing with departed spirits, not demons. Hers was a sort of white magic, harmless yet powerful.

The response of her customers—their tears of joy and relief—were what kept her going. It was a sacred calling, of that Dora was convinced.

Two more needy souls tapped on her front door that evening. A woman in her twenties wanted nothing more than to hear her mother's voice. Dora squeezed the girl's unlined hands with affection, thinking of her own daughter on the Other Side. Her last customer was an older woman, heart-broken at the loss of her husband two months earlier and desperate for companionship. Weeping throughout their session, the stranger left drained but happy.

Dora felt much the same: emptied yet filled with contentment.

The hour grew late. Nearly midnight, she guessed, stretching her bone-weary limbs, then snapping off the front porch light. The fire had died to scant more than embers, which she poked with listless stabs, yawning all the while. “To bed with us, Chelsea.”

The knock on the back door was sharp and sudden.

Dora dropped the iron poker, hearing it clatter on the tile hearth as if it were miles away, her every sense directed toward the kitchen door.

No one ever used that entrance.

It was locked tight. Always.

Bending down to scoop up Chelsea—for support, for protection from who knew what—Dora swallowed an uncomfortable lump in her throat and made her way toward the shadow-bathed kitchen. The candles had been snuffed out some time ago; the cold teapot sat empty in the sink.

Again the curtained door rattled under a series of firm knocks. Voices

were raised. Men's voices. Strangers—there was no doubt of it. Her heart was hammering so loud she couldn't discern their ages nor their intent. Only the desperation in their muffled words was certain.

Mustering every ounce of courage in her tired body, Dora called out, projecting her voice across the room. "Who are you? What is it you want?" Her surprisingly firm, authoritative tone reminded her of Carolyn Hutter's dead husband, for whom she'd interceded last Tuesday.

She flicked on the overhead light, and the kitchen instantly looked like home again, the countertops scrubbed clean, all four corners warm and inviting. Until, with a *pop*, the light bulb went out, plunging the room into a shroud of darkness once more.

*Not good.*

She blinked, willing her eyes to adjust. Her hands, usually warm, felt like ice against the cat's back. Chelsea's furry head was up, eyes and ears pointed toward the door, a low sort of growl stirring in her throat.

*Steady, Dora.* She clutched the animal tighter to her chest and eased her way across the room, steeling herself. Perhaps it was the police at last, come to put her out of business after all these years.

The men on the porch knocked again, louder and more insistently.

"Coming!" She nearly shouted it, for her own sake more than theirs. Stretching out a trembling hand, Dora pulled aside the gingham curtains that covered the back-door window and assessed the party on the other side of the glass.

Three men formed a broad, human knot on her porch. Two younger ones, their eyes wide with apprehension, and a larger man between them, his face lined with grief, although his direct gaze pierced hers with an uncanny measure of intelligence.

"We've need of your services, ma'am." His rough voice easily cut through the small panes between them. "Don't be afraid. We mean no harm."

Something told her he spoke the truth. Though wise, his eyes also had a haunted look. If anyone was fearful that night, it was this man.

Feeling in control again, her hands no longer shaking, Dora unlocked the door and pulled it open, its seldom-used hinges creaking in protest. “What can I do for you, gentlemen? Made a wrong turn, have you?”

The younger men both offered tentative smiles. “Not at all, ma’am,” the taller one on the right said, sounding relieved. “Our boss here wants a...well, he’d like to...”

The older man leaned forward. “I need to speak to my dead father.”

“I see.” Dora studied the men for a moment. They seemed sincere enough, but she couldn’t take any chances—not with strangers, not at this hour. “And what makes you think I could honor such an outrageous request?”

The one on the left piped up. “Everybody knows you’re a medium.” He pulled out a wallet, thick with bills. “Trust me, we’ll pay you well for your services.”

She frowned and shook her head. “What you’re asking me to do is illegal”—her standard line when an unknown prospect knocked. “If I recall the news story correctly, that kind of business is against the city ordinances—”

“So it is, Dora,” their boss barked. “Illegal as sin.” The older man stepped across her threshold, towering over her. “Which is why we won’t breathe a word of what happens this night, not to a living soul.”

“Nor to a dead one?” She swallowed the last of her concerns as a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

His laugh was gruff. “Talking to the dead is your department. So, will you help me? I swear on my father’s grave, my intentions are honorable.”

*Well see about that.* With a slight nod, she stepped back and ushered them into her gloomy kitchen. “Kindly give me a moment to get everything ready, will you?”

Lighting the candles with a steady hand, she directed the younger men into chairs well away from the table, lest they interfere with her centering efforts. Years of practice showed in her efficient preparation of the proper

setting for a séance. Within minutes, the fire on the grate had sprung back to life. A heady scent of anise pervaded the room, and deep notes from a lone cello poured from the hidden stereo speakers, infusing the silence with a low, hypnotic thrum.

She reached across the table and took the older man's large hands in hers, not surprised to find his grasp clammy but firm. "Are you ready to tell me your name?"

"Seth." He lifted his chin, meeting her gaze. "Seth Clay."

"Clay?" Stunned, she drew back, releasing his hands as if she'd been stung. Why hadn't she seen the resemblance sooner? "The same family as Samuel Clay, the minister?"

He nodded, his expression grim. "I'm his oldest son. My father died a few weeks ago. Or didn't you know?"

Of course she knew. Everybody knew. Half the town had attended his funeral. Dora had not been among them though. She'd celebrated Reverend Clay's passing by buttering an extra scone at breakfast that happy morning.

Now the wretched man's son was seated at her table, expecting her to conjure up the spirit of Samuel Clay, a narrow-minded tyrant who'd labeled her and her friends in the community "wicked witches" and "evil sorcerers."

*Evil?* Why, she was nothing of the sort! She *helped* people, made their lives better, their futures more certain.

She glared across the table at the reverend's fifty-something son, the lines in his face etched deeper by the flickering candlelight. In his eyes she saw neither judgment nor reproach. Only sorrow and a great emptiness.

It tore her medium's heart in two. The man desperately needed her assistance. Samuel Clay was dead and gone, wasn't he? True, with her particular skills, he could still speak from the grave, but he could no longer hurt her. The curtain between their two worlds was thin but impenetrable.

*Let him speak then.*

“What is it you want from your father, Seth?”

He gnawed on his lower lip, choosing his words with care. “I’m an attorney, you see.”

She merely nodded, remembering some mention of his profession in the obituary. “Go on.”

“Tomorrow I face an opponent in the courtroom who knows my every strategy. Without more information, I’m certain to lose the case, if not my entire career.” He edged closer. “It’s that important.”

“I understand.” Which she certainly did. “But what of your father?”

“He always counseled me before my trials. He...prayed with me. Helped me see the big picture, how God’s hand moved in such situations.”

Dora’s lips pressed into a thin, hard line. *God deciding court cases?* Samuel Clay had a lot of nerve calling mediums dangerous and fanatical! She’d almost relish conjuring up the loathsome man’s ghost, if only to taunt him with his permanently spectral state.

Grasping Seth’s hands in hers, more resolutely this time, she closed her eyes and brought to mind an image of Samuel Clay. It was easy enough to picture him, rising to his feet at a city council meeting, his gnarled hand wrapped around a Bible held aloft as if it contained some great truth instead of mere ancient superstitions.

For several moments she did nothing but breathe. The room grew still as death itself.

When she spoke at last, her voice was calm. “I see you, Reverend Clay.”

Seth’s hands began quivering. His voice was a hoarse whisper. “What do you see?”

*So impatient!* She saw only what Seth had to be seeing in his own mind’s eye: a vivid memory of his father. “I see your father in a gray suit...white shirt...red striped tie with a gold tiepin.”

Seth gasped. “Th-that’s wh-what he w-was w-wearing when w-we...we buried him!”

Dora smiled. The spirits were generous this night. The reverend’s

limited wardrobe and her lucid memory of the photo in the newspaper helped too. As the vision of Samuel Clay grew in size and clarity, she marveled at how real the image seemed. Why, she would have vowed he was in that very room!

As if lifted by an unseen hand, her eyelids slowly fluttered open, then widened in utter shock.

A bloodcurdling scream filled the air. *Her* scream.

*He was there. In her kitchen.*

Samuel Clay hovered larger than life behind his son, one ghostly hand still holding a Bible, the other resting on Seth's shoulder.

"Seth!" She swallowed, struggling to speak. "Your...father. He's...here. With us. Now."

Eyes wide with fear, Seth swung around in his chair. "Where? Where is he?" He swiveled back, distraught. "I don't...I don't see a thing, woman! Tell me what you see!"

What Dora saw left her speechless.

She, who many times had mentally reached across the chasm that separates life and death, had never approached such a level of success. It was thrilling. And terrifying.

This much was clear: It wasn't *she* bringing this ghost to life. It wasn't Seth's doing either. *No*. It must be—

Dora suddenly felt her mouth being forced open against her will, her lungs expanding with air, her lips preparing to move.

Rev. Samuel Clay, it seemed, wanted to speak...



## Kings That Go Bump in the Night: The Medium of En Dor

Somebody please turn the lights on.

Ever since our Girl Scout days, when we circled around a crackling

campfire on a black-as-pitch summer night, trembling on our waterproof sit-upons, we've heard and read dozens of ghost stories. Tales of the supernatural are part and parcel of our culture—from Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* to Stephen King's *Bag of Bones*.

Why the appeal? Because such otherworldly journeys are *forbidden*. Our naturally rebellious selves are drawn to things that say “Don't touch!” and “Warning!” Scary stories let us take a (short) walk on the wild side, then run home to a well-lit kitchen.

What's so bad about dabbling on the dark side?

Ask the Lord. You'll find his decree is crystal-ball clear:

Let no one be found among you who...practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. *Deuteronomy 18:10–11*

What a list! Who would ever think of doing all *that*? The Canaanites did. Those nefarious neighbors of Israel filled their religious rites with the entire collection of no-nos listed above.

Three thousand years later such practices are still around—flourishing, in fact—though some go by different names. *Divination* is another word for fortune-telling. Call the psychic hotline for details. A *sorcerer* tries to control people or situations with potions and herbs. Think aromatherapy with a seriously bad attitude. *Interpreting omens* includes analyzing flight patterns of birds, leaves in the bottom of a teacup, or whatever's handy. *Witchcraft*—modern practitioners prefer “wicca”—bewitches us everywhere we turn these days, from movie screens to bookstore shelves.

“Boo” is right.

Which brings us to this chapter's nameless Bad Girl, a *medium* or spiritist who contacted the dead. Label her what you will—“wizard” (KJV), “psychic” (NLT), “necromancer” (RSV), or one who “traffics with ghosts and spirits” (NEB)—the girl was a rock's throw from disaster.

“A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them;...”

*Ouch.* A zero-tolerance situation, this medium business.

“...their blood will be on their own heads.” *Leviticus 20:27*

In other words, by breaking God’s laws, they “brought it on themselves” (ICB).

You could say the same thing of King Saul, a man who made himself miserable by eventually turning his back on God. In the early years of his reign, though, he sent those necromancer types packing.

Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land.

*1 Samuel 28:3*

Don’t be impressed. We’ll see in a minute how Saul managed to “drive the devil out of his kingdom, and yet harbour him in his heart.”<sup>1</sup> Like so many of us, he got his outward act together, but inside the dark recesses of his soul, a rebellious spark still burned.

Lord Byron’s take on this biblical story of King Saul and the shady lady from En Dor catches the spirit of the tale: “It beats all the ghost scenes I ever read.”<sup>2</sup> After all, *this* one was the real thing.

Our ghost story opens—appropriately—at night, on the eve of a battle with those nasty Philistines.

When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. *1 Samuel 28:5*

Saul, a scaredy-cat? Saul, the slayer of thousands, terrified?  
You bet.

Saul realized he would fight the Philistines alone the next day, without God’s mighty right arm to guarantee the victory. Tough to lift your standard high with certain death staring you in the face. As a last-ditch effort, Saul knocked on heaven’s door.

He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him...

I know what you're thinking: *What's the deal, Lord? He needs your help!* True. But Saul had severed his relationship with God by intentionally disobeying the Lord's commands. The prophet Samuel had delivered the bad news years earlier: "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."<sup>3</sup>

Now we find him groping in the dark for answers.

...by dreams or Urim or prophets. *1 Samuel 28:6*

His dreams were nightmares. His trusty Urim and Thummim—two stones used to determine the will of God by asking yes and no questions—were dark. Even the prophet Samuel wasn't around anymore, since at age ninety-eight "the venerable Samuel crossed the boundary line into the other world."<sup>4</sup>

A desperate Saul decided to bring him back from that "other world" where only the dead reside.

Crank up the fog machine and cue the eerie music.

Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." *1 Samuel 28:7*

Find him a *what?* You mean one of those people he *expelled?*

At his order, those Bad Girls (and Boys) of the black arts were run out of town on a rail (okay, a camel), and now he wants one to act as his "medium [between the living and the dead]" (AMP)?

Desperate wasn't the half of it.

Such women weren't a dime a dozen—honey, you know they charged more than *that*—but being a medium was a "common occupation among ancient Near Eastern women."<sup>5</sup>

With little trouble, Saul's men found such a gal.

“There is one in Endor,” they said. *1 Samuel 28:7*

Although it’s also spelled “En-dor” (NEB), I decided to stick with the old-fashioned “En Dor” (NKJV) since in the original Hebrew it’s two separate words: *En* (“well or spring”) and *Dor* (“the nearest town”).

Just four miles from Mount Tabor<sup>6</sup>, this Canaanite stronghold was located in the same general area where we’ll discover another Bad Girl—Jael—who nailed that Bad Boy Sisera, “who perished at En Dor, who became as refuse on the earth.”<sup>7</sup>

Lovely spot.

For Saul to get to En Dor, he not only had to cross into enemy territory, he had to sneak past the Philistine army. The trip itself was dangerous, never mind what waited for him at the end. In Kipling’s words, “And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store for such as go down the road to En-dor.”<sup>8</sup> Preach it, brother.

So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes...

He skipped the royal robes. Ditto the good jewelry. Saul not only had to keep his identity under wraps for that stealthy stroll past the Philistines, but he couldn’t have his own people see him tiptoeing into a medium’s abode. The woman herself had to be kept in the dark, lest she panic and refuse to serve the very king who’d put her out of business.

...and at night he and two men went to the woman.

*1 Samuel 28:8*

In my teenage years, my mother always cautioned me to be home before the stroke of twelve. “Nothing good happens after midnight,” she insisted. Mom was right, of course. Did I listen? I did not. Many were the midnight hours of my rebellious youth spent in the backseat of a Camaro or the front row of an R-rated movie or in the middle of a circle of friends passing around some (un)controlled substance.

Hiding from the light.

Hiding from the Lord.

Darkness and disobedience go together. Almost all the scenes of Shakespeare's witchy *Macbeth* take place "either at night or in some dark spot."<sup>9</sup> The apostle John wrote, "Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."<sup>10</sup> That night in En Dor even the starless sky couldn't match the darkness of Saul's soul, that night when "death was in the air."<sup>11</sup>

We know not the hour of the night, but we know it was dark indeed. We know nothing of the age or appearance of this unnamed medium, though she was certainly "hedged around with a circle of evil rumors."<sup>12</sup>

Two things we do know: This surely wasn't her first late-night visitor. And the man on the other side of the door wasted no time in stating his intentions.

"Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name." *1 Samuel 28:8*

In ten versions of the Old Testament, this verse is never translated the same way twice. Check out these various phrasings:

"conduct a séance for me" (NKJV)

"perceive for me by the familiar spirit" (AMP)

"tell me my fortunes by consulting the dead" (NEB)

"bring up the ghost of someone" (CEV)

"I have to talk to a man who has died" (NLT)

That last one cuts to the chase, doesn't it?

Reminds me of the advertisement typo I saw for a Christian event where "interpretation for the *dead* will be provided." *Oops*. In Saul's day, however, provisions like that were more than a proofreading problem. They were against the law.

But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land." *1 Samuel 28:9*

Never mind the fact that talking to dead people broke God's Law. Madam Medium only cared that it broke *Saul's* law. It was clear that her heart did not belong to the Lord God.

Notice she didn't deny being a medium—what, and scare away a potential cash-paying customer? But she, who was “an outlaw, judged worthy of death,”<sup>13</sup> *did* want to find out how this stranger felt about bending the rules.

“Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?” *1 Samuel 28:9*

Was she truly worried...or hoping to raise her fee by pointing out the big risk she was taking?

Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this.” *1 Samuel 28:10*

Girls, this is what I call taking the Lord's name in vain. Using his name inappropriately. Blasphemously. Calling on the One whom Saul no longer knew, nor had a right to call his ally.

Sadly, it was also the *last* time Saul uttered the name of the Lord.

Then the woman asked, “Whom shall I bring up for you?”  
*1 Samuel 28:11*

At this point I want film footage, not a script. Why did she suddenly agree to take the gig? Did he silently press money into her hand when he made that oath? Did the two men with him brandish highly motivating weapons? Or did the obvious desperation on Saul's face prompt her to help this stranger?

She didn't realize he was King Saul—not yet—but she did recognize a beaten man when she saw one. Mediums of her day were older, wiser women, “deeply versed in human nature; acquainted with all the weaknesses, hopes and fears of the human heart.”<sup>14</sup>

People came to her as a last resort. Each knock at her door was no doubt followed by the same needy entreaty: “Help me!”

The witches I’ve met—including the one I almost chose as a roommate when I was nineteen—all had a desire to help people. Misdirected, to be sure, but genuine. They saw their craft as a way of assisting folks who were confused, lost, or discouraged.

Consider this, dear sisters: If you and I don’t stand in the gap as holy “mediums”—serving as godly intercessors by sharing the truth of Christ with those who don’t know him—our pagan counterparts on the dark side *will*.

Believe it.

Our Girl in En Dor stood ready to serve.

“Bring up Samuel,” he said. *1 Samuel 28:11*

Wait. *Samuel?* As prophets go, he was “one of the purest, noblest on any record.”<sup>15</sup> You’d think Samuel would be the *last* person Saul would wanna talk to. While Samuel lived, he seldom had good news for Saul. Death would hardly improve matters, would it?

And what of the medium? Wouldn’t *she* have been nervous about calling forth a prophet of the Lord?

Aha! Our first clue. She didn’t *expect* Samuel—or anyone else—to make an appearance! No wonder she went about her necromancy without hesitation. She wasn’t truly calling forth dead spirits. It was nothing but smoke and mirrors and giving people what they wanted.

The next verse, as you’ll see, describes the outcome of her efforts...but *not* how she did it. Very wise, Lord. You know us well. If we had a recipe for such conjuring, we’d be tempted to try it.

Records of typical séances in the past reveal a use of something the ancients called “Engastrymysme...or ventriloquism,”<sup>16</sup> which often sounded like “chirping and muttering”<sup>17</sup> to the customers. Probably sounded like gold coins to the medium.

But the woman of En Dor, no doubt gearing up to create this spirit by her own subterfuge, was in for a shock.

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice...

Um...didn't her *customers* usually do the screaming?

What caught her off guard? The importance of the one who appeared? As in, "Wow, it's Samuel! Didn't know my own strength!" Or was she shocked that it occurred at all? Was this in fact the *first* time her mumbo jumbo seemed to work?

That's my vote.

...and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me?"

*1 Samuel 28:12*

Deceived *her*? My, isn't that the cauldron calling the kettle black!

"You are Saul!" *1 Samuel 28:12*

She saw the ghost of Samuel, screamed, and then identified...*Saul*? That's odd. How did seeing Sam add up to Saul, I wonder. Did Samuel speak Saul's name as he rose? Did the medium reason that Samuel wouldn't have showed up for anyone less than the king himself? In any case, the woman put two and two together and came up with one scary scenario.

Talk about being between a rock and a hard place! A dead prophet on one side, a deranged king on the other. *Eeek*.

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

*1 Samuel 28:13*

The Hebrew text shows us this isn't a rebuke but a softened form of the words "please don't be afraid." After all, Saul needed her help more than ever because apparently he couldn't see squat.

The woman said, “I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.” *1 Samuel 28:13*

No wonder she was frightened at the “ghostly form” (NEB) rising before her eyes. “The ground” didn’t mean tilled soil but the region far below it, “the netherworld, the realm of the dead.”<sup>18</sup>

Shiver me timbers!

“What does he look like?” he asked. *1 Samuel 28:14*

Saul still couldn’t see anything, but he obviously believed her. Guess the scream did it.

“An old man wearing a robe is coming up,” she said.  
*1 Samuel 28:14*

Honestly, it might have been anybody. “Old man in robe” could describe my own dear father rising from his recliner, wearing the same beige terrycloth bathrobe he loved for ages. But since Saul *requested* Samuel and *expected* Samuel, those two clues were enough to satisfy him.

“Old geezer? Long robe? Yup, that’s Sam.”

Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. *1 Samuel 28:14*

It seemed Saul “did homage” (NASB) to the dearly departed. Either that, or he thought putting his ear to the ground might help him hear better.

Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” *1 Samuel 28:15*

I’ll bet Sam spoke in sepulchral tones. Dead serious, too. Pointed out Saul’s grave errors... (Okay, okay, I’ll stop.)

One important question: *Who was doing the talking here?*  
The Lord? The devil? Or the Medium of En Dor?

I'm ruling out the medium. She may have been the conduit, but the prophetic words that followed weren't her own.

That old talking snake, Lucifer? Some scholars think it possible, arguing that the devil, by divine permission, could have impersonated Samuel "since he can transform himself into an angel of light."<sup>19</sup>

Yeah, but to what end? Our medium was so scared she probably turned in her crystal ball the minute Saul left, never to consort with the Prince of Darkness again. Besides, Satan has no knowledge of what is to come except that which is revealed in God's Word, meaning the prophecy Samuel shared later would have been beyond Satan's ken.

So was it God himself speaking? Maybe God "miraculously permitted the actual spirit of Samuel to speak."<sup>20</sup> Or maybe it was nothing more than Saul's off-the-deep-end psyche.

*Groan.* I hate it when I don't have a clear answer.

There are times when I hear a small voice in my own head and heart and find myself wondering who's talking.

*Knock, knock. Who's there?*

*Is that you, Lord? Or old Beelzebub, up to no good?*

So how *do* we discern God's voice from the adversary's? Here are three questions I ask myself:

1. What's the message?
2. What's the outcome?
3. Who gets the glory?

We can measure this ghost story with the same yardstick.

The *message* was consistent with God's Word and with Samuel's previous prophecies.

"The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." *1 Samuel 28:19*

The *outcome* was Saul being humbled—on the spot, and the next day on the battlefield as well.

Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. *1 Samuel 28:20*

The *glory* went to God alone, since in Samuel's brief speech he mentioned the name of the Lord seven times—the number of perfection or completion.<sup>21</sup>

Saul was undone. Imagine knowing the hour of your own death! Another good reason not to seek knowledge about future events. It literally wiped the man out.

His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and night. *1 Samuel 28:20*

No doubt Saul fasted in preparation for his visit with Madam Medium, as was the custom. Add to an empty stomach his wretched emotional and spiritual starvation, his awareness that he stood on the threshold of death, and it's no surprise the man was close to fainting.

When the woman came to Saul and saw that he was greatly shaken, she said, "Look, your maidservant has obeyed you. I took my life in my hands and did what you told me to do."  
*1 Samuel 28:21*

Sure wish I could hear her tone of voice here. A gentle reminder...or a sharp rebuke? "Sir, I tried my best to be more than obedient"? Or, "Hey, mister, how 'bout a little applause for the old girl's efforts"?

The medium gets ten points for this: She didn't hand him an invoice.

"Now please listen to your servant and let me give you some food so you may eat and have the strength to go on your way." *1 Samuel 28:22*

Like any good hostess, she offered him food. Maybe she harbored a small corner of compassion in her necromancer's heart after all. Samuel

had just announced that Saul would be dead the next day, so the king was no longer a threat to her, nor did he indicate any plans to “shoot the messenger”...yet.

She did her best to persuade him to dine. “It will give you strength for your walk back to camp” goes one translation (CEV). Commentators think she was gifted with generosity or honored to find the king under her roof. No question those are strong motivators for any hospitable soul.

Personally, I think she realized the sooner Saul left, the safer she'd be. No wonder she said, “Eat, eat! Go, go!”

He refused and said, “I will not eat.” *1 Samuel 28:23*

Funny how hanging out with ghosts can spirit away your appetite.

But his men joined the woman in urging him, and he listened to them. He got up from the ground and sat on the couch. *1 Samuel 28:23*

When a stranger couldn't convince him, his own men did.

The woman had a fattened calf at the house, which she butchered at once. She took some flour, kneaded it and baked bread without yeast. *1 Samuel 28:24*

The Medium of En Dor put aside her sorcerer's turban, tied on an apron, and whipped up a late-night feast fit for a...well, you know. It wasn't the sort of thing one finds on the room-service menu at your typical Marriott. Fattened calf was a delicacy, sort of a “free range” thing. The animal was allowed to graze to its heart's content, then sleep safely under her roof—literally, “at the house.”

Then she set it before Saul and his men, and they ate.  
*1 Samuel 28:25*

Think of it as a last supper for King Saul.

That same night they got up and left. *1 Samuel 28:25*

She must have closed the door in utter relief. *Whew. Mission accomplished.*

Wonder what happened the next morning. Did she tell everyone in town about her midnight visitor? Or keep it to herself? With Saul dead, did she resume her former profession or vow never to grab her bell, book, and candle again?

As with our men departing under the cloak of darkness, so the fate of the Medium of En Dor remains shrouded in mystery. She's not mentioned again in Scripture, although folks have been talking about her ever since.

Their opinions boil down to two conflicting views:

*1. The Medium of En Dor was a compassionate helper.*

Because she “treated a stricken king with kindness,”<sup>22</sup> it would “serve us well to view the woman of Endor with sympathy rather than suspicion,”<sup>23</sup> goes the argument in her favor. She was a thoughtful hostess, a maidservant to the king, and “one of the most attractive exponents of ‘the Black Art’ in early literature.”<sup>24</sup> Give the girl a medal.

*2. The Medium of En Dor was a daughter of darkness.*

“In spite of her good points, she had sold herself to Satan,”<sup>25</sup> and so “by yielding her soul to spirits, she was abusing herself in the deepest possible way”<sup>26</sup> insist the naysayers. She indulged in the very sin that both God and her government outlawed and used her evil powers for personal gain. Get thee behind us, woman.

Good Girl or Bad Girl?

Listen carefully.

The Medium of En Dor was the worst kind of Bad Girl because she directly opposed God and his Word, yet clothed herself in the guise of a helpful soul. It's easy to be taken in by her caring, generous ways and her servant attitude. Visit a medium today and you'll no doubt find the same warm welcome and desire to please. As a Victorian writer phrased it, “it brings a sigh to think that she was bad.”<sup>27</sup>

Sigh away, honey, but the woman was bad, bad, and again I say, *bad*.

Ask yourself these two biggies: (1) Whom did the Medium of En Dor really serve? And (2) how does God view such activities and, as such, reward them?

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, and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse. *1 Chronicles 10:13–14*

Hear no uncertainty on God's part here.

Sorcery, witchcraft, divination are deadly.

Horoscopes, palm readers, telephone psychics are worse than hoaxes or pleasant diversions—they can cost us our souls.

Modern American spiritualism—according to their very modern Web site—began on March 31, 1848, when a family communicated with a departed spirit. Described as a “common sense religion,” the National Spiritualist Association of Churches defines spiritualism as a combination of science, philosophy, and religion that embraces the idea of continuous life, as demonstrated through mediums who “adjust their vibrations to enable communications between the two planes of existence.”<sup>28</sup>

In other words, sisters, the Medium of En Dor's descendants are alive and well. And busy.

Their tenets include the belief in one God—called Infinite Intelligence—and one life, endless because there is no death.

How easily a friend who doesn't know Christ as Savior might be drawn to this religion that speaks of “God” and “eternal life.” It sounds right... right? Wrong.

Their board of directors is predominantly women—no surprise this. Women historically—and by God's design, I believe—are more spiritually sensitive, drawn to the deeper things, the higher planes. Neither bashing men nor spouting feminist propaganda, I'm talking observable, quantifiable

fact: More women than men fill our church pews, Bible studies, and weekend retreats.

Perhaps the spiritualists might agree with the wiccan high priestess who wrote, “We were women seeking a spiritual home, a place where we would be respected and welcomed, where our souls would be healed and empowered, and where our experiences would be honored as a source of spiritual wisdom.”<sup>29</sup>

That kind of stuff sells, girls. Look at the words: *home, welcomed, healed, empowered, respected, wisdom*. Some two decades ago I found all that and more at the foot of the cross. But for those around us who are still searching, I fear many voices calling out to them are far more persuasive than ours.

One woman who turned from witchcraft to Christ shared her coven’s guidelines for making witchcraft more appealing: “Never frighten anyone. Offer new realms of mystery and excitement. Make it look like natural, innocent adventure. Cover up evil with appealing wrappings.”<sup>30</sup> It’s easy to see why wicca draws in the curious and disillusioned.

After covering myself with prayer, I studied various books on the occult and found safe-sounding, familiar practices: Prayer and meditation. Ceremonies and sacred days. Music and worship. Sharing of food. Storytelling. Rituals for birth, marriage, and death.

Many similarities. But oh, sisters, *one big difference!*

Our relationship is not with a dead spirit but with a *LIVING CHRIST*.

Our God does not come from within ourselves but from *ON HIGH*.

When people tell me they worship a god “of their own understanding,” my heart yearns for them to meet the God of all creation rather than a god you can understand, that you can fit in a box, that you can both define and control. Christ calls us to worship a God we can *never* fully comprehend, let alone control.

Spiritualists, witches, goddess worshipers, and others who beckon us with tempting ways to control our lives are collectively ignoring the Bible

and creating their own creeds to suit their selfish desires. No need to give Satan credit for such deceptions, though his evil influence hangs over all of it like a wisp of brimstone. We're plenty capable of deceiving ourselves.

It is the abandonment of self—not the elevation—that draws us closer to the One who knows us better than we know ourselves.

Scary? You bet!

Smoke and mirrors? No way.

One man. One cross. One life-changing God.

## What Lessons Can We Learn from the Medium of En Dor?

**When God says “I hate this!” pay attention.**

We are blessed to live on the other side of Calvary where grace abounds and forgiveness is eternally ours...and where wise women make it their business to know what our loving Lord despises. That list includes the occult practices mentioned in Deuteronomy 18, which are “detestable to the LORD.”<sup>31</sup> Though the world encourages a spirit of religious tolerance, God draws the line at the black arts. Shouldn't we?

A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil. *Proverbs 14:16*

**Dead men tell no tales. The living God does.**

The medium depended on the spirits of the dead—and her own talents of illusion—to bring forth Samuel, but it seems the Spirit of God in the form of the prophet Samuel showed up instead. No wonder she screamed! Departed loved ones, however much good counsel they once offered, no longer have the answers we need. God does. Let's turn to his printed Word—the Bible—and his Living Word—the Christ—rather than seeking man's wisdom from ages past or horoscopes present.

“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” *Luke 20:38*

**The goddess didn't die for your sins...Jesus did.**

If goddess worship is “the fastest growing spiritual practice in the United States,”<sup>32</sup> we're dropping the ball, sisters. No one loved, respected, healed, and empowered women more than Jesus did...and still does. Let your love for your heavenly Bridegroom set your face aglow like a candle. Let the fragrant aroma of his sacrifice cling to you like holy incense. While women everywhere are groping about in the dark, longing to find the Light, we who hold it in our hands and hearts must let it shine!

But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know what makes them stumble.

*Proverbs 4:19*

**Test and see that the Lord is good.**

When the spirit of Samuel rose from the ground that dark night in En Dor, even the medium knew something different had happened. We, too, need discernment when it comes to those internal voices that nudge us daily. Is the message consistent with Scripture? Does it draw us toward the Lord... or away from him? Is the tone one of loving concern...or of harsh judgment? And who will get the glory if we obey that inner prodding? With so many voices demanding our attention, these are questions worth asking.

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. *1 John 4:1*