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Not Just
a Game



Not Just a Game

We were a family of three—my mother, my sister and me. My parents had divorced several years before, and we were still learning how to be an all-girl clan.

My sister, Heather, and I had reached the awkward middle-school years and felt desperate to “belong.” Mom hoped to enjoy a new beginning in her personal life and was taking steps to pursue that hope.

We were a family of three, and each of us had lost a piece of ourselves when a failing marriage finally shattered. Each of us was seeking to fill the heart-holes my dad had left behind. But how? God wasn't part of our spiritual equation; both of my parents grew up with nominally Christian backgrounds that had faded away years before.

So when Mom met Gina, a woman involved in fortune telling, we were “ripe for the picking.” We had no idea that the path we were about to travel would take us further from peace—and truth—than we ever thought possible.

Mom shared with Gina the questions she longed to have answered. Gina, in turn, introduced her to New York City tearooms. Mom decided the extra trips from our suburban New Jersey home were worth it. Here she could share her heart with people who would listen, and here they would supply the insights she craved.

Eventually Mom took Heather and me with her to the tearooms, and we watched while she consulted a variety of psychics. All of them kept a Bible on the table. All of them made statements that contained a compelling element of





truth. And all of them would say only so much before ending each session, which kept Mom going back for more.

One of these people told Mom that she, too, had psychic ability. The suggestion appealed to her, so Mom bought a set of Tarot cards. She quickly learned how to “read” them and soon was “reading” cards for Heather and me, as well as for herself. The ritual fascinated me. Could we really see our future through these cards?

The next step was the Ouija board. This was even more enthralling. The thing really worked. We didn’t know what made the pointer move, but when

**Satan himself
masquerades as an
angel of light.
It is not surprising,
then, if his servants
masquerade as servants
of righteousness.**

(2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

I asked it specific questions (in my mind—not out loud), it gave specific answers.

I was getting hooked. One evening as we played with the board, I silently asked it about my crush. I felt desperate to know—Does Danny like me? The pointer steadily moved across the board to the word “No,” and my heart sank. Mom looked at me and gave a sharp laugh. “I bet I know

**Resist the devil, and
he will flee from you.
Come near to God
and he will come near
to you.**

(James 4:7-8)

what you just asked it,” she said. “Does Danny like me?” Her voice was mocking. I stared at her. For the first time, I felt uneasy about playing these strange “games.”

We all felt it but still couldn’t pinpoint what was wrong.

Mom gradually realized that her “counseling” sessions were going in circles. She felt confused and oppressed, even controlled. Heather felt wary of the psychics themselves and didn’t want them coming to visit our home. I sensed it inside the house, becoming more afraid to go downstairs alone, especially in the dark. I felt a presence—like something was watching me. Strange things began happening, and our anxiety levels rose higher and higher. I sensed the power of evil.

Then God stepped in.

Shortly before my thirteenth birthday, Mom met a man named Joe who happened to be a pastor. When he learned more about our family, he got right down to business. He told Mom about God’s grace and how she

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KING SAUL ASKS, "WHICH WITCH"

The story of Saul's life is sad because he started well and finished badly. He disobeyed God and then fell into even greater disobedience.

1. According to 1 Samuel 28:3, Saul was responsible for driving out of the country all of the mediums and spiritists (today we might call them fortune tellers, channelers, or witches). But in verse 7 Saul asked his men if they could find a witch so he could get help. What happened between verses 6 and 7 that changed Saul's thinking?
2. Before Samuel died, he told Saul something that could explain why he couldn't get an answer from God (see 1 Sam. 15:22-29). What was it?
3. Who did Saul ask the witch to "call up" for him (1 Sam. 28:11)? Why do you think he asked for this person?
4. Why do you think the witch was so terrified when Samuel actually showed up as she requested? After all, if she truly could call up the dead, why would she have been expecting him (1 Sam. 28:12)?
5. Was the answer from Samuel any different now than it was while he was still alive (compare 1 Sam. 28:16-20 with 1 Sam. 15:22-23, 27-28)? How would you make things better or worse for Saul?
6. What does this story teach you about trying to get help from the wrong people?



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Today's Scripture

Selected verses from 1 Samuel 28

¹In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. ²Now 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. ³The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all Israel and set up camp at Gilboa.

⁴When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. ⁵He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. ⁶Saul 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. ⁷So 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." ⁸But 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?" ⁹Saul swore to her by the Lord, "As surely as the Lord lives, you will not be punished for this."

¹⁰Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" "Bring up Samuel," he said. ¹¹When 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!" ¹²The 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." ¹³"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.

¹⁴Samuel 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." ¹⁵Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy?" ¹⁶The 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. ¹⁷Because you did not obey the Lord or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the Lord has done this to you today. ¹⁸The 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."

Bible Study



Continued from page 3.

could have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, repeating this message for a solid month.

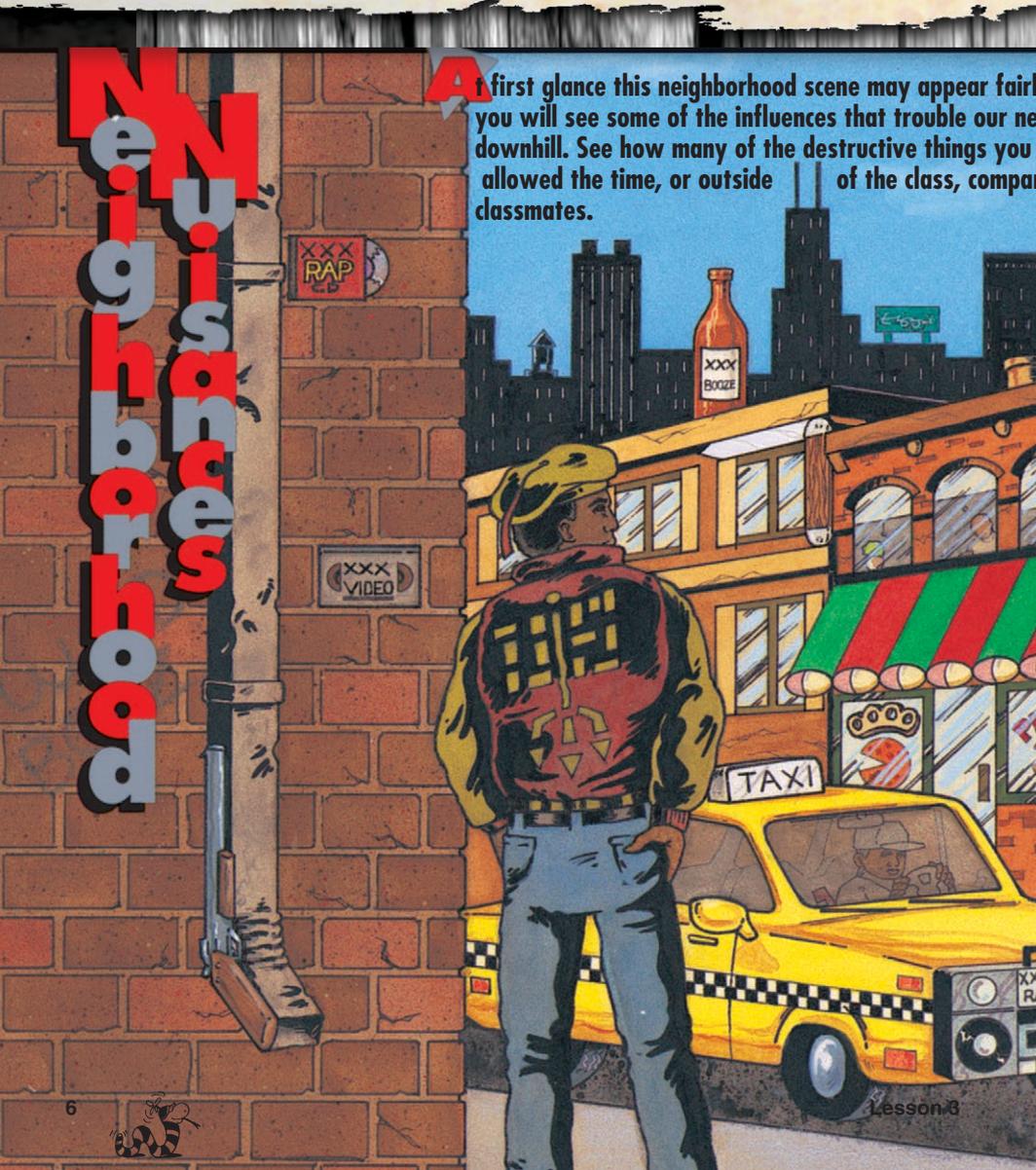
At the end of that month, we happened to spend a day visiting an old friend we had attended church with years before. She was a bold born-again Christian; like Pastor Joe, she urged Mom to surrender her life to God.

That night, Mom gave her heart to Jesus—and got rid of every piece of occult material in the house. “I felt a lightness, a peace,” Mom says. “I no longer desired to know the future. I bought a Bible and began visiting churches.”

Mom also asked Pastor Joe to come and pray over our home. Walking through, he anointed every entrance into

Neighborhood

At first glance this neighborhood scene may appear fair, but you will see some of the influences that trouble our neighborhood. See how many of the destructive things you have allowed the time, or outside of the class, compared to your classmates.



the house—even the fireplace—with oil, asking the Holy Spirit to come and fill the place. And we sensed the difference. We sensed the presence of God.

Finally we understood. We weren't just playing games; we had opened ourselves up to dark spiritual forces and were gambling with our very souls.

"It's not a hoax," Heather says.

"There is power behind these things,

but it's not the power of God. And if you have no other foundation in your life, you will be swayed by it."

Though two more years would pass before Heather and I felt ready to make our own commitments to the Lord, we never experimented with occult activities again.

Never.

normal. But if you look more closely, neighborhoods and cause them to go can find. Either in class, if you are re how many you find with one of your



every day devos



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

A good detective searches for clues in order to find out the truth. God wants us to put the same effort into finding out the truth about people who claim to speak in His name.

MONDAY Read 1 John 4:1. How can you tell whether someone is “from God”? What clues does 1 Corinthians 12:3 provide?

TUESDAY In order to separate what’s false from what’s true, you have to understand God’s Word. Fill out two columns, one labeled “false,” the other “true.” Think about what you believe about God. Can you back up what you believe with Scripture?

WEDNESDAY Draw a picture of a large magnifying glass. Read John 8:32; 14:6. What is the truth according to Jesus? How can this knowledge help you be on your guard against false prophets? Write your answers inside the magnifying glass.

THURSDAY What warning does 2 John 7-10 have to say about “deceivers” or false teachers? What advice does John give?

FRIDAY Make this a day to pray for God’s truth to be made known. Look at Matthew 24:24. What does Jesus say about false prophets?

SATURDAY Put 1 John 4:1 in your own words. If you were John, how would you advise your friends concerning false prophets?

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