

Is it a sin to study the occult not to practice it but to know what to avoid?

Christians study world religions and the occult for the purpose of apologetics. The apostle Paul said: We are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Co 2:11). Often the best apologists for Christianity are those who have come out of cults and 'isms.

It is forbidden of course (Deut. 18:10, 11; Jer. 27:9) to engage *in* occultism (e.g. astrology (Is. 47:13), charming (Deut. 18:11), spiritism (Deut. 18:11), divination (Deut. 18:14), magic (Gen. 41:8), necromancy (Deut. 18:11), soothsaying (Is. 2:6), sorcery (Ex. 7:11; Ex. 22:18), witchcraft (Deut. 18:10), wizardry (Deut. 18:11).¹ Christians should encourage others to forsake this behavior (Acts 19:18–20). They should share the truth with them but not *become* like them (Jn 17:16). Believers should keep pure and spotless from the world (Phil 2:15).

Men are called to believe. God asks that individuals have faith in him not in horoscopes or fortune cookies. Abraham believed God. He 'staggered not' (Ro 4:20). His faith is the type of faith that God is looking for. Many claim to follow the Lord but veer off to the left or to the right in disobedience.

Happiness comes from happenstance (e.g. what is happening in an individual's life). Joy, on the other hand, comes from one's trust in God's promises for the future. David wrote: I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Ps 27:13). A Christian must have courage until God sees fit to strengthen his heart. He is to wait on the Lord (Ps 27:14).

Believers get restless desiring their friends and family to be saved. They have prayed and prayed for others but see no results. The prophet Isaiah wrote: Remember not former things and ancient things consider not (Is 43:18, YLT). *Consider not* the many prayers before. The past is past. Keep praying (Mt 7:7-12) and consider God's character. He is loving not willing that any should perish (2 Pe 3:8-9).

Venturing into hidden knowledge is forbidden for a believer. The apostle Jude wrote: The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Jud 6). God expects his created beings to stay within their own realm. One should not attempt to gain information from the spirit world. It is disobedience and it demonstrates a lack of trust in the Lord. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

Jesus is the elephant in the room. Individuals will not go around him to find another way to heaven or forbidden information. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11). What men are looking for is less important that what God is looking for—he is looking for faith.

Believers should not get discouraged. Some pray not even believing that what they pray for is possible. Their unsaved loved ones are as good as dead to their mind because of their weak prayer. But, Jesus said with God all things are possible (Mk 10:27). One should pray believing. Jesus said: Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them (Mk 11:24).

God has authority over life and death (Eccl 8:8). A believer should stay within this own realm and share the gospel. Jesus should be first and foremost (2 Cor. 4:10–12)--no veering off to the left or to the

¹ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index (p. 456). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

right—no getting by the elephant in the room. He said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (Jn 14:6a). He knows how to meet individuals where they are in their spiritual walk.

God told Satan that he could do all he wanted to Job; but, he couldn't take his life (Jb 1:12). Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without God approving it! (Mt 10:29). The Christian is commanded to love as God loves (Mk 12:31)—hope all things (1 Co 13:7) and pray (1 Thess 5:16-18). God's will *will* be done in the life of each person. His plans for men are good (Jer 29:11-13).

Jesus never turned anyone away during his earthly ministry. He healed the sick and saved souls. One man, a centurion, had great faith. His servant was sick and Jesus offered to visit him. The centurion answered and said, “Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.” (Mt 8:8).

When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel (Mt 8:9–10). The Lord loves faith. He honors faith in individuals. In Proverbs it is written:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil (Pr 3:5–7).

The Lord arrives with healing in his wings (Mal 4:2). When he shows up: people are healed, saved and demonic activity is put down. One can't get that from a Ouija board. God's weighty presence shows up at times (2 Chron 7:2). Christians seek him not foul spirits.

God can even cause revival. When that happens the finger of God has come near (Lk 11:20). He can heal: physical, mentally and spiritually. Dead practices from dead people lead nowhere. Idolatry is looking toward something or someone other than God (Ex. 20:1–5).