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Our minds
are not a
closed
system...

What I Learned From The Ouija Board

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It was in 1970 or 1971 that my friends introduced me to the Ouija Board at a youth group activity in our church basement. The youth group kids explained to me how a heart-shaped pointer would move across this mysteriously decorated board, pointing to letters and numbers to spell the answers to questions we would ask. I warily accepted their invitation to try the Ouija, but watched for the joke I fully expected them to be play on me. Sure enough, as I sat across the board from one of my church friends, both of us lightly resting our fingertips on the plastic, felt-footed pointer, I felt my friend moving the pointer around the board. The plastic piece zipped around to different

letters of the alphabet, spelling out an answer to the corny question I had asked. “You’re moving the pointer!” I accused.

“No, I’m not, you are!” my friend retorted.

Well, I thought, they’ve already agreed among themselves to pull my leg with this thing. I didn’t stay at it long—it was obvious that the other person was moving the pointer. My friends would not let it rest though. They continued insisting to me that nobody was moving the pointer; the crazy thing did it by itself. To my stubborn refusal to believe, the owner of the board finally said to me, “Look, take the board home and experiment with it yourself, and see if you can figure it out.”

The offer to loan me the Ouija Board took things in a different direction. I thought of myself as a scientist. I was only a High School junior or senior, but I’d taken all the science and math courses available and planned to pursue a college degree and a career in biology. I was devoted to the scientific method. To me, testing was believing. Not only that, I did have

an interest in parapsychology. The prophecies of Edgar Cayce and the “revelations” of Jeanne Dixon fascinated me. I wanted to know if there really was another dimension where incorporeal beings lived and communed with one another. Here was an opportunity to apply the scientific method to a mysterious game and see if I could find any direct evidence for the supernatural.

A day or two later, I went up to my attic bedroom, pulled the Ouija Board and pointer out of its Parker Brothers game box and sat down with it on my lap. I set my fingertips lightly on the edge of the pointer, and asked a simple question. To my surprise, the pointer began to move. The strange thing about it was that it still felt as if my friend was moving the pointer from the opposite side of the board—but I was alone. Warming to the experiment, I asked a series of random questions. Sure enough, the pointer zipped all over the board, spelling out words that formed rational if occasionally mysterious answers to my questions. There was something here I wanted to get to the bottom of.

I had a dual hypothesis: I decided that the power of the Ouija Board originated either from some invisible being outside of myself or from the subconscious workings of my own mind. To test my hypothesis, I went up to my room each afternoon when I got home from school, and sat down with the Ouija Board, notepad and pencil beside me, and asked question after question. I tried to formulate questions that would test the mental and predictive abilities of whatever power was behind the Ouija Board, and I carefully recorded and tried to analyze the answers given. I very quickly discovered that I did not have to ask my questions orally; I had only to think a question and the Ouija Board pointer would begin to move in response.

I'd followed this routine for only a few days when my experiment took on a new dimension. I forget the question I asked, but the Ouija Board gave a particularly enigmatic answer, and I sat on the edge of my bed wondering what it could mean. As I sat with notepad in hand, my pencil tip still resting on the paper, the pencil began to move in my hand, seemingly of its own accord, scribbling lines on the notepad. Beads of perspiration popped out in the palm of my hand, but I did not fling the pencil away. I had only just recently read about this phenomenon, called “automatic handwriting,” in a book by Ruth Montgomery. Spirit guides supposedly communicated with willing participants by controlling a writing utensil in their hand. Who or what was controlling the pencil in my hand was still an open question as far as I was concerned, but it did feel as if it were somebody else. While my fingers still supported the pencil, it felt as though the pencil was directing the muscles of my hand rather than vice-versa. At first the pencil just scribbled, but I gathered my wits and thought a question. Sure enough, the pencil wrote out an answer longhand in one, continuous line! Then it went back to scribbling.

Who are you? I asked, *what do you want?*

“I want to draw,” came the answer. I'd had enough for that session and put everything away.

The next afternoon, I got out a large sheet of drawing paper, laid it flat on my desk, and picked up a pencil. I held the pencil lightly in my hand and spoke to it with my mind. The pencil began to race across the paper doodling and pausing in its play only to respond to my questions. In a single continuous line it drew a passable picture of a guitar, but then as if in childish frustration it drew the strings in over-long gashes across the page. I laid down a fresh sheet of paper and asked questions more insistently. I soon re-established the rhythm of questions and answers that I had experienced with the Ouija Board, only now, the answers were written out longhand on the paper.

One or two days into the automatic writing routine I was stunned by an incredible piece of artwork. The pencil began to move purposefully across the large, blank sheet of drawing paper in wide curving lines. I had no idea what the “power” was drawing, if anything at all, but as the continuous line began to describe a defined shape, I could see it would be some kind of portrait. Suddenly, my mouth dropped in astonishment. Before my unsuspecting eyes,

the curving lines resolved into a perfect caricature of President Richard Nixon. The finished drawing was of professional quality, done with a harmonious and relaxed execution, in one continuous line.

The Nixon drawing had definite implications for my Ouija Board experiment. Up to the moment when that picture materialized before my amazed eyes, I had leaned toward the “mind game” side of the hypothesis—the idea that the whole Ouija Board and automatic writing thing originated from somewhere down deep in my own subconscious. The problem was that I had never drawn like that before. Now, as I record the experience, I can look back on years of dabbling in art, learning some skills, and even teaching art to my daughters. At that time, however, I had never taken an art class and never drawn anything but stick figures and simple happy faces. The pencil in my hand had done something I knew *I* could not do. Perhaps if I had studied Plato back then, I would have wondered if I were expressing some innate talent I had been born with and only “forgotten.” Perhaps some psychologist could have explained the Nixon drawing, but at the time I could not and it made me suspect strongly that I was dealing with an entity outside of myself.

I didn't have too many friends that I could confide in at the time, but I did have one or two fellows that I excitedly shared my experiments with. I also mentioned what was going on to my mother and to my sister, Erlinda. Erlinda worried enough about my dabbings that she sent me a little book on spiritualism. I've forgotten the title and author, but it was a Christian book and the most important thing it did for me was to direct me to the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy. In that chapter of the Bible, I found a reference to communication with “familiar spirits.” The Bible recognized such a phenomenon as real, but condemned it unequivocally as something abominable in God's sight. That scared me, and I purposed to bring my experiment to a definite conclusion.

I had only been experiencing automatic writing for a week when I went up stairs and laid a clean sheet of drawing paper on my desk one more time. I had become convinced in my own mind that I was dealing with an entity outside of myself. The only question that remained for me was whether this entity was a good spirit, i.e., from God, or some kind of evil spirit. I sat down and rested the tip of my pencil lightly on the paper.

I need to know if you are a good spirit or an evil spirit, I naively said in my mind to the writing entity. The pencil began to write swiftly, racing back to the left hand side of the paper as it came to the end of each line. “I'm a good spirit, of course,” it wrote.

I'm not so sure, I thought, I think you might be an evil spirit, and I need to stop doing this stuff. The pencil began to race across the paper. I felt its emotion, although the only sound was the thin scraping of graphite against paper. The words poured from the pencil tip: “Don't stop whatever you do—we're almost ready to go to the typewriter—I'm going to speak to you through the typewriter—I have many things to teach you—you will become a great prophet to the world—whatever you do don't stop.”

All right, I said in my mind, *I'll have to put you to a test.*

“Fine,” the pencil replied, “just don't stop talking with me.”

Okay, I said, *if you're a good spirit from God, you should be able to tell me something that it would be impossible for me to know on my own.*

“Yes, that's right,” wrote the pencil.

Well then, I continued, *I just heard my mother come in from work downstairs; can you tell me how much money is in her coin purse right now?*

“Certainly,” wrote the pencil.

Good, I said, *then tell me how much money is in her coin purse and I'll go down and count it right now.*

“Two dollars and eighty-six cents,” wrote the pencil.

I bounded down the stairs, found where mom had set her purse on the bed, and

checked her coin purse. She had money in it, but the amount was no where close to \$2.86. Annoyed, I went back upstairs and took the pencil in my hand. *That's it*, I thought to the entity, *you lied to me and a spirit from God wouldn't do that. I think you're an evil spirit, and I need to quit this stuff.*

Once again the pencil raced across the paper: "No, don't stop, don't put the pencil down—I was just joking—come on, give me another chance, whatever you do, don't stop."

All right, I said, *one more chance, but then that's it.* I asked some easily verifiable question about what I would find on the seat of mom's car or in the glove compartment or something like that. The pencil answered confidently, and I went out to the garage to check. Once again, the spirit behind the pencil had lied to me.

Back at my desk, I took the pencil up and said, *You lied to me again. You must be an evil spirit and so this is good-bye.*

The pencil fairly flew across the paper: "No, no, don't stop—we're going to go to the typewriter—I have so much to teach you so that you can teach it to the world—whatever you do, don't put the pencil down yet—don't stop!" The evil spirit could sense my growing resolve. "Don't stop, give me another chance—you can take a joke—don't put the pencil down, whatever you do, don't stop—don't stop!—don't stop!" I slapped the pencil down flat on the desk and took a deep breath. My experiment was over.

I never tried automatic writing again after the day of my final test, but for the rest of that school year, if I happened to be holding a pencil in a relaxed position on my school desk, the muscles in my right hand would begin to twitch as though the pencil wanted to start writing on its own again, and I would have to put the pencil down, reach over with my left hand and press my right hand flat down on the desk until the feeling passed.

I did not know Jesus Christ when I had my encounter with the Ouija Board and automatic writing. I had grown up in the church but the gospel had not yet penetrated. I knew snatches from the Bible, but I had never read through the Bible for myself. I believed that God existed but it was a blind faith. I knew of no empirical evidence for the supernatural world—until now. The greatest thing that this experience did for me was give me an unshakable belief in the spiritual realm. It followed logically in my mind that if evil, lying spirits existed, just as claimed in the Bible, the Bible must also be true when it speaks of angels and God. I did not immediately begin to study the Bible, but later when pressed to seek answers for my teenage fears and struggles, I turned to the Bible with a confidence that it spoke of things that were real.

As I have shared this story over the last twenty years and contemplated the grave spiritual danger that I had been in, further insights have come to me regarding the spiritual battle that we are all in. Perhaps the most important realization is that the human mind is not a closed system. In other words, the human mind is constantly penetrated unawares by thoughts that originate from without. Ideas dawn in our minds that we take as our own when in reality God or Satan has injected them into our minds. We have overwhelming testimony to this truth in Scripture: God repeatedly dictated Pharaoh's thoughts in the book of Exodus, for example, and in John 13.2 we read of the devil putting it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. It behooves us all to so saturate our minds with God's words from Scripture that we can easily distinguish between thoughts that come from Him and thoughts that come from the enemy. Otherwise, what we inwardly embrace as our own wonderful idea, may turn out to be a subtle temptation from the evil one.

I kept the papers, the picture of Nixon and the other drawings for many years after I had become a Christian, even after Kaaren and I were married. It was while we were living in our first house in Parkland that I finally decided that I could not keep anything remotely connected with the demonic in our home. I burned all the papers and drawings in our back yard. Needless to say, I had long ago returned the Ouija Board to its owner and encouraged him to destroy it. Occultic games are not games.