Watching Dr. Phil Through a Discernment Filter

I like Dr. Phil (McGraw), the host of one of TV's top-rated daytime programs, but it's essential to keep a biblical discernment filter in place when watching his show. Last week I winced to see that his producers had talked him into bringing a couple of self-proclaimed psychics onto the program. Dr. Phil calls himself "a skeptic but not a cynic," and he took the bait.

His audience was wildly appreciative of the topic and his guests. In fact, Dr. Phil displayed a stack of emails at least a foot and half high from people anxious to contact "the other side."

Unfortunately, his wife Robin was one of the "believers" most excited to have the psychics on the program. One of the guests, who calls herself "an intuitive," did a reading for Dr. Phil in their home. She also met one-on-one with Robin, who had high expectations of the reading.

"There were two events that I found to be very profound in his life," she explained later. "One, I did not know him then, but one I was a part of with his mother. And I even mentioned it to him before the reading. I said, 'OK, will you really believe and be open if she brings up even one of these two events?' – and she brought up both events."

What disappoints me is that although both Dr. Phil and Robin, who has been a speaker for the Women of Faith conferences, confess themselves to be Christ-followers, apparently they are more concerned about what makes for good television than what makes for a disciple of Jesus. And this is why Christians need to filter all media through a discernment grid consisting of what God says.

Check out how God prohibits His people from engaging in any and all occult practices of the surrounding pagan cultures:

> *When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, you must not learn the abhorrent practices of those nations. There must never be found among you*
>
> - *anyone who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire,*
> - *anyone who practices divination,*
> - *an omen reader,*
> - *a soothsayer,*
> - *a sorcerer,*
> - *one who casts spells,*
> - *one who conjures up spirits (Hebrew: "asker of a [dead] spirit"),*
> - *a practitioner of the occult (Hebrew: "a knowing one; a familiar spirit"),*
> - *or a necromancer (Hebrew: "seeker of the dead").*
>
> *Whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord and because of these detestable things the Lord your God is about to drive them out from before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God. Those nations that you are about to dispossess listen to omen readers and diviners, but the Lord your God has not given you permission to do such things. (Deut. 18:9-14)*

The psychics on the Dr. Phil show purported to give messages to the living from the dead. They promised they knew nothing of the audience's private matters, yet came up with some staggering details that resonated with the loved ones left behind. That included Robin.

So what's going on if it's not what it appears to be—the dead communicating with the living through a medium?

The reason God prohibits any form of the occult is because it means dabbling with demons, and that is horribly dangerous

spiritually. If psychics receive knowledge they can't possibly know, it's not coming from the dead. The Bible makes no provision for any communication between the living and the dead (with two exceptions; you can read about that here). But demons know all kinds of information about people, and they can feed it to their puppets.

For example, when the McGraws discussed private issues before the reading, of course demons were listening to that conversation! Is it really so surprising that the psychic, who explained that she opens herself to the spirits to receive what they want to tell her, received information from evil spirits?

Viewing life through a biblical discernment filter means that sometimes we'll see things that makes us moan, "NOOOOOOOO!"

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/watching_dr._phil_through_a_discernment_filter
on Jan. 17, 2012.

"What Do You Know About Landmark Forum?"

What do you know about Landmark Forum? Received an e-mail from a relative about how this has changed her life and invited me to check it out. I came straight to your website to see if you had anything on this organization.

We haven't done any research ourselves on The Landmark Forum, but others have:

“Landmark Education” on Apologetics Index (note the very beginning of this analysis: “NOTE: (Landmark Education lawyers, pay attention please!)” The litigious nature of Landmark is quite interesting! Note this corollary article:

Landmark Education vs. A Link on Apologetics Index

Inside the Landmark Forum

Watchman Fellowship, a trustworthy source of information on cults and false religions, took down their analysis of Landmark after being threatened with a lawsuit. However, someone else has put it back up: web.archive.org/web/19980615070001/http://www.watchman.org/LandmarkProfile.htm

If you google Landmark Forum, you can find some intriguing information, including comments by people who have attended and/or experienced pressure from recruiters.

ask.metafilter.com/15619/Opinions-of-Landmark-Forum

www.ex-cult.org/Groups/Landmark/landmark-cherries.dir/_XOOM/apostate/ index.htm

For what it’s worth, Landmark uses experiential exercises rooted in its history of Werner Erhard’s “est” program, which eventually morphed into Landmark. Some of the exercises themselves are helpful and do not violate any biblical principles. Dr. Phil McGraw, formerly associated with Pathways, a similar program to Landmark, brought TV cameras into the “training room” of some of these same exercises when he was featured on Oprah, and periodically uses elements of the exercises on his programs.

And several Christians have taken the helpful parts of Landmark, rejected the rest, and created God-honoring, people-honoring seminars that are about discipleship and personal growth, not making money.

www.heartconnexion.org (my son and I both participated in this one, and bless God for it)

www.graceadventure.org/

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Help Me Figure Out Why My Relationship Hurts!"

I checked out the article where you and that guy were making comparisons between Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, and the Bible. That discussion really interested me because I am reading *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus,* and I began thinking as I was reading it and I developed a theory… First I thought about older people (ages 55 and up). I have seen so many of those older couples still holding hands and being very loving together. I found my self asking what is so different in relationships today and relationships in the fifties and earlier? Why do so many relationships fail today and not in those yester years? I came to the conclusion that Christianity must have been the key. Not only does the Bible provide instruction for healthy relationships, it also provides people (believers) with a feeling of fulfillment. Never before have I ever really understood the real reason for the verse "Do not be unequally yoked." It causes a real strain on relationships, and I have been through many unmeaningful and heartbreaking relationships. I was wondering since you have read the whole book *Men are From Mars and Women are from*

Venus **if you could help me with my most recent relationship problem.**

I have a great boyfriend—he is very beautiful on the outside and inside, he is considerate in fulfilling my needs, buying me gifts, and taking on his fair share of the cooking and cleaning responsibilities. I really love him for that. I know that he likes me or else he wouldn't be with me and he says that when I ask him how he feels about me. Actually he says you know how I feel about you why else would I be with you, and if I say how I feel about you too much it won't mean as much. How should I go about telling him that it means the world to me every time I hear (which is totally not enough and I feel unfulfilled because of it) him say how much he cares about me and I really need some reassurance right now about his feelings or I will have to leave him because I am very fragile right now and every day I grow more and more insecure in how I feel as to where I am in our relationship. I am even starting to question if he really wants me to go with him when he asks me if I would like to go out with him and a friend for lunch. Then he gets mad and says I wouldn't ask you if I didn't want you to come. I constantly wish he would just give me some reassurance, any kind, because I feel myself hurting soooo much, and I know he is hurting too because he doesn't like to see me sad. I think that he has a really hard time expressing how he feels towards me because he has been single for 30 years now (he has had long relationships that end badly) and like MAFMWAFV says that men start to love people and they pull away so they can find their own self because they are afraid they will lose their sense of independence. Do you think that he is really struggling with something like that or what do you think I should do to solve my problem? I really sincerely love him and I don't want him to slip away because I don't understand or know something that I should. When I am done my formatted and fully (to the best of my knowledge and understanding) completed correlation between the Bible and MAFMWAFV I will send you a copy. I know you probably

get about a million emails a day so if you can't answer mine I want you to know that I feel a little better just having gotten all of this off of my chest. Thank You Sue!

Wow, sounds like you have your emotional plate full. Question: are you living with your boyfriend? (Otherwise, why would you mention "his fair share of the cooking and cleaning responsibilities"?) If you are, no wonder you're so insecure! Tell me, what are you getting out of this relationship? It sounds like you're giving him the benefits of having a wife without requiring that he give you the commitment of a husband.

That's a big reason why God wants us to be married before setting up house. It sets us up for major pain to give ourselves away without a foundation of trust.

Trust is everything, and trust is closely tied to commitment. If I were you, I would pull waaaaaay back and stop giving yourself away without a commitment. If he loves you, he will pursue you and marry you. If he's just "enjoying the milk without buying the cow," (to use an old expression), then if you leave and he doesn't pursue you then you will know he is using you. Even if he's fond of you, he's using you. With your permission. (Ouch!) Which is not a way to demonstrate self-respect.

I would also suggest that you read Gary Chapman's book "The 5 Love Languages," and ask him to read it or listen to it on tape. Sounds like your love language is verbal affirmation, and he needs to know that you need to HEAR verbal appreciation and affirmations of love to feel loved. I cannot tell you how disrespectful it sounds to hear the excuse "If I tell you all the time how I feel about you it won't mean as much." Ask him why he eats all the time instead of only at Thanksgiving. I mean, eating all the time diminishes the meaning of eating, right? Wrong! It nourishes his body, just as hearing "I love you and I appreciate you" nourishes your heart and your

relationship.

I hope these observations help. I am concerned for you because it sounds like you're the one paying emotionally in this relationship, and you're treating yourself poorly. I like what psychologist Dr. Phil says: "We teach people how to treat us." Sounds to me like you're teaching your boyfriend that it's OK to get what he wants from you without any reciprocal commitment on his part. Doesn't sound fair—or healthy—to me! And for SURE it isn't what God commands in scripture, which is a way to protect and provide for women's fragility and need for security.

You might also want to read Dr. Laura's (Schlessinger) *The 10 Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives*. It's a good read because it is consistent with biblical values. . . such as the value of marriage and purity and commitment and servant leadership.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
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