

[How Shall We Find Water? \[1\]](#)

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Recently a brother, whom we'll call "Andrew," decided to have a new well drilled, since his old one was repeatedly running dry. When the drilling rig arrived, the driver "George" jumped out, holding two wires in his hands.

"What are they for?" asked Andrew. "To find water?"

"Yes," George replied. "Is that okay with you?"

The Question: What should Andrew have said?

What Is Dowsing?

Dowsing for water, or water smelling, is a method of searching for underground water. The custom is hundreds of years old, if not thousands.

Typically, a dowser uses a tool known as a divining rod. Often it is a Y-shaped stick from a tree. The dowser holds the ends of the branches, with the stem pointing forward, as he walks over the search area. The rod is to indicate water by suddenly pulling downward.

Other dowsers use L-shaped metal rods, holding one in each hand like a pistol. The rods are to indicate water by crossing each other or by swinging apart, depending on the dowser.

Some use a pendulum, which moves in different ways to mean different things, again depending on the dowser, who first "programs" it.

Some dowsers use their bare hands to just feel for a tingling sensation.

Dowsing is used to find not only the location of a water source but also its depth and rate of flow, such as by counting how many times a rod bobs up and down in the dowser's hands. Many dowsers say their methods can be used to find anything hidden—oil, minerals, lost keys, etc.—and even answer other questions. Some also claim to find things from a distance by holding a pendulum over a map.

How Does It Work?

What moves the divining rod? Is it a known physical force? Various explanations have been given through the years, often involving electricity or magnetism, but they just raise more questions.

Please give these questions careful consideration.

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1. If the force is electrical, how could it be strong enough to pass through many yards of earth, which is a poor conductor, and reach the rod without injuring the dowser?
2. If it is magnetic, it must be even weaker than the earth's magnetic field; otherwise anybody could find water with a compass. How then could it be strong enough to move a dowsing rod, sometimes with such force that the dowser can't stop it?
3. If a dowser's body electricity somehow amplifies the force, what violence would he experience when exposed to a vastly stronger source like a lantern battery or cow magnet close at hand?
4. Can flowing water induce electrical or magnetic fields in the first place?
5. How could electricity or magnetism move a wooden stick?
6. How can such a wide variety of materials and methods all work to detect water?
7. When a rod or pendulum is used to measure depth or flow, how does it "know" what unit to count—feet or meters, gallons or liters?
8. When you pick up sticks while cleaning the yard, why don't they jump in your hands?
9. If a physical force is involved, why can't we measure it with a simple device, just as we can measure temperature or voltage and get consistent results no matter who is reading the instrument?

In the many studies that have been done, dowsing generally did not work under scientific scrutiny. The consensus among scientists is that it works no better than chance. They say it often appears successful because in many areas water is so widespread you can drill almost anywhere and find it. (This information was obtained from numerous websites, including Wikipedia, and from booklets on the subject, printed by several conservative printing houses.)

Indeed, dowsers themselves admit there is no scientific explanation. Yet they firmly believe in it, and there are many accounts that seem to prove it works. (This information was obtained from dowsers' own websites, which would be completely in agreement with the practice.)

So let's assume it does work, at least in some cases. Since we have no physical explanation, we must reckon with the possibility that a spiritual power is at work. This raises a serious question for the Christian. Is the power from God or from Satan?

The testimony of "expert" dowsers themselves supports the conclusion that the power is spiritual. They say you have to believe in it to make it work. They speak of a sixth sense, detecting waves with the mind, listening to the language of the earth, being in a receptive state of mind, asking questions of your divining rod as you work. They say anyone can learn to dowse, but some can do it better than others because individuals vary in their psychic abilities. (Again this is coming from the dowsers' own information.)

Does the term psychic give us a clue as to what power is at work? Why is water smelling commonly known as water witching or divining for water? Why is the tool called a divining rod? Why do people involved in the occult, put dowsing (also known as rhabdomancy) in the same category as practices such as Ouija, crystal gazing, table tipping, and automatic writing? If the world calls dowsing, divination, should there be any doubt in the Christian's mind as to where it belongs?

What Does God Say?

While the Bible does not refer directly to water witching, it has much to say about divination.

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God called it an abomination. He drove out the Canaanite nations because of it, and He forbade the Israelites to practice it (Deu 18:9-14). Later He exiled them for practicing divination, among other sins (2Ki 17:17). He equated it with rebellion (1Sa 15:23). Look up divination or sorcery in a topical Bible or a concordance, to find many more scriptures revealing God's hatred of divination.

Especially relevant is Hos 4:12,

"My people ask counsel at their stocks [sticks], and their staff [a shoot, a stick for divining] declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God."

While this may not refer specifically to water dowsing, it describes exactly what dowzers say they do—use a divining stick and ask it questions. As this verse indicates, people practice divination because they have gone astray from God, and the practice leads them further astray. Like Saul, they are not getting answers from God, so they seek them elsewhere.

When a damsel with a spirit of divination met Paul, Silas, and Luke in Philippi, she actually stated the truth (Act 16:16-18). But Paul did not say, "She has a gift from God and she is doing a good service for mankind." Nor did he say, "She must be using some force that science has yet to discover." Rather, he recognized the demonic source and commanded the spirit in the name of Christ to come out, even though the act landed him in jail.

This is not to suggest that every water dowser is demon possessed. But using divination opens a door for the devil to gain a foothold in an individual's life.

Some Christians see water witching as innocent because they know of other Christians who practice it. However, this reasoning can justify many sins. What should be our standard: other Christians, or the Word of God? No doubt every experienced disciple can testify of times in his Christian life when he repented of an old practice because God helped him see it as sin. That is Christian growth.

The Christian also understands that just because something works does not make it right. When Moses struck the rock twice, it worked—"the water came out abundantly" (Num 20:11). But he had disobeyed God, and it cost him the promised land.

The Answer

Andrew told George that he was not comfortable with the use of divining rods, and that his chosen method was to pray for God's direction. George consented and followed Andrew to the site he had prayerfully selected. Before long the drill bit struck a good aquifer, and then another one.

Testing revealed a flow rate of 80 gallons per minute—far beyond the old well's 10 gpm, and to Andrew's knowledge, the best of any well in the area. Although George didn't have much to say, Andrew's testimony of faith must have spoken loudly.

God could have answered Andrew's prayer a different way and tested his faith further. Like Isaac of old, Andrew could have had to dig yet another well. But regardless of the outcome, he

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would still have the blessing he is enjoying now, worth far more than any well of water—a clear conscience. His sensitivity to God was sharpened by listening to the Holy Spirit, not dulled by listening to the spirit of divination. He had drawn closer to God by following His way, rather than giving the devil a foothold by dabbling in witchcraft.

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