

Paranormal Investigator Dies After Annabelle Doll Event, Experts Warn of Spiritual Danger

A veteran paranormal investigator died suddenly after showcasing a haunted doll believed by some to be demonically possessed, raising serious questions about the spiritual dangers of engaging with the occult.

Dan Rivera, 54, was found unresponsive in his hotel room in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, just hours after the final stop of the “Devils on the Run” tour. The tour featured the infamous Annabelle doll, the same Raggedy Ann figure that inspired The Conjuring films and was at the center of a case handled by legendary investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren.

Rivera, a husband, father of four and U.S. Army veteran, served as the lead investigator for the New England Society for Psychic Research (NESPR). While the cause of death has not yet been released, officials confirmed there were no signs of foul play. Rivera’s passing was described by NESPR as “sudden and heartbreaking.”

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While many remember Rivera as compassionate and committed to helping others, his death so close to an occult-related event has reignited debate among Christian voices about the unseen consequences of engaging with the demonic.

“Doing this stuff definitely gets a target on your back,” said Christian investigator and podcaster Tony Merkel in an interview with Charisma Media about the spiritual dangers of

investigating the occult. "If you say you're a Christian and you're just riding the bench, nobody's going to guard you. But as soon as you start becoming a problem, that's when the opponent pays attention to you."



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Merkel, who has spent years researching supernatural phenomena from a biblical worldview, emphasized the real danger of spiritual warfare, especially when exposing or even being near occult objects or activity.

"When I first started really understanding this idea of portals, I was fascinated by it... and I regretted it on a spiritual level," he said. "I felt like I disrespected the Lord... I felt like God gave me a lot to be trusted with and I abused that at certain points."

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Annabelle, the haunted doll Rivera presented during his final public event, is said to have left notes, moved on its own, and even physically attacked people, according to case files from the Warrens. While a psychic once claimed the doll was inhabited by a child's spirit, Ed and Lorraine Warren determined it was something far more dangerous: "a malevolent entity... using the guise of innocence to manipulate and ultimately harm."

That assessment aligns with warnings from Merkel, who stated: "Hunting for portals, not a good idea. It's a doorway to another realm, and things go in and out of that."

Though Rivera was not attempting to summon spirits, simply handling or publicizing objects tied to demonic activity may

still result in spiritual consequences. “We don’t need to conjure things or pull out Ouija boards,” Merkel said. “We just go out into the woods and exist in these environments to see what happens... But you have to be on guard and know the boundaries.”

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Remember, the spiritual realm is not only real but active. Jesus spent a significant portion of His earthly ministry casting demons out of people (see Mark 1:39, Luke 4:41), and Scripture warns that the enemy prowls like a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

For those without Christ, the danger is even greater. Engaging with the occult without the spiritual protection found in Jesus leaves people vulnerable to forces they cannot control or comprehend. The Bible commands believers to “put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (Eph. 6:11). Without that armor, people are spiritually exposed in battles they are not equipped to fight.

While some may view Rivera’s work as simple curiosity, people must be aware of the unseen cost of dabbling in darkness, even for the sake of exposure or education. True protection and discernment come only from a relationship with Jesus Christ, the one who holds authority over every spiritual power and principality.

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