

Radio psychic says he's tuned in to higher power

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ST. PETERSBURG — Radio talk show host and psychic Gary Spivey says he likes to give credit where credit is due.

"God is always giving gifts," Spivey says of his professed psychic abilities. "I was gifted with prophecy."

Spivey, whose show airs on WSUN, 620 AM, from 6 to 8 weeknights, is also the host of a television infomercial for his "Your Psychic Companion" 900 hot line.

His radio show is part predictions, part metaphysical discussion and part comedy. Decked out in white jeans, white cotton shirt and thick, permed, white-dyed hair resembling a steel-wool helmet, Spivey says he doesn't take himself too seriously.

As an adult, Spivey says, he acquired the gift of healing as well as prophecy.

"I believe healing is the most wonderful of all gifts," Spivey says. "I prayed very hard for this gift and one day, I saw Jesus."

"Jesus said, 'I'll let you heal as long as you tell people it's from me,'" Spivey says.

That night, he talked about his vision on the air when he took a call from an endocrinologist who suffered from a severe case of psoriasis.

"I talked to her and found out she was feeling guilty about something," Spivey says. "When you're feeling guilty, healing won't work."

After speaking with her that night, Spivey says, she called again in three weeks to let him know that her psoriasis had cleared up.

Baptist-turned-psychic

As a child in rural North Carolina, Spivey says, he was brought up as a Southern Baptist. Even as a child, Spivey says, he "didn't agree with everything completely" that he was taught about religion. To him, Spivey says, there is only one God and the different religions are simply different ways of reaching God.

"Whatever a person believes, I think they should just try to be a good one," Spivey says. "I believe in Jesus Christ, but I have read for people who were not Chris-



RON C. BERARD/Tribune photos

Radio talk show host and psychic Gary Spivey counsels listeners over the air. "I was gifted with prophecy," he says.

tians and yet they were very in touch with God."

Spivey disputes the idea held by many Christians that psychic powers are evil or that they come from the devil. He says his powers come from God. In fact, Spivey says that as people's lives become more complex and radical environmental changes take place on Earth, more people will turn to God.

"And we're going to see more and more psychics appearing," Spivey says. "Psychics are God's way of sticking some natural counselors here on Earth."

Caroline Heart, a nondenominational minister from Tampa, agreed, saying she is glad that talk about psychic and paranormal phenomena is becoming more mainstream.

"People are waking up," Heart says. Recently, she says, a major network aired a show about angels.

"There's also a TV talk show called 'The Other Side,' which deals with these subjects, as well as 'Sightings,'" Heart

adds. "The Other Side" airs on WTMV, Channel 32, at 4 p.m. weekdays, and "Sightings" airs on WTVT, Channel 13, at midnight Sunday.

Skeptics and believers

However, Tampa physician Gary Posner, founder of the Tampa Bay Skeptics, attributes the increase in psychics to other, less altruistic factors.

"I see the increase in psychics as some people's way of earning a living off a gullible public," Posner says.

The Rev. Mike Young, a Unitarian Universalist minister from Tampa, also attributes the growing number of psychics to "the failure of the American media audience to think critically.

"And offering critical thought on the subject of religion has come to be thought of as being something bad," Young says.

Young has seen examples of this "gullibility" with a stage act he used to perform with his daughter. During the act, Young

would be blindfolded while his daughter would go out into the audience, taking objects from audience members. Young would then correctly guess the item his daughter was holding.

"You would have to be really dumb not to pick up on the obvious verbal clues my daughter was giving me," Young says. "But after the show, people would always come up and tell me I had a real psychic gift.

"We eventually gave up the act because it got boring," Young said. "It was just too easy to fool people."

Catholics are also discouraged from participating in psychic readings because such abilities fall under the categories of "sorcery" and "superstition," says the Rev. Kevin Murray, co-pastor of St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Tampa.

Murray says he's especially suspicious of Spivey's infomercials, which he sees as slick, big-budget productions featuring TV and movie stars put together by "clever public relations people."

"Basically, there is no way to make sure he's on the level or that this is nothing more than a money-making scheme," Murray says.

Posner says he doubts that psychic power healed the psoriasis sufferer who telephoned Spivey's show.

"Before I would accept anything he said on faith healing, I would want to study the medical history of anyone whom he claims to have healed," Posner says. "I'm not aware of faith healers curing any organic disease, but psychosomatic diseases may be alleviated through faith healers.

"Since the exact cause of psoriasis is not known, it may turn out that emotions play a role in that disease," Posner continues. "The mind does play a role in healing diseases of the mind, and if you alter the person's mental state, you may heal them."

Ron Bennington, co-host of the "Ron and Ron Show" on WSUN, says psychic powers are still a mystery to him. But he says he is impressed by the number of people Spivey has helped with his counseling, judging from calls received by Bennington's show.

Spivey's program is syndicated through the Ron & Ron Radio Network.