

Apart From Him, We're a Boat Anchor

January 14, 2014

My computer had no battery and no way to connect to the power supply. It was useless. All the programs installed on it, all the information on the hard drive, were completely inaccessible because it needs power to run.

It needs power to do what it was designed to do.

It needs power to be a computer and not a doorstop. Or a boat anchor.

I was reminded of Jesus' simple statement (that we really don't believe): "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for *apart from Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

Apart from a power supply, my computer can do nothing. It, however, has the good sense to demonstrate the startling truth of Jesus' statement, unlike us. We're more like a car out of gas that can still roll downhill without power, boasting in the delusion of self-deception: "Hey, look at me, look what I can do all by myself!"

But Jesus really meant it. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. He's the glue that holds the atoms and molecules of the universe together, and He holds us together. Unless our lungs inflate and our hearts continue to beat, unless there is air for us to breathe in, unless our red blood cells dump out carbon dioxide and absorb oxygen, we can do nothing. We're as dead as my computer without a power supply.

Write a poem, a novel, or even a shopping list? Apart from Him, our brains don't work and our thoughts, if they exist at

all, are meaningless, random biochemical explosions.

Plant a garden, fertilize and water it, eventually harvesting vegetables or fruit? Apart from Him, the creator of seed and soil and fertilizer and water, we got nuthin.'

Get a job, any job? Apart from Him, we have no connections to people that He made, there is no structure within civilization to provide for employment, there is no basis for money for trade.

Actually, apart from Him, there *is* something we can do. We can sin. We can act independently of God, in either active rebellion or passive indifference.

Apart from Him . . . we can do nothing of value, nothing that lasts, nothing to be proud of or grateful for.

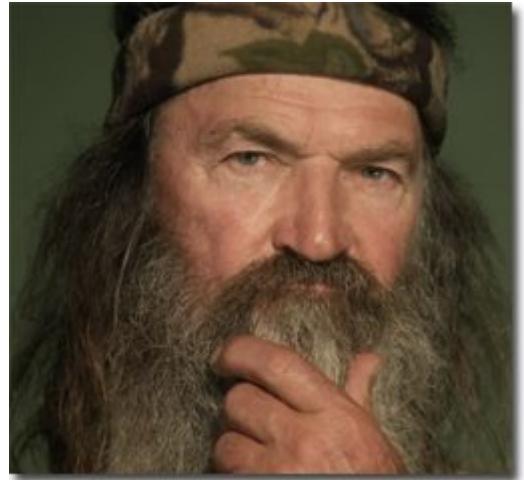
What Jesus called us to do is to abide. To hang out with Him. To teach ourselves to live in awareness of His presence, reminding ourselves of the truth that He is always with us, as He promised (Matt. 28:20). To actively depend on Him. That may look like mentally taking His hand no matter what we're doing. Or mentally sliding over into the passenger seat in the car to let Him drive through us. When we're afraid, clinging to the truth of scripture, praying over and over, "When I am afraid, I will trust in You" (Ps. 56:3).

Abiding is the spiritual discipline of staying plugged in, connected, to our power source.

Just like my poor little powerless computer.

Did (Duck Dynasty's) Phil Get it Wrong? Is Homosexuality Sin?

In one of the biggest social media flaps since social media was invented, Duck Dynasty's Phil Robertson openly said that homosexuality is sinful. Then the cyber world blew up in a clash of worldviews—the progressive, whatever-floats-your-boat perspective of A&E, the cable network that profits greatly from



the Robertsons' TV show, against the traditional biblical view of sin and sexuality. A lot of people think that Phil's old-fashioned morality is not only antiquated but unfair.

Is it? Is homosexuality a sin? If people are born gay, why would God condemn people for being the way He made them? What kind of God would do that?

Let me answer those questions in reverse order. First, how do we know that people are born gay? This idea is a newcomer on the scene of human history, arising only within the past hundred years—maybe only fifty. We “know” it because people keep saying so, and people say so because, looking into the rear view mirror of their lives, many of those who eventually identify as gay recall always feeling different, “other than.” According to the spirit of the age, that means they were always gay. Which means sexually and romantically attracted to people of the same sex.

But think about a newborn baby. Is he or she sexually and romantically attracted to people of the same sex? No, of

course not. That is an emotional development issue that will arise years down the road. Consider a toddler: how does one find the gay kids in a church or daycare nursery? You don't. But even in toddlers, some temperament and personality differences have surfaced, the kinds of differences that can lead to a child feeling "other than."

Little boys who are emotionally sensitive, artistic and creative, can be uncomfortable around the rough-and-tumble boys who are far more physically aggressive, sporty and relationally insensitive. It doesn't mean they're gay, it means their design, their God-chosen kind of masculinity, is different. They're probably going to feel "other than," and later on someone will label that as gay. It's not.

Little girls who have athletic gifts and abilities, who don't care for pink or dresses or nail polish and are often natural leaders, can be uncomfortable around the girly-girls who are interested in very different things. It doesn't mean they're lesbian, it means their design, their God-chosen kind of femininity, is different. They're probably going to feel "other than," and later on someone will label that as lesbian. It's not.

People are not born gay, which is a constellation of beliefs and feelings about oneself and others that is the result of many interactions with many people over many years. Just like people are not born prejudiced. Or entitled. Or English speaking, for that matter. But all those things can become so entwined with a sense of self that it feels like that's who one is.

Recently, my husband was talking with a new friend who struggles with same-sex attraction. His friend said it was hard growing up in a slender "case" (body type) and so sensitive, and that's why he was gay. My husband pointed out that he, too, had the same body type and was emotionally sensitive, that that was their design. Ray talked to him about

the [gender spectrum](#) for different kinds of masculinity as God's creation, and his friend absolutely lit up with gratitude. He had never heard that the way God had made him didn't mean he was gay, it meant he was gifted, and he had never heard an "everstraight" like my husband acknowledge that boys and men can live on that end of the spectrum and not identify as gay. There is another way of explaining the feeling of "other than" that honors both the person and the God who made them in a way that has often not been appreciated or affirmed.

But let's turn to the first question: is homosexuality a sin?

It's important to define your terms. What do you mean by homosexuality? Our culture has clouded the biblical perspective of the issue. Do you mean being same-sex attracted? Or do you mean "stepping over the line," actually engaging in same-sex romantic and sexual relationships? What Phil Robertson did, which is part of the firestorm, is to shine a light on what the Bible says: all sex outside of marriage is sin, both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. Our sex-saturated culture finds that offensive and unacceptable. Sex is seen as a right and a basic need of life, when it is neither.

But the Bible never condemns same-sex attractions, which constitute temptation and not sin. People generally discover, not choose, that they are drawn to the same sex, and [there are very good reasons for this](#). As with all temptations, God says to stand against them and not give into them. It is foolishness to define oneself by our temptations and weaknesses! (Much better to define ourselves the way God sees us, as His beloved child who desperately needs Him.)

So define homosexuality. If you mean simply feeling "other than" and different, complicated by being drawn to members of the same sex, then homosexual attractions are temptation, not sin. If you mean acting on those attractions to engage in

emotionally dependent and/or sexual relationships, then according to the Bible's standards, yes that is sin. Note how God addressed Cain's struggle with feelings and temptations: "Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it." (Genesis 4:7) So it really comes down to feelings vs. behavior. The feelings are not necessarily sinful (although sin begins in the mind, where attractions can cross over the line into the sin of lust, regardless of the object of those attractions), but behavior always is. We need to keep homosexuality in the context that God does: pre-marital sex, adultery, same-gender sex, incest, and sex with animals: anything outside the marriage bed (defined as one man and one woman, Gen. 2:24) is sin.

Many people have a faulty concept of a distant, scowling god sitting on his throne looking for people having a good time so he can be mad at them, looking for an excuse to hurl thunderbolts at them for daring to enjoy themselves. The God of the Bible is not Zeus. Jesus corrected many aspects of our misunderstandings of His Father. He is a loving God who put guardrails on the treacherous mountain road of human sexuality. He doesn't condemn people who run off the safety of the road by crashing through the guardrails He put in place; He knows that the natural consequences of running off the cliff are their own discipline. God says, "Don't have sex outside of marriage" because He loves us and knows that sex outside of marriage brings pain to the soul (as well as dishonoring everyone involved, including Him).

God doesn't make anyone gay, but He is full of compassion for those who find themselves with same-sex attractions. He warns us against all kinds of sexual sin because He knows how destructive it is when we violate His intention and design for our bodies and souls. He wants so much better for us.

This blog post originally appeared at

Reincarnation: The Christmas Counterfeit

24% of American Christians believe in reincarnation, the idea from Eastern religions that there is a merry-go-round of birth/life/death/reb



irth, over and over again. This has spawned a fad of “past lives regression,” discovering aspects of previous incarnations. Wiki-how even offers instructions on “[How to Remember Your Past Lives](#).” There’s a book called *Past Lives of the Rich and Famous*. Supposedly, Whitney Houston’s strong attachment to the gospel came from a moment in a previous life where she saw Jesus hanging on the cross. Liz Taylor used to be a Benedictine abbess in medieval Switzerland. Michael Jackson was the son of a royal courtesan in 100 B.C. Burma. And Marilyn Monroe was captured by a band of gypsies in the 1600s.

Not so fast. The Bible swats down the possibility of reincarnation: “It is appointed for man to die once, and then comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). That means that there are no past lives (but lots of opportunity for self- or demonic deception).

With one notable exception.

Jesus truly did have a past life, a life with no beginning, before He was born as a human being.

Philippians 2 tells us that "He emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." I cannot begin to imagine what it was like to leave behind aspects of being God when He became one of us. Instead of enjoying omniscience (all-knowing), He limited Himself to only what He would learn experientially and by listening to the Holy Spirit. Instead of enjoying omnipresence (being all places at once), He limited Himself to one place at one time. Instead of enjoying omnipotence (all-powerful), He limited Himself to expressing the Father's will through dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus lived out, and showed us, what perfect, sinless Adam was like before the Fall.

Recently I've been meditating on the unthinkable sacrifice of leaving behind omniscience and becoming an embryo in Mary's womb. He experienced life as every other baby ever has, first through the muffled filter of His mother's body. Then the shock of emerging from the warm cozy darkness and drawing His first breath of air. For the first time in eternity, God breathed air! He learned what hunger was, and He learned what it was to be dependent on His mother to be fed.

He experienced life as a baby, learning language. He learned to recognize His mother's voice and His earthly father's voice. That prepared Him to learn to recognize His heavenly Father's voice. He grew into a toddler, and the very God who designed the human body to walk, had to learn how to walk Himself. He grew into a boy, and learned to read. The very God who had splintered the language of man at Babel had to learn Hebrew letters and words so He could read the Scriptures that He Himself had breathed through the minds and pens of men hundreds of years before. He learned spiritual truth with a human mind, reading the scrolls with human eyes. He learned

the history of mankind and of His own people through the Scriptures.

He submitted Himself to His earthly parents, who had the unimaginable task of teaching Jesus His true identity: "Child, you are the Son of God, born of a virgin birth. Your heavenly Father is Your actual Father. You are the promised Messiah, the long-awaited Anointed One. You are the Savior of the world."

When He hung out in the temple at age twelve, amazing the teachers by His teachable spirit and the questions He asked, He had clearly owned the truth about His true identity: "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:49)

By the time He was an adult, He had grown in understanding about His previous life in heaven: "And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed" (John 17:5).

Part of the glory of Christmas is remembering that Jesus truly did have a "past life," which He left behind for a time because He thought we were worth the sacrifice. And reincarnation—that false teaching of false religion—is the counterfeit to the miracle of Christmas: the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Christ by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord!

Late in time behold Him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/reincarnation-the-christmas-counterfeit/

on December 17, 2013

Sit and Brine a While

I brine a turkey for Thanksgiving. When the bird sits in a salty, savory water bath overnight, it absorbs the flavors of the brine and the chemical composition of the turkey is changed to make it juicier. Delicious, juicy turkey—what's not to love?

Except when you learn the hard way that all giant brining bags are not created equal, and your bag opens up in the refrigerator, spilling a gallon of brine all over the fridge and the kitchen floor. Which my rock-star husband cleaned up without complaint because he's just wonderful that way.

Our Thanksgiving turkey was still delicious because the remaining brine did its magic on the bottom half of the turkey, and then I turned it in the morning for a few more hours of brining before roasting it.

That day a godly, wise friend of mine snapped a picture of her Bible open, with 1 Thess. 5:16-18 highlighted (“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”), and posted it to her Facebook with the insightful comment, “I need to ‘brine’ in this truth. I need to soak in it, it needs to change me, make me more tender...”

Amen!

That is how we are “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:2)—by “brining” in the truth of God's word. Memorizing it, meditating on it, and being very practical in how we choose to develop a perspective that agrees with what

God has revealed.

Recently my husband entered the fray of hostility in the comment section of an online magazine article featuring his role in vetting the science textbooks that the Texas State Board of Education would be voting on adopting. It's quite the assault to be called ugly names and have one's intellect and character impugned by people who cannot understand how a scientist can entertain any possibility of the supernatural and still call himself a scientist.

I walked by his computer and found a number of index cards next to his laptop on which he had written several scriptures. Before he put his fingers to the keyboard to respond to commenters, he was reminding himself to focus on the unseen and eternal, not the visible and fleeting, and to choose to speak truth that honors God instead of giving into fear and anger or hurt.

Ray was brining in God's Word. It blessed me deeply.

Recently, our friends at Igniter Media created a marvelous video about preparing to be with family, which was shown in the worship services at our church. Our pastor said it was his favorite of all the videos they had produced, because it shows how spiritual transformation happens.

This is what brining looks like.

Bon Appetit!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/sit_and_brine_awhile on
Dec. 4, 2013

Killer Question

The best critical thinking “power tool” I’ve ever discovered is a set of [four “Killer Questions.”](#) They’ve been around since Socrates, but after my friend Dr. Jeff Myers of [Summit Ministries](#) introduced them to me a few years ago, they have totally changed the way I process everything I hear:

1. What do you mean by that?
2. Where do you get your information?
3. How do you know it’s true?
4. What if you’re wrong?

I use the #1 question the most. “What do you mean by that?” is a clarifying question that invites the other person to define their terms and make sure you’re both talking about the same thing. This is a helpful question to keep in mind even when reading the newspaper, a website, or people’s Facebook posts—especially political and religious statements—because our society seems to be getting less and less able to articulate what we really mean. Or think.

For example, if someone tells me, “I don’t believe in God,” it’s good to gently probe about the kind of God they claim they don’t believe in: “What do you mean by ‘God’?” Often what people reject is actually an untrue caricature of God, a harsh, condemning, unloving and unreasonable deity who just might remind them of all the things they don’t like about their earthly fathers! In that case, I can assure them that I don’t believe in that god either—and then I might get a chance to talk about the true God of the Bible who reveals Himself as an eternally loving Father, Son and Spirit who invites us into the divine life of light, love and goodness.

The question “What do you mean by that?” is powerful for

preventing misunderstandings. A friend of mine who was on the pastoral staff of a church had a number of conversations with a new attender. When the woman told him about how her life was falling apart, he shared the good news of Jesus with her, and invited her to put her trust in Him. She asked a number of questions about what it meant to become a Christian. Afterwards, she called the church to lodge a complaint that he had been inappropriate with her.

The church leadership immediately suspended him. He knew that something was very, very wrong with the situation but couldn't get traction with the complaint. It finally turned out that when the woman had asked what would happen if she refused to trust Christ, he regretfully told her that she would spend eternity separated from Him, which the Bible calls hell. Offended, she considered his answer inappropriate and called to complain. But no one had asked her, "What do you mean by 'inappropriate'?" The church leadership had assumed the worst instead of simply asking for clarification. If they'd asked, they would have discovered that my friend had merely shared the gospel.

Another friend of mine, at nineteen years old, told her pastor that she was pregnant. His first response was to fire her from working in the nursery, which she loved, because they wouldn't want visitors thinking the church condoned sexual sin and teenage pregnancy. He never asked a single question. If he had just asked, "Wow—what do you want to tell me about this?" she would have told him that she'd been acquaintance-raped. But because of her dysfunctional family patterns, she had been robbed of her voice to speak up against injustice. Over twelve years later, she's still suffering the emotional wounds of his judgmental punishment.

Recently, a high school nurse told me that one of her girl students said she was a lesbian. The nurse asked her own version of "What do you mean by that," and inquired how she'd come to that conclusion. The student said, "I didn't have a

boyfriend in sixth, seventh or eighth grade, so that makes me a lesbian.” My friend was able to speak truth to this confused young girl because of asking good questions.

Where might you find a good place to use this powerful Killer Question this week?

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/killer-question/ on October 8, 2013.

A Holy Limp

I got polio at eight months old. Every step of my life, I have walked with a limp. It was a source of great shame to me growing up because of people’s stares. And my limp was probably the biggest reason I hated polio and hated how I saw myself, as the “ugly crippled girl.”

One day, as I studied the scriptures, God gave me a divine “lightbulb moment.” As I read in Genesis 32 about Jacob wrestling all night with God, the same Lord who touched his hip, asked me, “Do you see the souvenir I gave Jacob from his night with Me?” Jacob walked the rest of his life with a limp. He had been touched by God and it changed the way he walked.

It was a holy limp.

In that moment, I saw that there was nothing inherently shameful about a limp if God gave one to His beloved Jacob.

Certainly, this doesn’t magically transform a limp into something beautiful and good—after all, it means something is wrong. But God can, and does, bring something beautiful and good out of the limps of our lives.

Over the past few years of walking with hurting people, I have come to see how God uses my limp to connect with those whose hearts are still scarred and limited by the wounds they've received. As I wrote to a dear friend who left behind decades of life as a gay activist when she trusted Christ, and who still has to submit her feelings to Jesus every day of her life:

"You know, it's entirely possible your attractions to women won't change and you will walk with an emotional limp the rest of your life. . . just as I will continue to walk with a physical limp the rest of my earthly life. But both of us can glorify God in our limping by honoring Him with our choices, as we look to Him to restore us to a perfect future that includes running and jumping and leaping and loving perfectly, on the other side.

"I know that may sound weird, 'glorifying God in our limping,' but I think He receives more glory through limping people who are dependent on Him, than healthy people who breeze through life independent of Him."

Connecting the dots between my physical limp and my friend's emotional limp encouraged her greatly. Just as I was deeply encouraged by the godly response of my pastor, [Todd Wagner](#) of Watermark Community Church in Dallas, to the news that he has cancer in his foot. He wrote to his church family:

"So grateful for the prayers so many of you have offered on my behalf. I covet them for both wisdom in dealing with sarcoma (the cancer affecting my body) but especially sin (the cancer constantly waging war with my soul). There is no greater kindness than your earnest prayer for me. . . . In the coming weeks I will be watching, monitoring, imaging, praying, continually consulting with caring docs, and trusting in a good and sovereign God Who is never asleep. Having to trust my perfect Father with one more thing is no burden—it is a blessing. Anything that reminds me of His goodness and my

futility is a gift. Thank you for praying with me... may my every decision honor my King and may my every step—whether with two feet or one, with cancer or without – find me running hard in His way. Pray for my health... but double down on the health of my walk with Him over my ability to walk physically. If He will allow me both I rejoice. ***If the days ahead allow for only one, I would gladly choose to limp in this life over anything that would compromise my running toward His presence in faithfulness.*** (Habakkuk 3:17-19)” (Emphasis mine)

Can you imagine how Todd’s last sentence made my heart soar?

But it doesn’t end there. Watermark’s worship pastor, [Jon Abel](#), “plays with a limp.” Several years ago, when mowing his lawn, his lawnmower blade sliced off his finger—his wedding ring finger, which he uses every day as a guitar player. The trauma of losing his finger, with the attendant threat of losing his livelihood, forced him to come face to face with the question of whether a good and loving God was in control. Jon’s godly response to this trial, which is documented in this short YouTube video, is one reason he is one of my favorite worship leaders of all time.

I recently learned from my sister—on Facebook, of all places!—that the doctors told my mother I would never walk. Mom decided they were wrong, and worked patiently with me every day, exercising my once-paralyzed leg in the bathtub as she taught me the ABCs and who knows what else.

I don’t know why my mother didn’t tell me this fact, but I do know this: *limping means I can walk!*

I am grateful for the gift of perspective. Whether it’s my polio-caused limp, or Todd’s possibility of limping from losing a foot, or Jon’s limited ability to play guitar from a once-severed finger, I just know that if God can be more glorified from our limps than from physical perfection, we’ll

take the holy limp every time.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/a-holy-limp/ on November 15, 2013

Recalibrating Our Phones, Our Minds

November 5, 2013

At 2:00 a.m. Sunday morning, most of us in the U.S. reverted back to standard time. Something almost magical happened to our smartphones, tablets, computers and TV cable boxes: the time automatically jumped back an hour.

When we travel across time zones, our smartphones automatically recalibrate to the correct time because they are informed by the cell phone system, which is always aware of what time it is in every location.

I recently landed in Germany, and when I turned my phone back on and watched the numbers flip from 2:10 a.m. to 9:10 a.m., it occurred to me that regular time in God's word has the same effect on our minds. If we approach God's word with a submissive, teachable spirit, it recalibrates our wrong thinking, bringing it into alignment with reality and truth.

One of my dear friends lived 25 years of her life as a gay activist before she met Christ. She told God that she was going to spend a year gathering the information she needed to prove to Him and everyone else that He had made her gay and there was nothing wrong with it. As she started reading His

word daily, she found herself slowly changing her view of gender, sexuality, and her identity. It took less than a year for her to come to the point of saying, "OK, I was wrong. I choose to reconcile my faith and my sexuality by submitting to God's intention and design."

Another dear friend recently asked me about gambling, since she had allowed nearby casinos to consume large chunks of her income. It had never occurred to her to investigate what God says about it, and when I offered her a link to an [article](#) on that topic on the Probe.org website, she was astonished. She now sees all money as God's money, of which He entrusts some into her hands to steward wisely.

At Probe Ministries, we regularly receive emails from people who fear they have committed [the unforgivable sin](#), begging for reassurance. It is a joy to provide biblical wisdom and urge them to let go of their fears. (Bottom line: people who have hardened their hearts to the point of taking themselves beyond receiving forgiveness, don't ask questions about it!)

I know a number of people whose lives are being wrecked by unremitting anger toward others. Once they submit to God's commands to [forgive](#) those who have sinned against us, they find they don't have to be angry anymore.

I will never forget how the truth of God's word crashed into my college-age wrongheaded thinking about sexuality when I trusted Christ as a sophomore. I had *so much* wrong! A wise friend handed me a cassette tape by Josh McDowell called ["Maximum Sex"](#) that changed everything for me, because it was full of God's truth.

Romans 12:2 urges us to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds." Marinating ourselves in God's word is the key to that transformation. You just might find the numbers flipping in your own mind!

This blog post originally appeared at

The 3 As: Attention, Affection and Affirmation

Wise people have observed that we all have legitimate, God-given needs for “the 3 As”: attention, affection and affirmation. God intends for children to receive them from their parents first, laying a foundation of a healthy sense of self, then from their peers.

The Attention need is met by being there, listening, watching, engaging and interacting. Ever hear the famous line, “Daddy, watch me!”? One wise father told another whose daughter kept clamoring for him to look at her as she played in the back yard, “If you don’t watch her now, soon she’ll look for another guy to give her the attention she wants from YOU.”

The Affection need is met both physically and verbally. We all need hugs and safe touch. And most boys need the rough-housing kind of physical affection from their dads that says, “You belong in the world of males.” We need to hear the verbal affection of “I love you,” terms of endearment, and other forms of communicating love.

The Affirmation need is met by validating people’s feelings, efforts, skills and gifting. Noticing and commenting when they do things right—or even try. It communicates, “I am for you” and “I believe in you.”

Jesus received the Three As at His baptism. His Father and the Spirit showed up [attention], and the Father pronounced, “This

is My beloved Son [affection] in whom I am well pleased [affirmation]" (Matthew 3:17).

Much unhealthy, dysfunctional behavior is driven by trying to get these three needs met, usually without realizing what is driving us. Unfortunately, it's getting harder than ever to get these needs met because of two things proliferating in our culture.

First, families seem to be growing more fractured and more dysfunctional than ever before. Fatherlessness is at epidemic stage. The National Fatherhood Initiative cites the U.S. Census Bureau's statistic that one out of three American children live in homes without their biological father.[{1}](#) Parents in the home are often stressed, overwhelmed, and so self-focused, whether on selfishness or mere survival, that many children feel like they are on their own. Plus, the people God intends to fill their children's emotional tanks with attention, affection and affirmation—parents—are often scrambling to try to get their OWN tanks filled. So there is a sense of disconnection at home.

Second, smartphone technology has moved into the hands—and heads—of the majority of Americans. Over half of adults own smartphones, and a recent report from the Pew Research Center revealed that 78% of young people ages 12-17 now have cell phones, and nearly half of those are smartphones.[{2}](#) That means continual connection to the internet. That means billions of text messages daily, which have virtually replaced phone calls for many people, especially youth.[{3}](#) The camera on most people's cell phone means that many people view life's experiences, from wedding processions to grade school concerts to street fights, through a 3-to-4-inch screen held away from the body.

In short, we're doing life through a screen.

And that screen is an additional layer of disconnection

between people. Technology has created a superficial degree of counterfeit connection, and relationships are suffering. People think they're connected to other people through their phones, but in reality they're connected to their phones and a counterfeit kind of "life."

God knew what He was doing when He stressed the importance of staying in connection, continually engaging with each other: I count 41 "one anothers" in scripture.^{4} He knew what He was doing when He instructed believers to make sure and keep meeting together to encourage one another (Heb. 10:24).

God put needs for the Three A's inside us, and He intends for us to meet them through connection to other people. Please, hug somebody. Tell them they're important and valuable. Be there for them.

And you might want to put down your phone.

Notes

1.

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2.

www.pewinternet.org/Media-Mentions/2013/More-youth-use-smartphones-as-route-to-Web.aspx Accessed 09/10/13.

3.

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This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/the_3_as_attention_affecting_on_and_affirmation on Sept. 10, 2013.

“Are Aliens Really Evil Angels? Why Did They Take the Book of Enoch Out of the Bible?”

I was just wondering if so-called aliens are evil angels from the old times, or where do they fit into God's plans. I already know they have been here since the beginning of time and they are behind this new world order supporting the devil. I figured out that myself and the people are working for them and cover up lots of stuff in exchange for weapons and greed but in the end they will be the fools. Just wondering if I'm right and why did they take the Book of Enoch out of the Bible—what else are they hiding? They're trying to fool people into thinking they're God, but they hold a more insidious agenda. People need to know the truth! Am I right or wrong?

Thanks for writing to Probe.

1. We suggest that aliens actually do not exist, but demons (evil angels) successfully role-play aliens to deceive people. Satan has been a deceiver since he first approached Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the evil angels who rebelled along with him have been deceiving people ever since.

We have a couple of articles on aliens you may find helpful to shape your understanding on aliens from a biblical perspective:

[UFOs and Alien Beings: A Christian Response](#)

[Are We Alone in the Universe? A Biblical View of Aliens](#)

2. The Book of Enoch was never IN the Bible, so it was never taken out. One of our theologians answered a question about that book here: ["What Can We Know About Enoch?"](#)

Since you are curious about what is true (good for you!), let me encourage you to read this short answer to the question, ["How did the Church Recognize Which Books Were Inspired by God?"](#).

I hope you find this helpful.

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Think You Can Get Away With It?

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Several years ago I began to notice how many people buy into a disturbing fantasy.

First, I watched a dear friend jump into a sinful and dangerous relationship. She tried to numb her guilt through drugs, alcohol and self-injury, in escalating amounts of each. She ended up losing her job and her freedom—first in a hospital, then a psych ward, and then months in a rehab facility that consumed every penny of her considerable savings. Later she confessed to me, "I thought I could get away with it."

This summer I served over a month on a jury for a drug

conspiracy trial. (I blogged about that [here](#).) After we found all four defendants guilty, the judge came to talk to us and answer our questions. We learned that a large number of co-conspirators indicted along with these defendants had all pled guilty. The judge confirmed to us that these four had “rolled the dice,” hoping to persuade a jury that they were unjustly charged. Why didn’t these men plead guilty? They thought they could get away with it.

Thinking we can get away with it happens a lot, from speeding to not declaring everything on our tax returns to the U.S. government monitoring its citizens’ phone conversations.

And this fantasy—this LIE—goes back a long way. All the way to the Garden of Eden, when the serpent scoffed at God’s rule about not eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “Surely you will not die!” (Gen. 3:4) In today’s language: “C’mon, you can get away with it!”

But, being sneaky, the enemy of our souls (and his minions who are the spirits who actually tempt us with lies) uses first person to make us think his thoughts are actually our own, so we are not aware of the source of our temptation: “I can get away with this.”

God has something to say about this lie. One of my favorite Bible verses, particularly when my sons were small, is Numbers 32:23: “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

There were three four-year-olds on our street including my son. One of them, a heartbreakingly sexually precocious little girl, said to Kevin one day, “Let’s go behind this bush next to my house, take off our clothes and kiss.” When he said no, she insisted, “It’s okay. Jordan (the other four-year-old) and I did it yesterday, and no one will know.” Kevin said, “But God will see us, and He’ll tell my mommy!”

Back to God’s opinion. Jesus said in Mark 4:22, “Everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and

every secret will be brought to light.” In Luke 12:3, He said, “Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops.”

Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

No, we *can't* get away with it. That's a truth that can keep us out of a lot of trouble!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/think-you-can-get-away-with-it/