“If God is Immaterial, What is He Made Of?”

I got into a debate with an atheist on the existence of God. I used the Cosmological Argument, and then demonstrated how God is timeless, space-less, and immaterial. He countered my conclusion with this question. “If God does not exist inside of time, space, and is not made of material, then in what way does God exist, and what is He made of, nothing?” I don’t know how to answer His objection, so I would appreciate it if you could help me out here. I hope that you will e-mail me your advice and direct me to some resources.

Probably the closest relevant biblical description we get of God comes from Jesus in John 4:24, “God is spirit.” But God is a personal (or better, tri-personal spirit) characterized by intelligence, will, etc. In this respect, many Christian philosophers prefer to think of God as an unembodied Mind.

In either case, however, the important thing to realize is that God, as you already know, is not a material or physical being. God is spirit; that is, God is an immaterial, or spiritual being. We could also describe God as a spiritual substance. Obviously, this is a long way from saying that God is “nothing”! A spiritual being is not a physical being, but it is every bit as real as a physical being. Indeed, in the case of God, He is actually more “real” than the physical universe (which only exists because He created it and continually sustains it in being).

For some excellent resources on the cosmological argument, please see William Lane Craig’s site here: www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=scholarly_articles_existence_of_God.

Craig is a top-notch Christian philosopher and is a world-

recognized expert on the cosmological argument (as well as other issues).

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Do Non-Christians Have Spiritual Gifts?"

I love your ministry and I find myself going to your website a lot as I prepare for Middle School Sunday School lessons. I am going to be teaching on spiritual gifts to teenagers. My 14-year-old son asked a very astute question. He says he knows some very "gifted" non-Christians at school and wondered if the spiritual gifts are only for those who have been born again or if our purpose in life is intertwined with our spiritual gifts. For example, a non-Christian singer who has been given an excellent voice but is not using it for God.

Thank you for the blessing of encouragement! I'm so glad our website is valuable to you!!

I think one's theology determines the answer. I know lots of people say that spiritual gifts are only given to the born-again believer as if God has nothing to do with people before they trust Christ.

I don't think it works that way though; I think that since God reveals Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who created us for the purpose of bringing us into the circle of Their love and delight and pleasure and fellowship, that a case can be

made that God is everyone's loving Father ("one God and Father of all," Ephesians 4:6)—but unbelievers don't recognize it. That doesn't make Him NOT our Father; it doesn't make Jesus NOT "the Savior of all men, but especially of believers" (1 Timothy 4:10); it doesn't make the Holy Spirit NOT the giver of good gifts. So I think God lavishes all kinds of gifts on all people, but they are especially expressed more fully in those who are consciously connected to Him. I keep hearing stories from Christians who saw evidence of their spiritual gifts even before they were Christians; after they came into the Kingdom, they knew what they were.

Now there are also natural talents, which are different from spiritual gifts. Singing, for example, is a talent, not a spiritual gift. For one thing, it's not on the lists in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. Secondly, you can lose a singing voice, but Romans 11:29 says that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

Have you seen the spiritual gifts evaluation my husband Ray and I put together?
www.probe.org/how-do-you-determine-your-spiritual-gift/

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"I'm 15 and I'm Afraid I'm Gay"

Dear Mrs. Bohlin,

I really need your help, I am 15 and frightened of being homosexual. About one and a half years ago I was at an all-girls summer camp where a girl told me she had decided to become bisexual. I didn't know why but this upset me a lot. I had two weeks of camp left, and I was terrified that everyone was gay, finally I became scared that I was gay. I hadn't really thought that I was attracted to girls before, but I used to be a tomboy and envied all the "girly-girls". Ever since I went to camp and that happened my fear has gotten worse and worse, I haven't told anyone for fear of being told that I was. I heard about the "ex-gays" and read a few articles of yours. I don't know what to do. Please help me I'm very scared, all I want is to live again normally. I've been raised Christian and my parents are divorced. I'm sorry to bother you, but I need your advice. God bless you.

_____, I'm so glad you wrote to me!

When God made you a female, He made you more emotional than analytical, more intuitive to other people than most males, and very relational. This means you are open to being influenced by other people, especially when you were only 13. For someone to tell you she had decided to label herself as bisexual at the very beginning of puberty, when you both have a LOT of growing, maturing, and learning about yourselves ahead of you, no wonder you were upset! That's way too much pressure to process information and label oneself at the beginning of adolescence. Which is a time of intense confusion to begin with, totally apart from the whole sexuality issue!

It makes sense you'd be scared that you were gay, for the same reason that when people take health or medical classes that cover different kinds of illnesses, it's typical to think they're experiencing the symptoms of a bunch of them. It's typical to be susceptible to ideas, especially at a time in your life where you "try on" all kinds of identities and values and beliefs to see if they fit.

If you were a tomboy, it's because God loves tomboys and that's why He makes you that way! It's our culture that incorrectly limits femininity to only the "girly-girl" end of the femininity spectrum. Femininity also looks like jeans and t-shirts, tree-climbing, sports- and outdoor-loving girls. It makes sense for you to envy girly-girls because they are a different kind of girl than you are, but they aren't a BETTER kind of girl than you are! It makes sense because of the false message that tomboys are inferior to girly-girls. Nope! If God won't agree with it, it's not true!

Now for another part of the equation: what we know from talking to literally thousands of gay-identifying folks over the years is that envy drives a lot (if not most) of same-sex attraction. Both guys and girls are drawn to whatever they feel they lack. Instead of saying, "This means I'm gay," it would be far wiser, and true to God's design, to say instead, "Hmmm. I see where I need to work on myself so I become the kind of person I admire, or to develop the kind of attributes I admire."

I was teaching at Probe's Mind Games conference for high school juniors and seniors when I said that many people who are afraid they're gay, or who think they might be, need to give themselves grace to finish growing up. Being attracted to same-sex peers is part of normal adolescent development, complete with intense crushes, but all we hear in the culture is, "If you like other girls (or boys), it means you're gay." No, it doesn't. It means you haven't finished growing up yet. One of the students came back the following year as an alumnus and come up to me in private to tell me, "When you said this last year, it was the first time I'd ever heard it. I was able to relax and just give myself permission to finish growing up. And you know what? In the past year, I have! I find myself attracted to girls now, instead of being so stuck on my attractions to other guys. Thanks for speaking truth to us."

Let me encourage you to bundle up your fears and your feelings

and hand them to Jesus, who loves you more than you can possibly imagine, and He will help you sort through them. In fact, the more you concentrate on your relationship with Him, the better every other part of your life will become. In fact, I respectfully urge you to pray every day, "Jesus, show me how You love me," and then pay attention to the little intimate ways in which He says, "I sure do love you, _____!" When you know God loves you, that gives you a confidence in yourself that nothing else can even come close to. And it helps you sort out the rest of life, and put people in their proper perspective.

Relax and give yourself time to finish growing up without the unnecessary complication of being paralyzed by fear that you're gay. God doesn't make anyone gay; He DOES make people to be relational, and the more we do life in community, with friends who will love and accept just as we are, we can grow into emotionally healthy adults.

So. . . how does this hit your heart? Does it make sense?

Warmly,
Sue

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"Why Doesn't God Answer Prayers to Take Away Gay Feelings?"

I was reading your article about Gay Teen Suicides and Bullying, about how some people pray and pray for God to take

away their gay feelings and there is a reason that he doesn't that they don't know about. I'd like to know what that reason is. My best friend committed suicide when we were both 18 because he couldn't accept that he was gay. I learned to accept it and now I'm 36 and quite happy. Luckily, I have found a church that accepts me for who I am and I know that God loves me as does Jesus but I am always curious to hear the ideas and opinions of Christians on what the supposed cure for this condition might be.

First of all, _____, I am so very sorry to hear of your best friend's suicide. I'm sure that has left a wound on your soul that troubles you to this day.

I want to VERY respectfully suggest that "accepting one's gayness" is not the best solution to the grief and sadness that comes bound up in realizing one has same-sex desires. That would be like seeing the "check engine" light on your car and deciding to learn to live with it. I know the culture's pro-gay message is that there's nothing wrong with homosexuality so just accept it, but that's not God's position. Which leads me to answer your question: why would God not take away someone's gay feelings?

First, because everyone has an area of weakness that makes it easier for us to recognize our need for God and depend on Him more fully, which is His design and intent for us. Some people have physical trials; others struggle with a weakness for alcohol, drugs, or other forms of self-medication. Some struggle with same-sex attractions. Whatever our area of weakness, this is the very avenue by which God can reveal Himself to be strong, to be *enough* for us. And it is the best way for God to develop us into the people He made us to be, permeated with Christ like character and maturity.

So often, people pray and ask God to relieve their symptoms and make their lives easier (and this, of course, goes way beyond asking God to take away gay feelings. It's something we

all do). Being broken and fallen people, when we pray for that, what we're really asking is, "I want You to make me comfortable so I won't need You." But Jesus doesn't answer this prayer because there is something so much bigger than our comfort at stake; He wants our hearts. He wants our dependent trust. He wants us to repent of the sin and separation from Himself that results in our brokenness. He wants to heal the real brokenness, not just the *symptom* of the brokenness. True brokenness is our broken relationship with God.

The struggle (against same-sex feelings) itself is not an evil. The struggle can be a holy instrument in God's hand if we let it. Please read through to the end of my answer for more on that.

Secondly, it's helpful to understand the bigger picture of why someone has attractions for someone of the same sex in the first place. No one is born gay; we are such complex creatures, being made in the image of God, that feelings, attitudes and beliefs are shaped over time by our life experiences, and filtered through our temperaments. This is complicated by the fact that we live in a fallen world that has been poisoned by sin, which is separation and independence from God. Fallen people love each other in fallen ways, or not at all.

The three-Personed God (One God in Father, Son and Holy Spirit), who have enjoyed love and fellowship with each other for all eternity, created us in Their image (Gen. 1:26). This means we are created for relationship: to connect and bond with others in ways that would make us feel loved and secure. Living in a fallen world means that sometimes, we don't connect and bond with the people God intends to love and accept us, and there are serious repercussions from that.

After listening to people's stories in literally thousands of intake interviews, my friend Ricky Chelette of Living Hope Ministries has identified several common denominators that

provide perspective to same-sex desires:

• Little boys are born at some point on a gender spectrum that ranges from the rough-and-tumble athletic boy to the emotionally sensitive, artistic and/or musical, aesthetically gifted boy. Little girls are born at some point on a feminine gender spectrum that ranges from the girly-girl to the tomboy jockette. Our spot on the gender spectrum is God's choice for His glory and our benefit. Most male same-sex strugglers are on the sensitive end of the spectrum.

• God's intention is for babies to bond first with Mom, then with Dad, then with same-sex peers, then with opposite-sex peers. Learning to exercise our "attachment muscles" is an essential part of becoming emotionally healthy. Most Moms don't have any trouble bonding with their babies. (But when something disrupts the process, it seriously messes people up.)

• When emotionally sensitive little boys are born into a family with a rough-and-tumble, emotionally insensitive Dad, the little boy can find himself more comfortable identifying with Mom and her emotionally sensitive femininity than with his Dad. It's as if Dad speaks Spanish and the little sensitive boy speaks Chinese. They may *want* to communicate with each other, but they don't speak the other's language. Unless the "Spanish-speaking" Dad purposes to learn Chinese to relate to his son on his level, there can be a disconnect between the two.

• There's a point in a toddler boy's development where he should realize, "I'm a boy. I'm more like Dad than like Mom." When Dad involves his son in his world and communicates love and acceptance to his son, he comes to believe that he belongs in the world of males with his Dad.

• The wise author Toni Morrison says that a child knows he's loved when he walks in a room and his parent's eyes light up.

All children are created with the need to receive “the three A’s”: attention, affection and affirmation. When a Dad pays loving attention to his son, when his eyes light up when his son enters the room, when Dad affirms his son for who he is and not just what he can do, a boy will probably feel secure in his Dad’s love and acceptance. But if there is a disconnect between a Dad and his son, if the Dad thinks it’s too much trouble to try and connect with a son in ways that the son can receive, there will be a father-shaped hole in the little boy’s heart. A rough-and-tumble boy can try and fill that hole with all kinds of activities and risky behaviors to earn his Dad’s attention, affection and affirmation. An emotionally sensitive boy can easily detach himself from Dad and connect himself more strongly with Mom, or detach from everyone. Both kinds of boys are at risk for trying to get a legitimate need met in unwise, illegitimate ways.

• Most little girls don’t have trouble connecting with Mom, but if Mom is not warm and nurturing (or if something happens to disrupt the relationship), they can live with a mother-shaped hole in their heart. A Dad’s role is to support and cherish his daughter’s femininity, regardless of what form it takes. If he remains distant and unsupportive, or if he treats her like a son, she can have serious questions about her feminine identity: “If Dad doesn’t think I’m okay, then I’m not.” Or, if there *is* no Dad, she can be wracked with doubts about herself; a Dad’s attention, affection and affirmation is huge in a little girl’s life as well. Girls can have a father-shaped hole in their heart as well.

• From four to ten years old, the next stage of development is for boys to learn to attach to other boys and girls to attach to other girls. Both sexes usually have intense “BFF” (best friends forever) friendships that are not romantic or erotic, they are just emotionally intense as they learn to exercise their friendship attachment muscles. If a boy doesn’t learn to make these connections with buddies, he will continue to walk

around with a “buddy hole” in his heart. If a girl doesn’t learn to make these connections with other girls, she will walk around with a “girlfriend hole” in her heart. And since nature abhors a vacuum, and because we are all fallen creatures, we will try to stuff all kinds of things into the holes in our hearts.

• At puberty, sex hormones flood the body and hit the mother hole or father hole or friend hole in the heart. That aching desire to connect and attach, the painful longing to be nurtured and to bask in attention, affection and affirmation (“the three A’s”), then gets sexualized. If the adolescent boy or girl fantasizes about the object of their affections accompanied by masturbation and orgasm, brain chemicals get released that act like emotional super-glue. Physical (synaptic) connections are made between the object of affection and sexual pleasure, and then strengthened with repetition. When someone buys into the lie that “if I feel it, it must be true,” the end result can be a homosexual identity.

• (This last point is not limited to same-sex strugglers by any means.) When people experience the trauma of abuse or neglect, when they don’t get their God-given emotional needs met, they stop growing emotionally. They shut down inside. Their bodies keep growing but inside, they are still the emotional age of the point when they stopped growing. Although this sounds like an insult, it’s actually a simple descriptor: many people are emotionally four to ten years old. (Ever see road rage?) This is why wounded people tend to live lives driven by drama, self-centeredness, a lack of self-discipline, and emotional dependency (which is relational idolatry).

Why doesn’t God take away homosexual feelings? Because they are not a separate part of the person like a nasal polyp or an infected appendix that can be cut out to restore health. Feelings are a part of us. They are the *product* of beliefs, actions, and the way one sees life and reality. Feelings are like the caboose on a train; they trail along at the end,

pulled by the parts that do the work.

God will not "zap" us because to do so would be to eradicate who we are. He will not remove feelings because feelings are part of the *imago Dei,* the image of God. He made us, He loves us just as we are, and He wants to work with us to transform our thinking and our understanding of who He is, who we are, how life works, and what is true. Romans 12:2 says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." When we change the way we think and the way we do life, our feelings will eventually change. (Not necessarily 180 degrees, but some degree of transformation is part of the power of the Gospel!)

Homosexual feelings come from legitimate, unmet longings for connection, for the "three A's." God wants us to be connected to other people; He created us to function best in community. He wants us to experience His love, and the love of other people, in the context of relationship. God wants us in HIS community of believers, and the church is a second chance to be in a different family. He wants to meet our needs for connection and relationship through healthy God-honoring friendships. Many people testify that their same-sex longings decreased as their security as a man or as a woman grew because of belonging to the world of men or the world of women in God's family. As they took their place in the Body of Christ with their new (church) family and friends, the longings and desires shifted to age- and gender-appropriate feelings. They finished growing up.

But even in those who did not experience a shift in orientation, they still report having a home with God's people, with relationships that help fill the hole in their hearts.

Let me suggest a related but less emotionally charged illustration. In his excellent book *Changes That Heal,* Dr. Henry Cloud writes,

> *It is not unloving for God to say no, even to our healing. He knows that sometimes we need to work out our healing instead of his doing it for us. For example, if I am depressed because I don't bond with others, for God to "heal" my depression would prohibit me from learning how to bond and becoming loved. He may then say no to my prayer for healing from depression for my benefit. We like Job, must trust God's no and his timing. It does not mean that he doesn't love us. It may mean that he wants something better for us.*

I believe that God says "no" to zapping away homosexual feelings because He has something better. He is passionate about growing us up to maturity (Eph. 4:13-15). There is no shortcut to maturity; it means struggling through to connect, attach and bond with healthy people until we finish growing up.

Some years ago, someone sent this email about the value of struggling:

> *A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole.*
>
> *Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther.*
>
> *Then the man decided to help the butterfly, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings.*
>
> *The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.*
>
> *Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of his life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled*

wings.

It was never able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening, were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been, and we could never fly.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"I Can't Recommend Probe Because of Your View of Creation"

Dear brother,

I am a Pastor and also teach Bible at _____ School. I have used some of your materials in my Church and ministry. I have also made Probe.org a resource for my Senior Bible Class. I must confess that I was greatly disappointed recently to see your view related to creation. While I admire your view that

six literal days of creation make the most sense I do not at all understand how you allow "overwhelming" scientific evidence to move you from that sensible position. Seems to me that one could make the same argument of the miracles or even the resurrection to be contrary to "overwhelming" scientific evidence. It would also seem from a scientific point of view the evidence was at one time overwhelming that the earth was flat. While I do not think it is your intention to place science above the Bible this is certainly what is happening among many of our youth today. I am sure in the long run it makes little difference but I can no longer recommend your ministry to my students or my church. Rather than be a "fence sitter" to use your description I would urge you to stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints in the inspired Word rather than the ever changing observations of science.

Pastor,

I regret your decision to deprive your students of our material because of one cautious position on an issue of secondary importance. However, I understand your position. But your response has raised issues and questions I feel I must respond to.

> *While I admire your view that six literal days of creation make the most sense I do not at all understand how you allow "overwhelming" scientific evidence to move you from that sensible position.*

This evidence is something that requires a simple and plain reading of facts that I and the other young earth creationists I have asked, have no answer for.

> *Seems to me that one could make the same argument of the miracles or even the resurrection to be contrary to "overwhelming" scientific evidence.*

Not at all. There is no pertinent scientific evidence to contradict miracles in Scripture. But there is present and currently observable evidence to lead anyone to question the young earth view of a thousands of years old earth and universe.

> *It would also seem from a scientific point of view the evidence was at one time overwhelming that the earth was flat.*

A spherical earth was recognized from the early Greeks onward. You are victim here of the naturalists' contrived view of the flat earth. The Bible never taught it and even early science never did.

> *While I do not think it is your intention to place science above the Bible this is certainly what is happening among many of our youth today.*

That is certainly not my intent and I fully recognize the strong tendency that you mention. My contention is that it is not absolutely clear that Scripture teaches a young earth.

> *I am sure in the long run it makes little difference but I can no longer recommend your ministry to my students or my church.*

I truly do not understand this position. But I have run across it frequently among my young earth friends. I find it sad and counterproductive.

> *Rather than be a "fence sitter" to use your description I would urge you to stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints in the inspired Word rather than the ever changing observations of science.*

Where in Scripture does it say the earth and universe are only

thousands of years old? There are many uncertainties here both scripturally and scientifically, I for one, do not consider myself so informed to conclude which position is correct. There is a resolution, I just don't know what that is. At least I am not refusing to consider all the evidence at hand. The young earth model now admits that all the supposed radioactive decay necessary to indicate billions of years actually occurred. But since the earth CANNOT be that old the decay must have been accelerated a million times or more. This means incredible heat and radiation that would have annihilated all life on earth, even the life on the ark. But that couldn't have happened so they appeal to miracle and heat release nowhere indicated in Scripture. That is special pleading which I find disappointing.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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"Is Laminin All That Louie Giglio Says It Is?"

There are some crazy-popular YouTube videos featuring Louie Giglio about a cross-shaped molecule called Laminin that holds us together. What's your take on it?

As a biologist myself I was intrigued when I heard about it and watched one of his YouTube videos. He really had to pump the crowd to get the reaction he wanted when he put it on screen. He almost always uses the crafted diagram, not an actual photograph, because the diagram shows the cross far

better. Seemed a little forced to me.

Some observations:

1. The cross is not Jesus, so we are not held together by a symbol of Jesus. The cross is just the symbol of crucifixion, maybe.
2. Any adhesion molecule is going to need a way to interlock with another and this shape works well.
3. As mentioned above, when you see an electron micrograph (tiny tiny photo) the cross shape is not so clear. Textbooks will naturally lay it out differently.
4. Sorry, no goose bumps for me.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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"Can You Have Multiple Besetting Sins and Still Be a Christian?"

I read the article that you wrote in response to a gentleman who was almost 70, had prostate cancer and stated that a besetting sin he had caused him to doubt his salvation for years. I related to that somewhat, as I am 68 and also have bouts with doubting my salvation. I always wonder if I have repented as I should and have studied about repentance extensively.

My problem is, I think I have more than one besetting sin. I

never can understand whether or not a person can have more than one besetting sin and still be a genuine Christian. My major sin is my weight, having struggled with that for years. But I also struggle, though maybe not as bad, with a temper, easily offended, critical and judgmental thoughts of others, am lazy a lot of the time, sometimes watch TV that I shouldn't, and I have negative thoughts of God, and probably others as well. So you see, I am at a loss as to what is going on with me.

I would so much appreciate it if you could help me understand rather or not a true Christian (an individual Christian, not a general group) can have struggles with all kinds of sins, not just one and still truly be a Christian. This is what has haunted me for years, I even gave up the Christian life and went back into the world, I am ashamed to say, but have been back in the church now for 30 years.

I am so sorry for the way your fears have beaten you up and stolen your joy! All Christians struggle against our flesh, and we all have a number of sin patterns. That's just the way the brokenness of sin plays out in our lives. It's not that you have more sin patterns than other Christians—it's that you are more aware of your own than of mine, or your pastor's, or anyone else's. Everyone has multiple sin issues. Those that don't think they do, are engaging in the sins of self-deception and pride.

Sin causes such blindness and such brokenness, it's pretty much amazing that we're able to do much that IS right. That's the power of God in our lives.

I love this passage from James Bryan Smith's book *Embracing the Love of God*, in the chapter "Forgiving Ourselves":

> *[We need to learn] to see ourselves as we truly are. We need to develop a proper identity if we are to forgive ourselves. In today's world, we are prone to viewing ourselves primarily*

as righteous people who are capable of doing sinful things, as opposed to being sinful people who are capable of doing righteous things. The difference in perspective is monumental.

If I see myself as a righteous person, I expect very little failure. Doing good is what comes naturally to a good person. God, too, I reason, must expect a lot of success from me. Failure, sin, and error occur only when I lose focus, only when I am lazy. If I work hard enough, I can live flawlessly. God is not particularly pleased when I do something good, some act of kindness or courage, because that is what he expected in the first place.

But if I see myself as a weak and broken person, I am not shocked by failure. It does not throw me out of kilter. I certainly do not hope for it, expect it, or easily excuse it, but I am not startled by it. Failure, sin and error do not happen because I get lazy; they are a part of being a fallen person in a fallen world. God is not shocked by my sin; he knows that I am dust (Ps. 103:14). When I do something courageous, or self-sacrificing, God is pleased. Given all that is against me, a kind act is a thing of awe in God's eyes.

God expects more failure from us than we do from ourselves because God knows who we are. We are not the righteous person who occasionally sins, we are the sinful person who occasionally—by God's grace—gets it right. When we start from this perspective we are released from the bondage of perfectionism and are able to forgive ourselves once and for all. We are to take our cue from him. We may be disappointed with ourselves, but God is not. We may feel like condemning ourselves, but God does not.

Let me encourage you to accept yourself as the flawed but beloved person you are, simply because GOD accepts you fully and completely as the flawed but beloved person you are! He loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to let us stay there. That's what sanctification does: it makes messy, broken people over into the image of Jesus. That's the power of Jesus' work on earth . . . that's the power of His love.

Hope you find this helpful in making the decision to accept the grace of God and give it to yourself.

Sue Bohlin

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"What's the Difference Between God's Will and Man's Will in Salvation?"

What is the difference between God's will and man's will in salvation? When someone chooses to believe in the Lord, do they believe by their own will or by God's will? The Bible says, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight…" (Ephesians 1:4).

I think that (in a sense) both wills are involved when someone trusts Christ for salvation. God's will is primary and the human will is secondary. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and He provides sufficient grace for each person to be saved. Hence, when someone trusts Christ for salvation, they are not doing this on their own initiative or in their

own will-power. Rather, they simply quit resisting God's grace and allow Him to save them. Those who persist in resisting God's grace will ultimately perish.

Thus, as one Christian theologian has observed, the difference between believers and unbelievers is NOT to be found in the believers; it is to be found in the unbelievers. The believer is one who simply allows God to save him (which is God's will and desire); the unbeliever is one who continues to resist God's grace.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Why Does God Create People Born Blind, Deaf, Etc.?"

Why does God create people who are born blind, deaf etc.? Why don't they get a chance to live life the way others would?

The great thing about your question is that Jesus Himself answered it! This account is found in John 9:1-3:

> As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

God's got a plan for people born with a disability. In their weakness, He can display His strength, His goodness, and His

grace. This passage was life-changing for Nick Vujicic, a young man born without arms or legs. After a time of despair-filled depression, he heard this passage and it was a major "light bulb moment" for him. It changed everything. Nick has grasped that the reason he was born without limbs was so that God could be glorified in him in a special way. Today, he is a life-changer in the lives of millions of people worldwide. Check out his website "Life Without Limbs" at www.lifewithoutlimbs.org Here's a YouTube video of Nick: www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8ZuKF3dxCY

Actually, this is not an abstract concept for me; because I was crippled by polio as an infant, I've lived my life as if I were born with a disability. It's not a matter of "their" weakness, but "our" weakness.

I respectfully suggest that the reason it's easy to put an inordinate amount of stress on the idea of living a "normal" life free of physical limitations is the culture's emphasis on the temporal, physical dimension of life. Consider 2 Cor 4:17-18:

> "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

When we ONLY look at "the seen," the temporal, we can forget that the lasting, unseen realities outweigh them. I can promise you that since God has shown me that the limits of my physical life are only "momentary, light affliction" that are producing in me "an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison," it allows me to focus on the things that really matter—things like letting God shine His light through me. He has shown me that He has been using my disability to scoop out my soul and create a bigger place for Him to fill; that He balances my physically diminished capacity with a larger

spiritual capacity—and I'll take that trade any day!

Now, I do realize that not everyone born blind, dear, lame etc., turns in faith to Christ. Some people live their whole lives consumed by bitterness and anger at God for allowing them to be born that way. That is so sad, that they miss the opportunity to experience God redeeming their painful experience and turning it into something good and beautiful (in the unseen, eternal sphere).

I have written an article on our website called "The Value of Suffering," that gives more reasons that God allows people to be born with disabilities and experience other kinds of suffering. I hope you will find it helpful in answering your question more fully:

Blessing you today,

Sue Bohlin

P.S. I just came across a phenomenal blog post by Randy Alcorn titled "Insights from a Precious Disabled Child of God." He offers a short essay by a marvelously articulate 22-year-old woman. It's one of the best things I've ever read.

> **Hearing God, and Sensing Life**
> *Cass Harris 4/16/11*
>
> As I stood on the beach near my home in Alaska, taking in God's creation, knowing full well that my precious Audience of One had my heart completely, I couldn't help but remember.
>
> God had never been silent in my life. At 10 months I was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy. Too early to tell all the implications, the doctor gave my mother and father the gravest of warnings. Known debilitations were the inability to talk, walk, comprehend, eat on my own, use my hands; the list was endless. There was also a possibility of

epilepsy, but no one wanted to acknowledge that. So, being the people of faith that they were, my parents did the only thing they knew to do. They thanked the physician, took me home and prayed like crazy that they'd know how to raise a special needs child.

As it turned out, my cerebral palsy wasn't nearly as bad as—according to the doctors—it should've been. My speech abilities left something to be desired, but I was communicating. My entire right side was two times weaker and smaller than my left, but I was walking. I'd never use my right hand as a hand I could depend on, but I could move it. I misunderstood numbers, but I could comprehend the tools given me to overcome that. The dreaded epilepsy turned into a reality when I was 12, and by the time I was 16, I'd already undergone three brain surgeries to 'fix' the disorder. In all, my life was an unsung miracle. At least among most humans.

If there's anything I've learned as a disabled individual, it's that the quantity of misinformed or ignorant individuals is never ending. And on top of that, as sweet as they may come across, those people are the ones that talk and squawk the loudest. My heart was totally God's, but they had no problem questioning that. And they had no problem testing their boundaries of information in front of my very innocent and sensitive heart.

"So! Cerebral palsy, huh? Did you know that as recently as 1985 they still left kids like you in caves to die in parts of the world?!" The fact that I was born in '89 made that 'fact' even more fun to spout.

"It's too bad that your parents didn't catch the fact that you had cerebral palsy and epilepsy before you were born. Would've been so much easier on your parents to just try again, rather than stand by and watch you suffer through so much. You really are proof that abortion is merciful!"

Of all the insults, and all the “well-intentioned fact spewing,” the merciful abortion line got to me the most. What God did they think they understood when they sweetly put the words “merciful” and “abortion” in the same sentence?!

As many disabled Christians will tell you; by the grace of God, having a disability, at times, is just a fast track to understanding His heart. When the rest of the world can rely on intelligent authors to explain heart issues; or motivational speakers to get them out of a funk, there isn’t a known formula to explain away and comfort life-long rejection just because you don’t look right. Sure, parents can give you love and support. And yes, friendship is still very possible, but, the only One that can truly make such pain worth living through is my Lord.

I remember the times that I’d brokenly inquired and cried out to God about how to handle the fact that my young heart felt as if the entire world just wanted me aborted; only because of two or three sweet yet ignorant individuals. I also remember feeling God’s arm around me, rocking me to sleep after a mind-numbing seizure and my thought that “maybe abortion *would’ve been a Godsend!*”

His answer was simple, but amazingly just the thing that my broken heart had needed at the time. And to this day, at almost 22 years old, I still remember smiling as I heard Him explain.

“Child, your heart breaks because you only hear the fact that people are trying to reason away their moral mistakes by making it logical; and you’re the perfect subject. My heart breaks, however, because in announcing that they think abortion is merciful, they are telling **ME** that they believe I wasn’t involved in your creation. That I somehow turned my back while you were being created, and when I looked at you again, there was an irreversible mistake that I could just

hope one of my other creations would step in and fix themselves.

“What they don’t seem to understand is that the precious ones they decide they should have aborted, are the ones that I created exactly that way for a reason. Although I love each creation, I also love the fact that there are some where their hearts are 20 times stronger than their bodies, and I can give them tasks that I would never give someone who is what some may deem perfect.

“My Precious Little One, I made you this way because I love you. I knew that your strong will, crazy adventurous heart and love for people would have been amazing tools used to make you forget me if you had the chance. And although you still walked away for a time, and didn’t hear or see me, you remembered the fellowship we were perfecting within your imperfections—not outside of them.

“Abortion? Why would you ever take the chance away to see just how deep My love goes, just because you want to ‘try again.’ My sweet Baby Girl, I knew what I was doing when I allowed your mama to carry you in her womb the way she did. I saw the pain she went through, and I had one hand on your little head, and the other hand held your heart, the entire time.

“You’re my beloved, my child. And I wanted you here. Don’t let the world tell you otherwise.”

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“How Do I Answer the Argument for Satan Because All Positives Have a Negative?”

I was hoping you could help me give an answer to my co-worker. He follows a lot of pagan beliefs. Today he was discussing how the “elite” run the world, and I asked him who he thinks influences the unjust “elite.” He responded, “Satan.” I asked, Do you believe that there is such thing as Satan? and he replied, “Yes, every good thing in the world has a counterpart, hot and cold etc. Therefore since every positive force has a corresponding negative force, a negative ‘spirit’ must exist.”

I was not sure how to respond, other than to say that is not what the Bible teaches, evil is not eternal, and Satan will be overthrown and sent to the lake of fire and tormented forever. I guess he is positing dualism. I wanted to know how I could break down the argument that Satan must exist because “all positives have a negative.” Obviously I agree that satan is real, and I am not disputing his existence; I am disputing the argument he uses to arrive at Satan’s existence.

It seems to me that you are quite right to point out that this is not what the Bible teaches. God is the eternal Creator of all that exists (other than Himself). Hence, there can be God without any Satan, good without any evil, etc. I think your response was right on target.

Not only is this true, but (as something of an aside) it’s also important to remember that God did not originally create the angel who became Satan as an evil being. Rather, Satan fell into sin of his own free will. [Please see my answer to email, “What Caused Lucifer (Satan) to Fall?”]

The principle that every positive must have a negative is therefore simply false. Cold is the absence of heat. And one can certainly conceive of a logically possible "hot" world that no human being would ever regard as "cold." In addition, we must also remember that just because we can conceive of something's opposite, this does not mean (or prove) that the opposite actually exists. One can have heat without cold, light without darkness, love without hatred, etc. None of these REQUIRES an opposite. And for someone to claim that they do would require some sort of argument or proof to that effect—not just an assertion that it is so. After all, we can think of many examples to the contrary. So why should we believe that all positives have a negative?

Finally, according to Occam's razor [Editor's note: "The simplest explanation is often correct"], we must not multiply causes (or entities) beyond necessity. The God of the Bible provides all the explanation we need regarding the origin of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe, the existence of objective moral values, etc. To posit, in addition to God, an eternal "Satan", is not only unbiblical, it is also completely unnecessary.

At any rate, these are a few of the thoughts that occur to me after reading your letter. I hope this is helpful in talking with your friend.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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