“Why is Satan Mentioned Little in the Old Testament?”

One of my religion professors brought this up when we were discussing Judaism.

She said that in the Old Testament there was no belief in Satan or the devil. I asked her about the book of Job. She then said that the Hebrew word used in Job that was translated as Satan is actually a word simply meaning adversary. So I looked up the original meaning of the word and sure enough, there it was. The word appears in many other places of the Old Testament but was never translated as Satan into the current English Bible. The word is even used to describe the Angel blocking Balaam’s path in Numbers 22.

Mostly this just causes me to wonder why there seems to be so little mentioned of Satan (at least obviously and directly) in the Old Testament when compared to the New. Surely Satan was just as much a problem then as he is now.

Your professor is correct in that the “adversary” of the OT is just that.

Theologians often talk about “progressive revelation” regarding the unfolding of truth in scripture. Those living during OT times didn’t know exactly how God was going to provide salvation for his people through the sacrifice of His Son, but they did understand the concept of blood sacrifice and the need for atonement. Those living under the law had small glimpses of Satan’s work, but it took the added information of revelation in the NT to give a more complete picture. It might also be noted that many of the concepts about Satan revealed by Jesus through the NT writers can be found in literature outside the Bible during the first century. As time goes forward revelation gives us a clearer

concept of a fallen angel who leads a rebellion against God's reign and works to disrupt the work of the church.

Bible.org has quite a few files on the person and work of Satan that might be of interest to you. You can find this material at: www.bible.org/topic.php?topic_id=12. Here is a good article on Satan in the OT from that site: Satan's Part in God's Perfect Plan. I hope that you find this helpful.

Don Closson

Editor's Note: See also the section "Angels in the Old Testament" in our Angel Quiz: Origin and Background of the Angels and Demons.

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"Is Pole-Dancing for Exercise Okay for Believers?"

Does Probe Ministries have anything in writing about not doing "pole dancing" like strippers do? A friend wants to do this (just for exercise, she says) but like yoga, I think this is something that is far from Christianity. She refuses to believe it's anything other than "just exercise" but the whole format is sexual. Please help?

Great question! Let's think about what the purpose of pole dancing is: pure eroticism. The point of it is to arouse the watcher. If anyone pole dances alone, I would think, it would be in preparation for doing it for an audience, right?

So is there any scenario in which that is acceptable? Absolutely! By a wife, for her husband, in total privacy.

There is a biblical precedent for erotic dance of a wife for her husband in Song of Solomon 6. The privacy of a married couple is also, by the way, the only appropriate place for sexy behavior and clothing that would be immodest if worn out in public or for anyone elses eyes.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Help Me Stop Verbal Abuse of My Boyfriend"

I am in a relationship with a wonderful man but I am verbally abusive to him. I become easily frustrated and angry with him when he doesn't know how to get somewhere or when we can't agree on what to eat. I seem to make him feel stupid and not wanted because we have different educational backgrounds. I hate that I am destroying his spirit and, in turn, destroying mine. I know I am verbally abusive but I am having such a hard time stopping and keeping my mouth shut. I don't want to even think the way I do…. I just want to change and love him deeply because now I am just snide and mean.

I am a Christian and a.) I know this is wrong; b.) I want to change, and; c.) I want this relationship to work because he is a sweet, gentle, kind man, marriage material. Do you have any suggestions as to what I can do? I already see a therapist.

The fact that you are aware you are being so unloving and destructive in your relationship is the most important first

step to changing it. Good for you!

What occurs to me is that deeply profound truth the Lord Jesus said: “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” What comes out of your mouth is generated from what’s in your heart. Which sounds like [bluntness warning ON] pridefulness, disrespect and self-centerednessfruits of the flesh (see also Galatians 5:19-21).[bluntness warning OFF] I think the problem isn’t as much your behavior, but a heart desperately in need of transformation by Jesus. (Please understand: there isn’t a single one of us who doesn’t desperately need a heart transformation! I was recently asked, “What’s your best evidence for the existence of God?” I replied, “He changed my whole life!”)

I’m glad to hear you’re a Christian, since your heart issues can be solved by cooperating with the Lord in the sanctification process. And that is usually a process of Him:

1. *Convicting us of sin so we can repent*

2. *Giving us power to change the way we respond to life’s challenges, as we depend on Him to do it*

3. *Identifying lies we believe, and helping us replace them with the truth*

I suggest that you make a solemn decision to choose humility before the Lord and with your boyfriend. Pray daily about this, asking the Lord to show you your sin from HIS perspective. Ask Him to break your heart over your pride and arrogance so that you will deeply WANT to repent, and will work hard at changing your bad habits.

At the same time, ask your boyfriend for help in changing the habits you are ashamed of. Choose a code word or phrase that he can say when you are being judgmental, impatient, and frustrated. Give him permission to say the code word/phrase,

make a solemn promise that you will not get angry and will instead say, “Thank you for helping me get better.” (And pre-decide that if your ego rises up in ugliness, you will tell yourself the truth: “You are being unkind, prideful and ugly. Shut up, flesh. I choose love and kindness instead.”)

I have learned that when we are easily frustrated and angry, that is usually the result of harboring unrealistic expectations. (I recently came across a word of wisdom on that: “Expectations are the mother of resentments.”) When you find yourself erupting in frustration and anger, pre-decide to ask yourself, “What am I believing about this?” It could be unrealistic beliefs such as, “Men should always know how to get anywhere.” “Other people should want the same things I want since I know best.” “Men should always have education levels higher than or at least equal to women.” With the Lord’s help, work at being more self-aware about what drives your self-centeredness. Ask Him in your prayer times, “Lord, what do You want me to know about myself? Give me grace to hear what You have to say without being defensive.”

This kind of internal turnaround works best when you “put it on project status,” as Dr. Phil says. You have to make it a primary intention and put a lot of mental and emotional and spiritual energy into it. And every time you think about it, give it back to the Lord and invite His help, confessing your desperate need of Him to make you more Christlike. He has all the power you need for exactly what you want.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“What Is Your Position on Universalism?”

Do you have any information or research on “Christian-Universalism”? Please see the website www.christian-universalism.com.

Universalism, in its simplest sense, teaches that at some point all will be saved. The website that you referenced in your email contains many of universalism’s most popular beliefs. However, routinely these views stray from orthodox Christian belief and away from the Bible. In numerous places the Bible refers to a time of judgment where the righteous are granted eternal life and the wicked are given over to eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 20:11-15). Furthermore, Jesus, as well as the New Testament writers, referred to a place of eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 5:22, 18:8-9, Mark 9:43, 48, Revelation 19:20, 20:10, etc.).

The Bible is very emphatic regarding the doctrine of eternal punishment. Universalism rejects this teaching and replaces it with its own. Below is a website that contains information regarding Universalism. It takes a look at Universalism’s beliefs and teachings and subjects it to the Bible through various word studies and Scripture comparisons. It is a helpful place to start:

www.carm.org/universalism.htm

Hope you find this helpful.

Ryan Holmes
Probe Ministries Intern

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“Can the Truly Saved Commit Such Sins as Adultery and Murder?”

I wanted to ask if a truly saved person can fall into the sin of fornication, adultery or murder…. Wouldn’t the Holy Spirit deal with a truly saved person if he/she is tempted? Please explain in detail. Thanks and God bless you!

Yes, a truly saved person can indeed fall prey to such sins. A good example is King David. He was truly saved and yet committed the grievous sins of adultery (2 Samuel 11:2-5) and murder (2 Samuel 11:6-17). Because of his sins, God sent Nathan the prophet to rebuke David and he repented (2 Samuel 12:1-13). Nathan told David that the Lord had taken away his sin, but that there would still be negative consequences for it (2 Samuel 12:13-14).

It’s important to realize that, like believers today, David was indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We know this because, in Psalm 51 (David’s psalm of repentance), He prays that the Lord will not take His Holy Spirit away from him (see v. 11). Of course, today believers are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17), but this was not so in David’s day. Hence, David’s request in Psalm 51:11.

Of course, the Holy Spirit will certainly convict us when we sinand it is God’s desire that we so depend on the Holy Spirit that we do not sin (Galatians 5:16-26). Furthermore, God always provides a way of escape when we are tempted (1 Cor. 10:13). Thus, if we avail ourselves of God’s provision, and rely on the Holy Spirit, we can resist our fleshly desires. We need not fall into such sins as fornication, adultery or

murder. And we need to be ever mindful, and appropriately fearful, of future judgment (2 Cor. 5:11). But if we do sin, we have an advocate who pleads the blood of Christ on our behalf (1 John 2:1).

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Can You Suggest Graduation Gifts With Worldview In Mind?"

We are desiring to give each of our graduates an age appropriate gift, i.e., 8th grade, High School, and College, for graduation. We want to give them something to help them think through the Christian worldview in light of the culture they are being raised in.

Great question! We are in the "business" of providing such resources for kids and adults especially useful for those headed to secular university or college so anything on our site is appropriate, as well as the books & sites below.

The Reasons to Believe section of Probe.org is a great place for starters.

Resources written for children up to about 8th grade:

Here are Amazon.com listings by journalist turned Christian apologetics author extraordinaire Lee Strobel (note emphasis

on titles very similar but not the same):

- *The Case for a **Creator** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Christ** for Kids*
- *The Case for **Faith** for Kids*
- *Off My Case for Kids: 12 Stories to Help You Defend Your Faith*
- *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God (more grown-up edition)*
- *The Case for Faith—Student Edition*

Also, see:

- *My Heart Christ's Home: Retold for Children (don't know grade level) by Robert Boyd Munger OR*
- *My Heart Christ's Home (original)*

Other suggestions for high school grads, possibly 8th graders:

- *Ethix: Being Bold in a Whatever World, by Sean McDowell (son of Josh McDowell, good author, speaker, thinker in his own right; this book written somewhat to youth leaders, perhaps—I've only sampled it; great illustrations especially about absolute truth vs. relative truth and morality)*
- *How to Stay Christian in College, by J. Budziszewski—My wife and I give this one to high school grads for obvious reasons, given the title. J. Budziszewski is a one-of-a-kind critical thinker who matches his intellect with caring for kids. See his columns under Ask Theophilus at Boundless.org—excellent narratives of paraphrased professor-student conversations about deep, real life issues from a Christian worldview.*

Note: I suggest the 1999 edition, although there's a newer one (Th1nk books, a NavPress imprint). This older one contains many useful links, many from a site I used to edit:

LeaderU.com. Massively useful for scholarly work like writing papers, essays, debates. Most or all of the links cited in the book should still work.

Chris Chrisman Goes to College: and Faces the Challenges of Relativism, Individualism and Pluralism. From the master of worldview, James Sire, brought down off the proverbial shelf for laypeople, this fictional account of three new collegians creatively tackles the topics in the book's subtitle. Particularly interesting: Sire "identifies no fewer than six types of relativism," according to the cover.

For college or high school grads:

Welcome To College: A Christ-Followers Guide for the Journey, by Jonathan Morrow. This sweeping, but accessible and succinct volume contains 42 chapters that ask: What do Christians really believe? Can I put that into words for unbelievers? What is the nature of truth and how do we know things? What about sex? Finances? How should a Christian worldview inform my entire life and experience? and much more. Packs a worldview wallop.

Making Your Faith Your Own, A Guidebook for Believers With Questions, by Teresa Vining. See the top review of a pastor's wife.

The second review at Amazon.com of the above book is by my colleague, Sue Bohlin, whose responses on scores of questions from believers and unbelievers, posted here on Probe.org, are worth their weight in gold:

Probe Answers Your Email. Look for Sue Bohlin's responses particularly, especially in the Marriage & Family, Sexuality,

Homosexuality and Gender sections, but elsewhere as well. Michael Gleghorn is great on theology & philosophy. This set of 500-600 answers is good for high school, college, adult, sometimes younger, depending on topics.

My Utmost for His Highest (latest edition), Oswald Chambers

A subscription to our own *Probe-Alert* e-letter (always free, every two weeks, relevant new materials and more) might be a good "freebie"—they'll have to approve it via email. Or, to avoid that and make it a one-step operation, send a list of emails to me and I'll mass subscribe them manually.

I hope you find this helpful. God bless you and your graduates and may they thrive in their faith as they move to their next life-step.

Byron Barlowe

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"I'm a Christian in Love With a Hindu"

Hi, I'm a Christian girl. I'm in love with my friend who is Hindu. I'm much worried for my future. I'm praying for his salvation, so that my marriage goes smooth and we can lead a Christian family life. If I ignore him, also, it would mean I had made a sin. Please give me a helpful guidance, so that I should not sin.

God is very clear about this kind of situation in 2 Corinthians 6:14 (King James Version): "Do not be yoked

together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" The context of the passage is marriage. If you marry anyone other than a Christ-follower, you cannot and will not have a smooth marriage. This is especially true when the people come from such strongly different worldviews and belief systems. Do pray for your friend's salvation, but do not date him. We marry people we date and fall in love with; I strongly suggest you distance yourself from him because he is not safe for you spiritually.

If you ignore him—or even withdraw from him—it is not a sin. That is obedience and wisdom, not sin.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Your Ministry Is Devoted to Exclusion"

It is amazing that your ministry devotes so much to exclusion.

We are very aware that our views are not popular, but much of what Jesus claimed and said wasn't popular either. And what we believe and teach is based on what He said. Such as "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me." That's about as exclusivistic as anyone can get.

Yet, He also said that after He was crucified, He'd come back to life three days later, and He did. So that's a pretty

convincing argument for believing that what He said was true. About God, about the nature of man, about heaven and hell, about other religions, about sexuality, about philosophy, about ethics. . . the whole ball of wax.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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"Accepting Jesus as Your Savior Means You Won't Have to Suffer Bad Karma Anymore?"

I have friends who believe that people will suffer bad karma from past lives and it will be carried over to this life. Now, I read in the Bible that if you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and ask him for forgiveness with a sincere heart, He will wipe away your imperfections and you won't have to suffer "bad karma" anymore. Is this correct? If not, then what's the point of asking for forgiveness? Isn't this what Christ died on the cross for? I need the truth because it will set me free.

What Eastern religions call karma is the Bible's principle that "a man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7). God created a cause-and-effect universe where our choices have consequences.

In the Eastern systems, each person has to work off his own bad karma. . . over and over and over, through as many lifetimes as it takes. In contrast, the Bible offers the

marvelous gift of forgiveness and grace (God's blessing that we don't deserve) through Jesus Christ. You are right that Jesus takes away the guilt of our sins and the eternal punishment of being separated from God forever. However, although forgiveness takes away the obstacle of sin that separates us from friendship with God, it does not take away the consequences of our choices. In the same way that a parent disciplines his child because he loves him, God allows us to suffer the consequences of our choices so that it builds character and helps us to grow and mature and become wise.

Christ died on the cross to reconcile us to God, but He does not take away the effects of our choices. For example, let's say I steal something from a store. Stealing is a sin, and I then confess it to God, who forgives me because Jesus paid for that sin on the Cross, but He will still let me experience the shame and humiliation of being arrested and having to go to trial and then jail. My relationship with God has been restored, but I still have to experience the consequences of my actions. In the process, He will develop my character and help me to grow from this painful experience, making me more mature and less selfish, preparing me for this life and my life in heaven. But once I die, it's all behind me, forgiven and never to be suffered again.

Does this make sense?

Sue Bohlin

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“Can Cheaters Remarry Without Living in Adultery?”

I want to know is oral sex adultery? My friend’s husband cheated on her. She divorced him, but before she divorced him, she had sex with another man. She is now divorced and wants to marry the man she later cheated with. Is this ok? Or since they both cheated, can they remarry without living in a continual state of adultery?

First question: Yes, oral sex is adultery. Oral sex is sex. Having sex with a person when youre married to someone else is adultery. So oral sex is adultery. (Here’s a question that moves this question from the hypothetical to the real world: Ask anyone who’s married how they would feel about their spouse having oral sex with a third party, and if it constitutes cheating. Most people [those without seared consciences, at least!] would quickly assure you they wouldn’t want their spouse even *kissing* another person, much less getting far more intimate than that!)

Second question: Its not so much the living in a continual state of adultery, but the permanent stain of having been adulterers that can never go away. Both people would be marrying people who have demonstrated that they are cheaters. Second marriages have an extremely high failure rate, but it’s even higher for those that begin in adultery.

What a sad question. It makes my heart hurt. But Im glad you asked.

Sue Bohlin