“Is My Husband’s Cybersex Grounds For Divorce?”

My husband has been having cyber sex. Sometimes there was a camera on the other end. Is this biblical grounds for divorce?

Dear _____,

I am so sorry. What a horrible betrayal you are feeling!

I don’t know God’s definitive answer on this, but I do think that cyber sex and webcams are high-tech ways of extending the sins of lust and fantasy, which are mental and emotional sins . . . but I don’t believe they cross the line of adultery. Actual sex between two people has an effect of creating soul-ties to each other that compromises the marriage covenant.

I think the bigger issue is one of hard-heartedness. If you have asked your husband not to engage in cyber sex and to get rid of the camera, and he refuses because he wants what he wants even if it means hurting you, then that’s the real issue. What kind of marriage is it if one person makes self-centered choices that insure the other will be hurt?

May I respectfully suggest you read Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud’s excellent book *Boundaries in Marriage* for some wisdom on what to do next. For example, I have a friend whose husband refuses to stop going to a website where he can play games and chat with other women, and he has fallen into at least emotional affairs with a couple of them. She has said, “As long as you won’t get rid of Pogo, you can do your own laundry.” This way, his stubbornness and selfishness are costing him something.

Hope you find this helpful. Again, I am so sorry. My heart hurts for you.

Sue Bohlin

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"Please Help Me – I'm Lost"

Please help me, I'm lost. I'm in my 50s now and the question of life after death is on my mind a lot. I've been brought up a Methodist but stopped going to church when I was big enough to make my own decisions. . . . Being young, I lived for the moment and never gave God much thought. But now that I'm older I want to know more.

Like what does it matter if one man lives or dies? It's not going to make any difference as the world turns. We're not supposed to care about earthly things but in this country that is supposed to be "one nation under God" we probably control half the money in the world and yet millions are dying from starvation. Why? I'm sorry just have so many questions and don't know who to go to for answers. Please help me find peace for myself!

Dear _____,

I am delighted that you wrote to us! My husband Ray and I are both in our fifties as well so we very much understand why you'd be asking these extremely important decisions now. Way to go!! <smile>

Allow me to point you to an essay on our website by Jimmy Williams called "The Most Important Decision of Your Life" here: www.probe.org/the-most-important-decision-of-your-life/.

Also, please allow me to address your question of "what it matters if one man lives or dies, since it won't make any

difference as the world turns.” Very few people make a noticeable difference to the world at large, but EVERYONE makes a difference to the people closest to us. The world is different because of each of our lives. The question is, what kind of difference does each of us make? One for good, or for evil?

Also, your observation is very true from a worldly perspective, but from God’s perspective it makes a tremendous amount of difference because He made you for Himself, and He made you for a purpose. It matters because God wants you to know how much He loves you and how deeply He wants you to accept His invitation to find your life in Him. Ultimately, a billion years from now, when the world as we know it isn’t here anymore, only things from God’s perspective will matter.

Jimmy’s essay will help you grasp life from God’s perspective. Let me know what you think after you read it, OK? But first let me pray for you.

Dear God, I lift up _____ to You and I thank You for the big smile on Your face as You see him turning over these important thoughts and decisions in his mind. Thank You for opening _____’s eyes to his need to see the big picture of life and to ask the eternally significant questions he’s asking. Lord, it’s only Your grace and goodness that allow him to know he is lost and needing peace. He would be blind to those truths if it weren’t for You calling to him and allowing him to hear You calling. So help _____ understand his need for You and the promise that is his life, since You made him for a purpose, You made him so You could love him, and You made him so he could love You back, enjoy You forever, and make a difference because He’s Your beloved creation. I pray You would help him cross over the line to become Your beloved son.

I bless you today, _____!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

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"How Do I Deal with the Guilt and Anxiety of Killing in War?"

How do I deal with the guilt and anxiety of war? I helped kill and witnessed death first hand. I flew combat missions in Afghanistan and was shot at and shot up. I placed soldiers on the ground, many of whom were killed. I agreed to this path. I suffer from a great case of PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, formerly termed "Shell Shock"] **which has destroyed my life. I am seen by the VA weekly. I live with great depression and am scared a lot of the time. My belief in God is shaken and I am left with questions.**

Dear friend,

None of us at Probe have any combat experience, so I turned to a dear friend who has, Warren Gallion, and asked him how he would answer you. Below is his letter.

My husband Ray read your question at our staff devotions. People sat there stunned, not knowing how in the world to answer. Then Ray read Warren's letter. I wept; someone else murmured, "What a masterpiece. . . " It was a powerful example of the truth in 2 Cor. 1:4, which assures us that God comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we

ourselves are comforted by God.

All of us at Probe want you to know we thank you, bless you, and honor you for serving our country and fighting the good fight against evil in Afghanistan.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries Webservant

> *Dear _____,*
>
> *As Christians we have been taught from a very early age that "Thou shalt not kill" and to "Love your enemy." In 1969 I found myself trying to reconcile how I could be the best Vietnam Infantry soldier I could be and still "Love all the people in the world."*
>
> *It was very helpful for me to learn that God has different rules for governments than he does for individuals. The Bible tells us we live in a World where there will always be war and rumors of war. It is the responsibility of governments not individuals to resolve war. The government is authorized with God's blessing to wage war, declare a death penalty or even say it is OK to kill an unborn child. God in his own time will judge the country concerning whether we are making the right decisions in each of these areas.*
>
> *As a soldier your job is to follow orders. Although you may have to make many decisions, even deadly decisions within the scope of your mission, you need to realize that your commanders and the country that sent you on the mission will be judged if your mission was ungodly. If you did your mission to the best of your ability you should not feel guilty for being a part of the mission.*
>
> *As an individual it would be wrong to consider murder or killing as a solution to any problem. Even in war it is*

possible for an individual to step outside their mission and decide on their own to do something ungodly. However, it sounds like the Afghanistan experiences you described were all within the scope of your mission.

If you are dealing with guilt you need to ask yourself, "Were the actions that I feel guilty about within the scope of my mission?" If the answer is No, I acted outside the scope of my mission, and you are already a Christian then you need to confess those sins to God and ask for forgiveness and then do a little Bible study on the words forgiveness and grace. God can and does forgive with amazing grace.

If the answer is Yes, I acted in the scope of my mission, you need to turn loose of the personal guilt and allow God to use your experiences to mature you and to minister to others. God sometimes allows you to experience bad things so he can prove to you he is in control and he has a reason for keeping you around.

War is a very hard thing to experience. As Christians we sometimes think we shouldn't have to deal with hard things. Let me share a verse with you that helps me. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish it work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1: 2-4)

September 11, 2001 was a tragic day in our country's history. Having experienced war first hand myself, it is not an experience I would wish on anyone. However, I was in agreement with our governments decision to send men and women like yourself to fight. Although I did not know your name, I prayed for you while you were there. Allow me to pray for you now.

Dear God, I lift up our brother _____ to you today. Just as your Son willingly placed His life between me and the eternal death my sins deserved, we honor men like _____ that willingly placed his own life between us and the dangers our world faces. Help _____ grasp that You are a great God and You do not fear any of his questions. Lord, we ask that You take away any guilt, fear, depression and anxiety that _____ may feel from the trials he has experienced and turn it into the perseverance You promised, and help _____ to feel mature and complete so he is not lacking anything. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

_____, I want to personally thank you for your service. You mentioned you were a pilot and you placed men on the ground. In Vietnam it was helicopter pilots that placed us on the ground. When things got really hot it was normally some crazy pilot that had to do something really stupid to save our hide. I try to never miss an opportunity to Thank a Pilot.

Thank you,

Sgt Warren Gallion 4th Infantry Vietnam 1969

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"Do Animals Have Souls?"

My name is C_____ and I am 13 years old in the 8th grade. A classmate told me she was a Christian but she didn't believe some of what the Bible says. I asked her for an example and she told me that the Bible said that animals don't have souls and how she believed that they did have souls. I would be very

appreciative if you would help me on my quest to find out what the Bible says about that.

Dear C_____,

We have an answer to email about animals and souls and going to heaven: www.probe.org/do-our-pets-go-to-heaven/.

I would ask your friend where in the Bible it says animals don't have souls. Lots of people have heard things they repeat as true but they don't really know. When you ask powerful questions like, "How do you know that?" and "Where do you get your information?" the answer is really, "Well, I heard. . ." or "They say that. . ." Which doesn't go very far in being persuasive, does it? <smile> In reality, the Bible doesn't anywhere say, "Animals don't have souls." It's a much bigger issue than that, and it comes down to the fact that animals are not made in the image of God, like people are. (Note that angels are not made in the image of God either. Not being made in the image of God doesn't mean something doesn't have great value.) And it also matters how you define "soul." If you mean "personality," then of course some animals have souls. If I ask our Irish Setter Pele, "Pele, do you have a soul?" with a smile on my face and energy in my voice, he'll respond by breathing fast, wagging his tail, and smiling his doggy smile.

If you mean, "the spiritual place inside you where God can dwell," then no they don't. If I ask our dog, "Pele, who made you? Do you know who God is? Did you know Jesus is Lord?" he'll just keep on wagging his tail. . . or sleeping. . . or looking at me blankly—because those questions have no meaning to him. He is not a moral creature like we are. He cannot respond to the truth of the gospel because he has no understanding and no choice. He does, however, glorify God by his "dogginess." He brings glory to God by just being the dog God made him to be. He has a place in God's creation, and a very important place in our hearts. . . but he cannot become a part of the Kingdom of Heaven or the family of God like we

are. Any more than he can choose to become a fish.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Why Didn’t God Just Throw Satan into Hell When He Rebelled?”

Why did God allow Satan to deceive mankind for a certain time period? Why did He not just throw Satan into hell first after he rebelled?

You’re right, we don’t know many things in the mind of God, but some wise people have pointed out that God has Satan on a leash (see the opening of the book of Job), and He is able to use him as an instrument in His plans to produce a beautiful, strong, mature, SEASONED Bride for the Lamb. Spiritual warfare, and the discipline of prayer, are the ways God prepares us to be the Bride of Christ, and the very real warfare (yet pre-decided outcome) is what purifies us, strengthens us, deepens us, matures us.

If you’ve ever known spoiled-brat types who have never known hardship or suffering, for whom life was made easy and who never had to experience the consequences of their choices because other people paid them, then you see how ugly untested, unchallenged people can be. God wants better for us and better for His Son. He uses Satan to achieve that goal.

I hope this helps. . . even if its just a little!

Sue Bohlin

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“As an Ex-Mormon, How Do I Find a Church That’s Not a Cult?”

I was raised a Mormon, I now know it is a cult and totally wrong. I am Christian now. I am having difficulty finding a church I can go to as I am afraid of being sucked into another cult.

Many have asked for guidelines regarding what church they should or should not join, as well as how to recognize a cult. The question might be expanded to include a broader spectrum of religious organizations. This range could include churches that are both orthodox and healthy, orthodox but unhealthy, pseudo Christian cults, and finally organizations that claim a completely different religious tradition. The progression might look something like this:

Orthodox & Healthy → Orthodox & Abusive → Cult (Christian) → World Religion (Other religious traditions)

The goal would be to attend churches that are both orthodox in their theology and that are governed by a group of men who model a Christ-like form of servant leadership. There should be a healthy balance between building up believers and sending

them out to serve and reach the world. Churches can often become unhealthy when they have a completely inward perspective. Unfortunately, there are churches with orthodox theology that become abusive due to leadership that is either immature or that chooses to lead in a manipulative and abusive manner. This can happen when a pastor lacks significant oversight by a competent board of elders/deacons or when men who are not good candidates become elders/deacons and hire a young or inexperienced pastor.

The term orthodox basically means to conform to tradition. In this case we are referring to the tradition or teaching of Christ's apostles as found in the Bible. Some have defined it as what all Christians everywhere have believed. The first seven ecumenical councils of the church established Christianity's theology regarding the nature of God and the person of Christ. These beliefs are a good test for orthodoxy. In general, Christians believe that there is one God who has revealed himself in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit (one essence, three persons). Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man, and has been co-equal with the Father since eternity past. It has also believed that the death of Jesus Christ is the only atonement for sin.

A pseudo-Christian cult usually denies the deity of Christ or his humanity (Gnostics). As you know, Mormonism denies the trinity, claiming that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods with a similar or united purpose. There is much more that could be said about each movement (Mormons, JW's) but you can check our articles on the web for that info. Ron Rhodes defines a cult in one of his books in this manner:

> *A cult may be defined from both a sociological and a theological perspective. Sociologically speaking, a cult is a religious or semireligious sect or group whose members are controlled or dominated almost entirely by a single individual or organization. A sociological definition of a cult generally includes (but is not limited to) the*

authoritarian, manipulative, and sometimes communal features of cults. In this type of cult, converts are sometimes cut off from all former associations, including their own families. The Hare Krishnas, The Family ("Children of God"), and Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church are examples of this kind of cult.

Theologically speaking, a cult is a religious group that claims to be Christian but in fact denies one or more of the essential doctrines of historic, orthodox Christianity (as defined in the major historic creeds of Christianity). Such groups deny or distort essential Christian doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and salvation by grace through faith alone. Cults that fall into this category include the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. [Ron Rhodes, The Culting of America, p. 5)

I hope that you find this helpful.

Don Closson

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"How Should Elders Be Appointed in the Church?"

In the biblical point of view who is supposed to appoint a person to become an elder? Is it the pastor, the board of elders or the congregation?

First, let me recommend an excellent resource on the topic of leaders and leadership in the church. Dr. Gene Getz has

written a book titled Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church (Moody Press, 2003). It is his view, and mine, that God has given us considerable freedom in how we govern our local congregations, both in organizational structure and in the number and the appointment method of elders/leaders. Far less flexible, or perhaps I should say far more important is the character and maturity required for someone to be considered qualified to be a leader in the church.

The Bible uses two terms interchangeably to describe the leadership position in the early church. In the earliest days of the church, the Greek term *presbuteroi* (elder) was consistently used. This is the same Greek word used by the Jews to describe elders within the Jewish community. By the time of Christ, every Roman city with a significant number of Jews had a council called the Sanhedrin composed of twenty-three elders. There was also a "Great Sanhedrin" in Jerusalem comprised of priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. Although the term "elder" was borrowed from the Jewish community, the role of "elder" in the church was quite different from an "elder" in the Jewish faith. Later, the term *episkopoi* (overseer/bishop) is used by the Bible to describe leaders. This term was more familiar to Gentile believers. The Romans used the title to refer to a superintendent or leader of a colony. When there were both Jewish and Gentile believers present, the Bible uses both terms (elder and overseers) to signify the leadership function.

The key is not the term used, but the function that these men served in the church. How these men were selected also varied. In some cases they were chosen directly by Paul and Barnabas. Timothy and Titus are given instructions by Paul regarding how they were to select elders and what qualifications were to be used. Apollos is another example of one who most likely appointed elders/overseers in the churches. Beyond these early examples of Apostolic appointment by Paul and those he

approved of, we have no clear model for the selection process. Both the appointment method by existing leaders and forms of congregational selection coexisted into the future. There are some indications that self-appointed leaders existed in the early church as well. Titus 1:11 mentions an example of a leader that was causing problems by teaching things he ought not to teach.

I believe that both appointed and congregationally chosen methods are permissible as long as the qualifications for elder/overseer are taken seriously. The form of selection and the name or title given leaders is secondary to the function that they are to perform.

Don Closson

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"What Do Mormons Mean When They Say Jesus Is Our Big Brother?"

I have two questions. I know that when Mormons say Jesus is our big brother, they take it literally. What do they mean by that? Second, what is the best way to witness to my Mormon friend?

First, Mormons believe that Jesus is our literal brother in the sense that we existed with him prior to our incarnation on earth. They believe that we all (Jesus included) existed prior to our bodily form as spirit children of Elohim and God the Mother. In fact, prior to this spiritual state, Mormons

believe that we have existed for eternity past as intelligences. The only difference between Jesus and us is that he has been more faithful and useful to the father. This all makes more sense when you realize that in the Mormon system there is only one form of sentient or intelligent life; God the father, the Son, the angels, and mankind are all of the same species. It looks something like this:

Intelligences → spirit beings → incarnate (fleshly) beings → god

Mormonism teaches that all of us are on this path of progression toward existing as a god.

Regarding your desire to inform your friend about the Christian faith, another good resource is the book *How Wide the Divide* by Blomberg AND Robinson. It is a dialogue between a professor at Brigham Young University and a seminary professor from Denver Seminary. It is very informative and it provides a good example for how Christians and Mormons can enter into dialogue with one another.

For Him,

Don Closson

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"I Object to Your Article on Genesis Unbound"

I came across your review of the book *Genesis Unbound*. The article wasn't written as a way to see a parallelisn in Genesis 1-3it presents a substitute "Interpretation" of

Genesis 1-3. It in fact totally misses an even bigger problem which this view causes: the worldwide flood.

I'm not saying that Mr. Milne hasn't a right to state his views. I am questioning its consistency with Probe's past overall Biblical worldview. It is questionable as an article representative of Probe.

I regret that you had such a negative reaction to Rich Milnes review of John Sailhammer's book. The controversy over the age of the earth within the church is a critical discussion that often gets lost in people protecting their territory more than seeking the truth and being open to a different approach.

As Probes main science speaker I still refer to Sailhammers work not because I necessarily agree with his conclusions but because I think he challenged the underlying assumptions of both young- and old-earth creationists. If there is ever going to be an in house resolution to this controversy, works such as Sailhammers will need to be discussed openly and critically. That never really happened, unfortunately.

Please read Milnes closing paragraph again:

> *You will have to read all of Dr. Sailhammer's provocative book to make up your own mind. But at least give him the chance to make his case directly from the text. Genesis Unbound is a book to stir your thinking, and should be read slowly. But go back and read Genesis to be reminded of God's greatness in His creation.*

Rich (as well as I) simply thought it was a provocative work that deserved wider attention and response. If you havent read the book, then I would ask that you suspend judgment on Sailhammer until you do. (Though I admit the book would be hard to find now.)

Thank you for your participation with us and for writing.

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“Was God Silent Between Cain and Noah?”

One of her reasons my Wiccan friend gives for turning away from Christianity is that God was silent after dealing with Cain and Abel up to the time of Noah and the flood. For nearly two thousand years pagan civilizations thrived, say in Sumeria and Mesopotamia. Where was this monotheistic God at this time in history? In her mind this God is uninvolved and therefore heartless for bringing a flood. Where in the Bible does it say God was involved with man during this time?

God was indeed involved in the affairs of His creation between the time of Cain and Abel and the Flood. The clearest example of His involvement (in a clearly miraculous sense) can be found in Genesis 5:24 “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (see also Heb. 11:5). Clearly, such an event requires Divine intervention.

Obviously, this one example is enough to prove God’s involvement in the affairs of men and the world between the time of Cain and Abel and the Flood. But God is actually constantly involved in the affairs of the world. In the first place, the world only exists because God created it (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; etc.). And the universe is continuously upheld in existence by the word and power of God (Heb. 1:3). Thus, God’s involvement with His creation is continuous. And God has revealed Himself to man not only in the Bible and Christ (special revelation), but also in creation (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:18-23), providential acts of kindness (Acts 14:17), and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15) all examples of what is

called general revelation. Such revelation is also continuous and ongoing to all men, at all times, in all places.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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